COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: THE ROLES OF THE AGRICULTURE UNION AND THE PSAC

The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) is the certified bargaining agent for all members of the Agriculture Union. As such, it is the PSAC that officially negotiates and signs collective agreements, letters of understanding, etc.

The Agriculture Union does, however, have an important role to play in this process. As well, our members should be very much involved in ensuring that better working conditions, improved benefits, job security and increased pay are achieved for our members. This can be achieved in a number of ways, such as providing input into bargaining demands from the local and regional level, sitting as a member of a bargaining committee and ultimately a negotiating team member and working to mobilize members during the negotiating process.

Regulation 15A (https://psacunion.ca/sites/psac/files/regulation_15a_-_2023_-_en.pdf), 15B (https://psacunion.ca/sites/psac/files/regulation_15b_-_2023_-_en.pdf) and 15C (https://psacunion.ca/sites/psac/files/regulation_15c_-_2023_-_en.pdf) of the PSAC Constitution sets out how the bargaining process for each bargaining unit or separate employer will be conducted. The Agriculture Union, in its own regulations (*Regulation 10* – Bargaining and Negotiations) (https://www.agrunion.com/wp-content/uploads/regulations_-_last_updated_september__2024_-_en.pdf) describes how we will assist in that process.

At the time this is written, the PSAC's step-by-step collective bargaining process is as follows:

- The senior PSAC Officer assigned to a particular bargaining unit will establish a Strike/Strategy Coordinating Committee (SCC) to provide strategic advice on bargaining, mobilization and strike mobilization. Ideally, the SCC will meet before notice to bargain has been sent to the employer.

- An initial negotiations timeline is established six months to a year before notice to

bargain is served.

- At least six months before notice to bargain is served, or at such time established on the bargaining timeline, the PSAC will send out the call for bargaining input from the members in the bargaining unit. Once an ‘input call’ has been issued for a particular group or bargaining unit, Agriculture Union Locals must establish a Bargaining Demands Committee. This Committee has the critical role of soliciting membership input as to which issues should be pursued at the upcoming round of negotiations.

While there are many issues which our members would like addressed, it is the responsibility of us all to propose demands which will have the greatest chance of success. A ‘wish list’ simply takes our collective eye off the major issues. The Local bargaining committee also ensures that only one demand is submitted to the Agriculture Union for each article. It is also imperative that these are submitted with a complete rationale and justification for its proposal.

The Agriculture Union National Office reviews, amends and/or supplements proposals and forwards them to the PSAC Negotiations Section.

Agriculture Union representatives and alternates to PSAC Bargaining Conferences are elected at our Regional Seminars. Delegates must be members of one of the bargaining units, must work in the designated area and hold a Union position.

For Treasury Board members, delegates attend the PSAC Regional Bargaining Conferences where elections are held to establish who will represent the members at the PSAC National Bargaining Conference where the Negotiation Teams will be elected.

For CFIA members, delegates attend a National Bargaining Conference where the Negotiation Team will be elected.

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