

BARGAINING TOOLKIT

Your 2026 Guide



Canada Employment
and Immigration Union



Syndicat de l'Emploi et de
l'Immigration du Canada

As we navigate the current round of bargaining, we want to share as much information as possible with our members. The bargaining process can be complicated and misunderstood. We have pulled together multiple resources to ensure that you have access to the fundamental information about the process.

In this kit you will find:

How bargaining works:

- General Explanation
- Roadmap to Bargaining Process
- PSAC vs. CEIU: who does what?

Our demands:

- General Explanation
- Wages
- Telework
- Call Centre Working Conditions

Supporting the process:

- Your Role in Bargaining
- Your rights
- Being Strike-ready

We encourage you to read through, share with your colleagues and support your team. The collective agreement is the cornerstone to what the union does, and bargaining is the fundamental function of a union.

The strongest bargaining team is one with members standing behind it. The best collective agreements come from demonstrating to the Employer that we all **STAND IN SOLIDARITY.**

BARGAINING: HOW IT WORKS

The vast majority of CEIU members are a part of the PA bargaining unit. When it comes to bargaining, we don't negotiate with departments such as ESDC, IRCC and IRB, but rather with the Treasury Board Secretariat.

The Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act (FPSLRA) governs collective bargaining for most federal public service employees in Canada. It sets out how unions are certified, how bargaining takes place, and how disputes are resolved. The FPSLRA lays out everything from timelines to the scope of bargaining and even legislates the requirement to bargain in good faith, which requires both parties to meet and engage in discussions, exchange information and make reasonable efforts to reach an agreement.

Bargaining generally covers pay, allowances and benefits as well as working conditions, hours of work, job security and many, many other things. Certain matters considered management rights—such as staffing, organization of work, or assignment of duties—are generally excluded unless the employer voluntarily agrees to negotiate them.

The important part to consider is that every demand that has been made at the table is based on a bargaining demand put forth by a member. If an issue is high on the list of priorities for the team, it's because it has been articulated as a priority for the membership.



WHERE WE'RE AT - MAY 11, 2026

We were actively bargaining for ten months with the Employer, and the PA team has recently declared impasse.

This means that they believe they have exhausted all options to come to an agreement and declared impasse because the Employer refuses to proactively negotiate. The employer flatly refused to engage on foundational issues such as wages, job security, remote work, service levels, discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority, technological change, and the expanding use of artificial intelligence and surveillance.

The PA bargaining unit are on what is called the Conciliation-Strike route. This means that with impasse declared, we must follow the conciliation route outlined in the FPSLRA.

To begin, a Public Interest Commission (PIC) is appointed to help the parties reach a settlement and to issue non-binding recommendations. At the suggestion of either side, the Board may appoint a mediator to assist the teams in reaching an agreement. That is what has happened to date in this round. We have completed mediation without success. The Employer even tabled an insulting wage proposal.

After the PIC report and the observance of mandatory waiting periods, employees may strike. A strike vote would have to be completed and the PSAC national president would have to call for a strike. The essential services agreements would also have to be negotiated. Essential services means that the positions are necessary for the safety or security of the public.

This is the point at which visibly supporting our team becomes critical. Our team can use our support as leverage at the table to further push our bargaining agenda. Engaged members lead to stronger bargaining power and the possibility of a successful tentative agreement. Once a tentative agreement is reached, the strike would end and members would vote on ratification.

A GLANCE AT THE BARGAINING PROCESS

Treasury Board Bargaining: The Process at a Glance

Setting the stage for bargaining

Bargaining Input

Members are asked to submit bargaining input in advance of negotiations. Audit of the collective agreements by PSAC elected officers, staff and previous bargaining teams (e.g. the Program of Demands).

Bargaining Conference

The bargaining conference provides a forum to bargaining unit members for discussing bargaining input, provide feedback on bargaining priorities and develop initial mobilization strategies.

Election of Bargaining Team

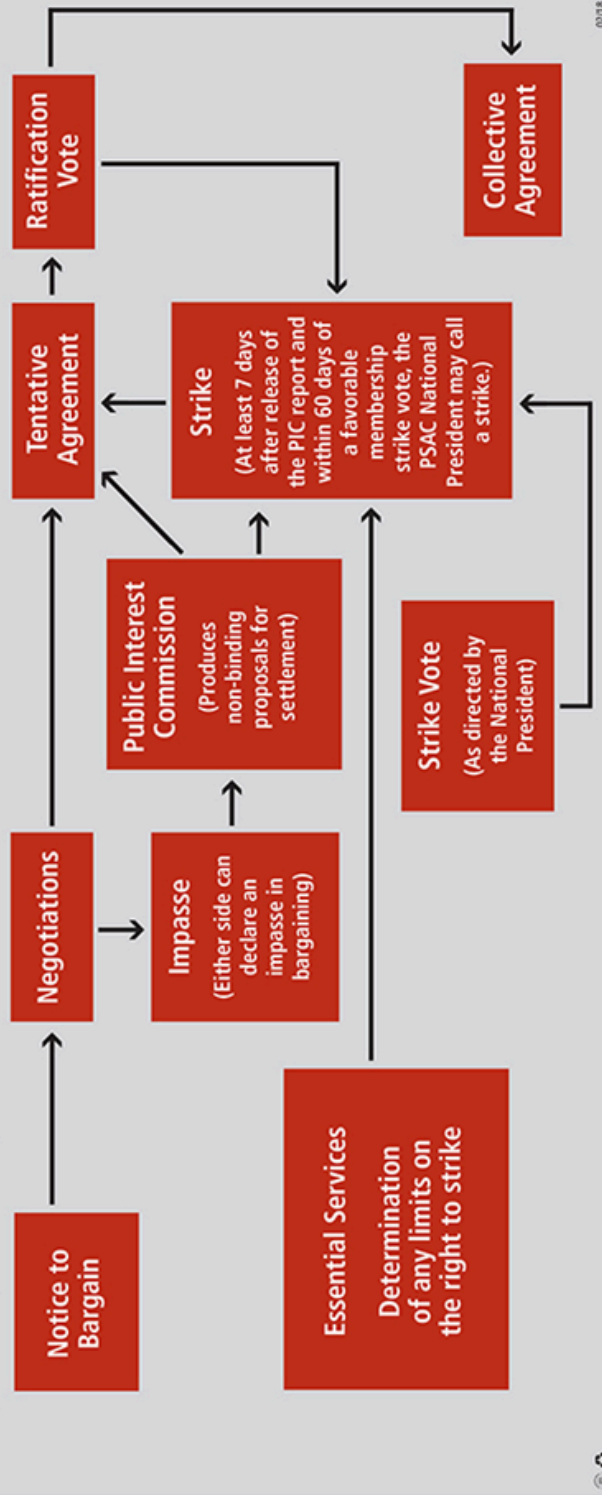
The bargaining teams are elected from the membership by the member activists from the bargaining unit at the national bargaining conference.

Finalization and Prioritization of Demands

Bargaining teams review the bargaining input and feedback from the national bargaining conference and compile a list of bargaining proposals to bring to the negotiations table.



Negotiation process at a glance



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EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY



Public Service Alliance of Canada
Alliance de la Fonction publique du Canada

Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC): Your Bargaining Agent

A bargaining agent is the union that is authorized to negotiate a collective agreement with an employer. Legally, the PSAC is the only entity that is authorized to negotiate on behalf of its members. The PSAC makes the decisions around bargaining with the elected team and communicates updates to the membership.

At the bargaining table, there are PSAC employees who are present and are the spokespeople at the bargaining table. They are responsible for communicating what the membership wants and counselling the bargaining team on decisions to be made at the table.

Canada Employment and Immigration Union (CEIU): Your Component



Components exist by virtue of the PSAC Constitution and its delegation of certain responsibilities. Components generally represent employees of specific departments and sectors.

At CEIU, we have members in three federal departments, ESDC, IRCC and IRB. For those members, we carry out representation – or grievances – all the way up to adjudication, where PSAC would take over. We also ensure that the Employer respects the Collective Agreement and work with the Employer to address working conditions in your work environment.

When it comes to bargaining, CEIU does its best to communicate any information that may be helpful. We are however required to only share what PSAC releases to the membership. If the information appears limited, the PSAC has made a strategic decision to only share some information and CEIU follows the bargaining agent's lead. We will mobilize and engage our members around bargaining, because members always want to know more about the process. It's important to know that this mobilization is done to support the PSAC at the bargaining table. You can always reach out to us for support on the ground and if we cannot help, we will ensure to find someone who can!

YOUR DEMANDS

One of the most common questions that we get is how PSAC decides what to bargain every round. It is a multi-layered process and is centered on the demands that come directly from the membership.

The demands originate from a process called the Input Call: PSAC sends a communication to all members asking for them to submit bargaining demands. Once the input period has ended, the demands are then sent to the components, like CEIU, to prioritize them. Each component receives the demands of their own members and has a different process on how to prioritize the demands that were submitted.

As per CEIU regulations, we are required to hold a bargaining conference every round. This allows us the opportunity to come together as a component and decide what the priorities are for CEIU members.

For this round of bargaining the sheer number of demands received from CEIU members was overwhelming. There would have been no way to prioritize that many demands. So, an internal committee was established to sort through, assess for relevance and decide on the top 40 demands to bring to the conference.

At the conference, CEIU members who were delegated by their region debated and defended bargaining demands to come out with the top priorities to submit to PSAC on behalf of the component. Every component is asked to submit the priorities and then the whole process is repeated at PSAC's Bargaining Conference where PA bargaining unit members from all ten components impacted are present.

Furthermore, the bargaining team, comprised of members from across the country, from different components, regions and equity groups are elected to the negotiating team by their peers at this conference.

In this kit, we're taking a step back to look at the top three priorities that CEIU members communicated during their conference: Wages, Telework and Call Centre working conditions.

WAGES

As we deal with global economic instability, the rising cost of living and very slow economic growth within our country, the need for a significant salary increase is at the top of the list for most members. Economists point to stable inflation numbers and lowering interest rates as positives, but members are still feeling the pinch at the grocery store, gas pump and even when negotiating mortgage rates.

For these reasons, wages are the number one priority of most of the membership for this round of bargaining. We understand, people want to stop losing their buying power year after year. Wage increases had been following inflation rates and keeping up with the economy over the life of our last collective agreement. However, with the economy slowing, employers have been increasingly cautious about their wage increases.

We need to fight for the recognition of the work that we do, the importance of the communities we support, and the well-being of CEIU members. This has societal value, that should be recognized.

A Few Things to Know About Monetary Demands



PSAC bargaining teams rarely talk publicly about wages during the bargaining process since monetary demands are often the last to be tabled.

Monetary demands in the bargaining process are proposals related to compensation, benefits, and any other aspect of a collective agreement that has a direct financial cost to the employer. Monetary demands can include leave entitlements, overtime, allowances, premiums, and even classification reviews. The idea is that there is only “one pot of money” and the Employer wants to know how each demand impacts that bottom line.

Therefore, if you have wondered during a previous round of bargaining why the team had not yet spoken about wage increases, it is very possible that they had not tabled monetary demands thus far.

At the end of the bargaining process, when we get to address monetary demands, this is often where most of the bargaining work is done. Our teams present the employer with a rationale, comparators (such as CRA), and often many justifications for the wage increase that is being tabled.



WHY TELEWORK MATTERS

Bargaining demands are often similar from one round to the next. The newest demand that ended up at the top of our list is the integration of the right to telework in our collective agreement.

In 2020, the world shut down, but people still needed to receive the services that you provide, such as EI or immigration supports. The show had to go on, so the government sent everyone home to work. The federal public service employees whose jobs could be completed from home did so. As public service employees, you not only survived but thrived. Even when the government announced a whole new program called CERB, you still met your performance requirements. You settled into a more affordable, more flexible life. You proved your worth in the middle of a global pandemic. However, no one knew that it would be a successful endeavour and change the reality of work.

Over the pandemic years, more research was done. Turns out that telework is beneficial to both employees and employers, as well as having a net positive impact on the environment.

For employees, there are many advantages to teleworking. The right to work in a hybrid environment leads to a better work-life balance, in particular when it comes to time savings, especially for those who are parents or those who provide caregiving in their home to a loved-one. Many employees speak of an increased sense of productivity combined with increased autonomy and reduced stress. There are also individual financial savings relating to commuting, parking as well as lunch expenses. As a part of the increased productivity, many, many members outline that there are far fewer distractions when working from home.

However, the added value is not only to employees. An increase in productivity as well as efficiency directly benefits the Employer and the Canadian public. With recent return to office announcements, there have been discussions regarding the space to welcome back employees. As we consider these mandates and the Comprehensive Expenditure Review (CER), the union looks to alternative avenues to find cost savings. We suggest that divesting some real estate assets would have an impact on cost savings and could play a role in the CER. Lastly, the government would also benefit from better retention and recruitment and access to a larger recruitment pool.

Beyond the impact on work and employees, telework has a net-positive impact on the environment. It reduces the government's carbon footprint, creates less traffic congestion and lowers energy consumption.

With the vast amount of research and studies that demonstrate the above, we need strong, clear language that allows everyone whose role is appropriate to access telework.

We have a significant proportion of our membership that works, or has worked, in call centres across the country. At the CEIU Bargaining Conference, delegates identified 40 second micro-breaks between calls as a priority demand for this round of bargaining.

History

In 2017, the PSAC and Treasury Board (TB) carried out a joint study on the work environment in Call Centres, pursuant to a Memorandum of Understanding in Appendix E of the PA Collective Agreement. The study concluded in June 2021, and the results were released in October 2021.

From this study, there were seven recommendations jointly agreed upon by PSAC and TB in October 2021. While these recommendations were unfortunately not binding, they clearly show the physical, mental and emotional challenges of working in call centres. The recommendations lay out a path to make changes in the work environment to protect the health and safety of call centre employees.

Of the seven recommendations, recommendation six outlined that cognitive micro-breaks, which are brief recovery periods from call answering activities, positively impacted employees stress management and reduced emotional labour.

The Fight for Micro-Breaks

In the last round of bargaining, the PA Team tabled a proposal around cognitive micro-breaks; “Employees working in call centres shall be provided with a minimum of a forty (40) second cognitive microbreak between calls.” The proposal was taken to the Public Interest Commission (PIC) and compelling arguments supporting this proposal were submitted. Ultimately the PIC recommended that “the parties undertake pilot studies in different departments and agencies to assess the impact of “respite time” of different lengths in different settings and take action in accordance with their findings.” Since then, TB has been unwilling to undertake this study, even after multiple attempts to have this discussed.

The Campaign “Breaks Beat Burnout”

After seeing the lack of consultation and movement on implementing micro-breaks for call centre employees, your National Call Centre Committee decided to take action. Most call centres within CEIU have only 10 seconds between calls. The campaign “Breaks Beat Burnout” is our way of fighting back. Micro-breaks are essential in improving performance by promoting relaxation and rest while reducing stress and burnout. In a work environment where calls are recorded, performance monitored down to the minute all while trying to deliver a crucial service to Canadians, call centre employees deserve to not be burnt out.

We ask members to wear the buttons supporting the campaign, talk to co-workers about the importance of micro-breaks between calls and support the PA bargaining team in their fight this round to secure micro-breaks for call centre members. The more members that show support, the better the chance we are successful at obtaining our demands.

YOUR ROLE IN BARGAINING

While there are a limited number of members at the bargaining table, every single member can play a role in advancing the bargaining process.

There are many ways to get involved:

- **Stay informed.** The easiest way to show your support is to stay updated on any information that is shared. Know the process and the steps and follow along throughout the process. Reading the communications that we or PSAC release is the most basic form of engagement.
- **Get more info!** This cycle we are holding regular town halls during bargaining. These sessions provide further information and allow members to ask questions! Watch our newsletters for announcements!
- **Use your lanyard.** We have produced lanyards that have a dry-erase section for the number of days without a contract. Change it every day so that it reflects reality. Remember that our collective agreement expired on June 20, 2025.
- **Use the swag and resources.** PSAC will more than likely produce some swag items to be worn or used in the coming year. A lot of members underestimate the impact and how closely the Employer is monitoring swag in the workplace. Furthermore, resources, like virtual backgrounds, will be created. Any use of these resources shows the Employer that you stand in solidarity.
- **Attend events.** If anything is organized around bargaining or bargaining issues, try your best to be present!
- **Have conversations.** If there are other members that have less knowledge than you, you should share and encourage them to do the same as you! Spreading the information received to your family, friends and community is a way of engaging around bargaining!
- **Invite your bargaining team members.** Encourage your local to invite your team members to any event that is being organized in your region!

At the end of the day, the people at the table know which actions will help them. If the bargaining team asks for action – do your best to show up!

They may ask for a National Day of Action, or even something on social media. They will ask for what they believe will have the biggest impact and demonstrate the most support for the team and show the Employer that members are paying attention to what is happening at the table!

The best way to avoid a work stoppage is to be prepared for one!

YOUR RIGHTS IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

CEIU (and PSAC members) have the right to promote and build our union in the workplace, and that includes the virtual workspace. Members have the right to be kept informed and take action during non-work time, before or after shifts and during paid and unpaid breaks and lunch periods.

You have the right to:

- Talk about the union. You can talk to co-workers about the union at work, including through virtual meetings, as you would any other subject — and help keep everyone informed about union activities.
- Share information. You can sign petitions, sign up for events, and share bargaining related information during non-working time. However, ensure that this is done via personal, non-work email accounts, rather than the Employer's email network.
- Wear the union message. You can wear buttons, lanyards, stickers, t-shirts and other items that communicate the union's message.
- Use a union virtual background or email signature. You can use a virtual background or email signature expressing support for your union and bargaining team. Avoid being critical of the employer's policies, focus on supporting the team.
- Attend rallies and mobilization events. You can take part in in-person rallies or other union events during your paid breaks as well as before or after work.

If management interferes with these rights or discourages you from exercising them, alert your local president or your National Vice-President.





BEING STRIKE-READY

There are a few things that you should know about striking, especially if this will be your first time.

If members vote to go on strike, you will receive strike pay for every day that you spend four hours on the picket line. You will not receive your regular paycheck for those days. However, if your position is deemed essential, then you would continue going to work and your paycheck would continue as normal.

There are many ways you can prepare for an upcoming strike. Your local will be doing the same.

You should consider:

- Make sure you have contact information on file with the union: this is important for both communications but also if you wish to receive strike pay.
- Know the issues: this will help you understand the process better.
- Consider putting some money aside now, if you can.

WHAT'S NEXT?

We will be following the process closely and communicating important information to our members.

Should we be heading for a work stoppage, we will also release more resources and provide training.

Make sure you're signed up to receive communications!

MEMBERS OF THE PA TEAM

The following three CEIU members sit on the PA bargaining team. They love to hear from members who are in the work environment or words of encouragement!



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