



The union for  
financial professionals

# 2018 Annual Report



The logo features a stylized yellow and white graphic resembling a rising sun or a leaf above the text "ACFO | ACAF Annual Report 2018". The background of the top half of the page is a photograph of a large conference hall with a speaker at a podium and two large projection screens displaying presentation slides. One screen shows a portrait of a man, and the other shows a slide with the text "Hold Exs accountable".

# ACFO | ACAF Annual Report 2018

## Introduction

ACFO was able to make progress on behalf of our members on a number of key fronts in 2018, despite the ongoing impacts of the Phoenix payroll system debacle.

An unprecedented number of you benefited from ACFO's professional development offerings, a key priority of our community every year. We have worked to engage with more of you in your workplaces and held a record number of in-person events. And we moved our operations into a new, modern and professional headquarters building – a building that is not only closer to major public service workplaces so we can serve you better, but also a building that is in a major Ottawa transportation corridor, including a future LRT station, so it represents a sound financial investment. Our reputation has never been stronger as a union and that is thanks, in large part, to the incredible reputation of the members we serve. We are proud to represent this community of professionals and we are eager to see what 2019 will bring.

## Professional Development

Beyond compensation and benefits, access to professional development is consistently cited as the single biggest priority of the ACFO membership.

This is hardly a surprise. As your representatives, we know full well how seriously you take your role as competent, professional stewards of the public treasury. We are pleased to have been able to offer an unprecedented number of training and development opportunities to a record number of members over the past year and we are excited by what lies ahead on this important file.



*With more than 1,100 attendees, this year's Spring Tune Up was the largest ever, where high profile speakers - including Peter Mansbridge - offered inspiring and educational presentations that were useful to the career and personal development of FIs.*

## What we've done in 2018

- In 2018 we wrapped up the first year of the Joint Career Development Program (JCDP) and launched the second year of programming. More than 1,750 members received training or attended an event as part of the 2017-18 JCDP, including training on leadership, the financial cycle and language training, as well as regional events across the country and in the National Capital Region.
  - Our flagship PD event, the annual Spring Tune Up in Ottawa, drew more than 1,000 attendees to hear presentations from Peter Mansbridge, workplace conflict expert Mercedes Watson, personality psychologist Dr. Brian Little and former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page.
  - Regional town hall events in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax attracted more than 550 members for informative and educational sessions on emotional intelligence, workplace conflict, leadership and professional communications.
  - More than 100 members attended the incredible Institute for Fiscal Studies and Democracy course hosted by former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page.
- Almost 400 members received language training
- 100 members took part in a customized leadership development program
- 90 members got the opportunity to shadow their colleagues and see operations in another city thanks to the FI Interchange program.
- We also worked to strengthen relationships with departmental CFOs and the Office of the Comptroller General to ensure members could take advantage of these programs and offerings.

## What we'll do in 2019

- By spring of 2019, we expect close to 2,000 members to participate in the 2018-19 offerings under the JCDP, culminating with the 2019 Spring Tune Up on June 4. Planning will then begin for the 2019-20 JCDP, when we hope to deliver training to more than 2,000 members.
- We will also work to ensure that access to JCDP programming is included in more members' annual learning plans, with the support of the OCG and departmental CFOs.



*JCDP Participants enjoyed interchange and job shadowing opportunities, leadership and language training and a record-number of events across the country.*

## Phoenix

The unmitigated disaster that is the Phoenix payroll system continued to be the single-biggest issue facing ACFO and our public service membership over the past year.

While the government has turned its attention to the next generation of payroll administration in the public service, we have fought for a seat at the table while still working to ensure anyone affected by Phoenix is made whole. It's unfathomable that these problems persist but persist they do; we continue to exhaust every available channel of recourse for our members while also working on the structural and systemic problems that led to this disaster in the first place.

## What we've done in 2018

- Thanks to the feedback from members in the FI Community Phoenix Impact Study, we were the first to raise concerns to the employer about the degradation of financial controls and the risk of fraud associated with Phoenix emergency payments. We also appeared in the media in response to the Auditor General's report to echo these same concerns.
- In our submission to the House of Commons Finance Committee's pre-budget consultation process, we called on the government to rescind the blanket approvals that allow the employer to bypass financial controls associated with Phoenix problems.
- ACFO has a leadership position with a handful of other unions and employer representatives in a working group to determine compensation and damages for public servants affected by Phoenix, both directly and indirectly. We expect an announcement on this matter in the coming weeks.
- We also secured a coveted seat on the committee that is looking at the requirements for the next generation payroll administration system, to help ensure that the mistakes of the past are

not repeated. We are one of only four unions represented on this committee.

- Throughout the year, we continued to help individual members affected by Phoenix, escalating their cases where possible and helping to ensure appropriate documentation is in place in others.

## What we'll do in 2019

- As work intensifies on creating the next payroll administration system, we will work to ensure the mistakes of the past are not repeated. This includes ensuring that public servants who see problems with the system are empowered to speak out before the system goes live.
- We will continue to hold the employer to account for the damages caused by Phoenix and will work to make sure every single pay issue is resolved.
- We will also continue to fight to ensure government financial controls are applied so that due diligence is done to avoid fraud or gross mismanagement related to emergency payments associated with Phoenix.
- We will continue to make senior officials aware of the increased workload on financial professionals and push for more resources to help manage the work.

## Member Engagement

Engaging with all of you is a key priority every year but it has taken on an increased sense of urgency this year given the ongoing Phoenix payroll system.

We rely on the employer to tell us who is and who isn't a member every month and the quality of this information has degraded along with all of the other problems caused by Phoenix. This has made it even more important to meet with members face-to-face, all across the country. Our annual pulse survey showed, once again, that the overwhelming majority of our members are satisfied with the services they receive from ACFO. It's incumbent on us, though, to stay connected so we can provide you the information you need to ensure your rights are protected.



*Town hall sessions across the country gave ACFO members a chance to ask their questions directly to the ACFO leadership.*

## What we've done in 2018

- We held a record number of in-person events for members across the country this year, including lunch-hour town hall sessions in Edmonton, Niagara Falls, Mississauga, Ottawa and Charlottetown, a networking night in Ottawa and, through the JCDP, regional town halls in Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal, Moncton and Halifax.
- We also undertook a comprehensive telephone outreach of members through September and October, ensuring we have updated information for members.
- We are about to launch a new membership database system that will give us the ability to better serve our

members while also giving you more control over the type of information you receive from your union.

## What we'll do in 2019

- Our new membership database will be up and running in 2019.
- We will also be expanding our in-person membership engagement program, with more events and more opportunities for you to engage with your union and with each other.
- We plan to roll out a new and improved ACFO Representative program to increase our visibility in the workplace and to give more of you the opportunity to engage with the union and help us represent your colleagues.





## Collective Bargaining and Employee Wellness

Collective bargaining is the core of what we do at ACFO.

In addition to helping our members negotiate collective agreements with Treasury Board (for public service employees) and NAV Canada, we're also currently in the process of a parallel negotiation process for the new public service Employee Wellness Support Program (EWSP), as first planned in the most recent FI Collective Agreement. Our members at NAV Canada ratified their current deal in 2017, which carries through until 2020. As such, our focus this year has been the negotiations with Treasury Board for a new collective agreement and the new EWSP.



*The first public service collective bargaining session took place at ACFO headquarters October 2-4 to discuss the renewal of our collective agreement which expires in November.*

## What we've done in 2018

- ACFO entered negotiations alongside other unions to work out specifics of the Employee Wellness Support Program. These negotiations are separate from the talks about the main collective agreement. ACFO representatives sit on both the technical committee and the executive-level committee working on employee wellness.
- Our commitment remains to ensure our public service members have better coverage than they currently have in the existing sick leave regime. Negotiations are ongoing and we hope to have a plan to present to members in the coming year.
- In the summer we also filed notice to bargain our next public service collective agreement. We exchanged proposals in September and held the first negotiating session in October, in advance of the deal's expiration in November and before other unions start negotiations.

- Comprehensive research, including an analysis of other groups' collective agreements and finding private sector comparators, was done to support our bargaining team's work.
- We also carried out a survey on the public service health care plan and submitted our priorities to the committee looking at this issue.

## What we'll do in 2019

- Our focus is on getting a new contract for our public service members that is fair and respects your vital role as professional stewards of the public purse. Negotiations will continue on the Employee Wellness Support Program, with the goal of getting it ready in time to be part of the next collective agreement. That said, we will not hold up an otherwise-ready contract if the EWSP is not ready for ratification once a tentative deal is reached.

## Advocacy Issues

In any given year, ACFO also works on a number of other advocacy and workplace issues — issues that tend to be longer-term in scope.

These include public-service wide issues, like pushing for improvements to legislation related to pay equity and whistleblower protection, and group-specific issues, like resolving our public service pay equity complaint, curtailing the outsourcing of financial work, monitoring staffing actions and modernizing the classification standard for our group.

### What we've done in 2018

- **Pay equity:** We were invited to be part of the consultation process for the development of new, proactive pay equity legislation in the federal public sector following successful lobbying efforts that drove the government to finally announce new legislation in the 2018 federal budget. This work has been done in conjunction with other public service unions and the Canadian Labour Congress, who has deep expertise on the file. We also continued to work to resolve our own outstanding pay equity complaint, both through the formal litigation route and through attempts to resolve it informally and collaboratively.
- **Outsourcing and privatization:** We launched a major research project to help understand the scope and scale of outsourcing of financial

management work in the public sector.

This work is in its early stages but we've already attracted the attention of Members of Parliament, who have been receptive to our calls for tighter controls on contracting out and greater accountability for external consultants. We have also established relationships with other unions through the Canadian Labour Congress, Public Services International and one-to-one, giving us greater access to research and lessons learned from other sectors.

- **Staffing:** ACFO presented to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates as part of their study of the public service staffing system. We flagged concerns about flaws in the process and also the fact that, too often, managers end up contracting out work rather than hiring full time employees because the staffing system is so inefficient.

## What we'll do in 2019

- **Pay equity:** We are optimistic about a resolution to our existing pay equity complaint in the coming year. We have been working closely with the employer to find a solution that will close the existing gap, respect the human rights of our group and demonstrate the government's commitment to pay equity prior to the 2019 federal election. Similarly, we hope to see progress on new, proactive legislation this year so we can ensure that such a gender-based pay gap does not open again in the future.
- **Outsourcing and privatization:** We will ramp up our efforts on this file in 2019, with a joint research study to be released in the spring showing the impacts of outsourcing, including high cost, weakening of internal capacity and risks of fraud and a lack of accountability.
- **Whistleblower protection:** The 2017 report from the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates set out a legislative framework for better protection for public servants who disclose wrongdoing. We intend to use this report to put the issue on the radar of all the major political parties in advance of the 2019 election.
- **Classification:** We have been made aware of potential changes to the FI classification standard that may be coming in 2019 and we have already begun to prepare our research in anticipation of these changes. More information on this file is expected soon.



ACFO President Dany Richard met with a delegation of leaders from Public Services International to discuss the international coalition's work on privatization and contracting out.

## ACFO Operations

We continue to ensure we are using our members' dues efficiently and are pleased to have been able to keep our dues among the lowest in the public service for many years.

This year we made a major capital investment, selling our old headquarters building and buying a new building in Ottawa's Westboro neighbourhood. Throughout the transition, we've been able to continue to serve our members effectively and efficiently, manage high case volumes related to Phoenix and maintain key relationships with stakeholders all while staying within our budget.



*ACFO's new headquarters building in Ottawa is closer to our members and offers more opportunities to engage face-to-face, all while representing a solid investment in a sought-after neighbourhood.*

## What we've done in 2018

- In 2018 we finalized the sale of our old office on Queensview Drive. Purchased in 2006, the building served its purpose well but as our membership grew, so too did our staff, and over the last year it became clear we'd outgrown the space. The decision to buy this building was a smart investment as the asset increased in value during our time of ownership.
- We purchased a new building in Westboro, conveniently located near our members working at Tunney's Pasture and easily accessible by transit – including close proximity to a future LRT station. The new building is large enough to accommodate modest future growth and provides a professional flagship presence for ACFO in a major Ottawa corridor.

- 2018 also saw a continuation of 2017's spike in member cases, largely due to ongoing problems with the Phoenix pay system. We are pleased to note that the annual member satisfaction survey showed the majority of members are pleased with our services, despite this heavy volume of cases.

## What we'll do in 2019

- Our focus will remain on delivering top quality services to our members in an efficient and effective way.
- We will use the new membership database to give members more control over the information they receive from ACFO to enhance the membership experience.

## Conclusion

When something as fundamental as the system that ensures you get paid goes as horribly wrong as it has for our public service members, it can feel overwhelming and quickly become all-encompassing.

Indeed, supporting our affected members; flagging concerns about the associated health of the financial management framework; working to ensure those affected receive compensation for damages; and fighting to ensure these problems are not repeated dominated our work through 2018 and will continue to be a big part of our 2019. But just as all of you have adapted and persisted in your work, we too have worked hard to make progress on key files and initiatives. As the representatives for a group of dedicated professionals, we are compelled to model your own dedication and fight to ensure your rights are respected and the conditions in which you work are as healthy as they can be. We're proud to represent this community and we're proud of what we have done in 2018. On to 2019.