

# Collective Bargaining: Your questions answered

As we prepare for the first collective bargaining process under the new CT Group classification, we'd like to take this opportunity to explain exactly how the process works.

**Collective bargaining** is the process that brings together ACFO-ACAF members who negotiate the collective agreement with the employer. It's the backbone of what ACFO-ACAF does as a union.

**Collective Agreements** are large documents, full of detailed language and it's important to us that our members understand the process, how it works and why it's so important.





## Before bargaining begins

In order to come up with a list of priorities for our bargaining proposals, ACFO-ACAF:

- sends out surveys,
- collects demographic information
- analyzes the collective agreements for other groups;
- and solicits suggestions from our members.

We want to hear what you have to say before we negotiate the collective agreement on your behalf. If you would like to be even more involved in the process, you can volunteer to be a part of the Compensation and Benefits Committee.

If you have a suggestion for something you would like to see during negotiations, be sure to complete the survey when you have the chance.



From there, a team of ACFO-ACAF member volunteers apply and are appointed to the Compensation and Benefits Committee by the Board of Directors.



The negotiating team is made up of ACFO-ACAF Labour Relations Advisors, members, board members and support staff.

The Committee helps the negotiating team conduct research and put together the list of priorities for the bargaining round.

## At the table

Every round of collective bargaining is different, so there's no real way to tell how long it will take, but typically, bargaining takes place over several months, with the team sitting down to negotiate multiple times in periods of three to five days at a time. Events such as a federal election can also delay the process.



## What's not included in bargaining

While collective bargaining covers a lot of your rights and entitlements at work, there are some aspects of your terms of employment that are not included in this process. If it's covered by an NJC Directive or found within the Public Service Employment Act, it cannot be negotiated at our Collective Bargaining table. This includes:

- Classification
- Staffing
- Bilingualism bonuses
- Work force adjustment
- Health care plan
- Pension plans

## If bargaining stalls

In the case that the two sides reach an impasse at the bargaining table, there are a couple of options. Either union members vote to strike, or we enter a process called binding arbitration. This process works much like a more traditional court case, where each side takes the time to present their side. In the case that we do not reach an agreement, ACFO-ACAF has registered our choice of binding arbitration for the next round.

# How changes to the CT Group will affect bargaining

When we sit down at the table this time, there will be a few changes to the process, as this is the first time ACFO-ACAF is negotiating on behalf of all three of the CT subgroups (CT-FIN, CT-IAU and CT-EAV).

While most of the collective agreement will apply to all three groups, there will be some differences depending on your subgroup. For example, pay scales will differ slightly between the groups, so those will be negotiated separately. Most of the bargaining will occur at one central table.

Once an agreement is reached at the table that everyone is satisfied with, the document is called a 'tentative agreement'. Next, the tentative agreement is sent to the union members to vote on. This voting process is called 'ratification'. If the tentative agreement is approved by a majority of members, the collective agreement is ratified, and goes into effect. If the agreement includes any changes in pay scale or benefits, members may receive a lump sum retroactive payment after this point.

**If you have questions about the process, have suggestions or want to get involved, please reach out to Lead Negotiator Scott Chamberlain ([schamberlain@acfo-acaf.com](mailto:schamberlain@acfo-acaf.com)).**

**You can also fill out the Collective Bargaining survey to help shape our priorities for this upcoming round of negotiations.**