



3.2 Collective Bargaining - Negotiations

6B. Ontario Public Service (OPS)

Negotiations Procedures - Unified

1. Bargaining Better Contracts

- 1.1 These procedures apply to all members in the Unified bargaining unit in the OPS.
- 1.2 Bargaining better contracts for the OPS Unified Division requires a mobilized membership. Every Local in the OPS Unified will participate as much as they can in organizing and mobilizing their members.
- 1.3 OPSEU/SEFPO's fundamental goal in collective bargaining is to improve the wages and working conditions of its members.
- 1.4 Collective bargaining is a continuous cycle with three main (and overlapping) phases. The enforcement phase is continuous. The demand-setting phase occurs in the year prior to negotiations. The negotiations phase extends from the election of the bargaining teams to the final signing of the ratified collective agreement. The purpose of these Ontario Public Service (OPS) bargaining procedures is to guide members by providing clear goals, roles, and rules for each phase of the cycle.
 - 1.4.1. The demand setting phase is continuous. Demands that arise during the term of the Collective Agreement should be forwarded for inclusion in the formal demand setting survey prior to bargaining using the process in these procedures. Demand setting will be held in the year prior to the end of the current Collective Agreement. Demand setting training for Locals will be conducted by the Area Coordinating Groups.

2. Roles and Structures

2.1 The members

The power to set the union's overall bargaining agenda rests with the members at the local level. All members are expected to participate actively, through their local, in all phases of the bargaining cycle regardless of job status.

"Job status" means members' status as full-time classified, regular-part time classified, flexible part-time, full-time fixed term, part-time fixed term, seasonal or student workers.

2.2 The bargaining categories

The bargaining categories included in the Unified bargaining unit (commonly referred to as "categories") are:

- Administrative
- Institutional and Health Care
- Office Administration
- Technical/Operational and Maintenance.

2.3 The locals

Locals with members in the Unified bargaining unit are responsible for ensuring that all affected members participate in each phase of the bargaining cycle. Locals should be forwarding their demands and enforcement issues to the Area Coordinating Group for their Region and the effected Ministry Employee Relations Committee for the effected Ministry.

2.4 Ministry Employee Relations Committee (MERC)

The MERCs are responsible to enforce and negotiate working conditions between bargaining cycles for

their Ministries. They are supporting Locals throughout the Province and assisting in communicating issues to the Area Coordinating Groups. MERCs will keep a list of enforcement issues and demands that have been brought to them for consideration and negotiation by their members. This list will be provided to the CERC to be included in the demand setting process.

2.5 Central Employee Relations Committee (CERC)

The CERC will be responsible to implement the bargaining procedures prior to the election of the bargaining team.

The MERCs, Area Coordinating Groups and mobilizers will be used to assist in the implementation of these procedures.

The organization of the demand setting phase, regional bargaining team elections and provincial bargaining team elections will be coordinated by CERC.

CERC will design the demand setting training, survey and information sharing processes.

Staff will be assigned to ensure this process.

2.6 Bargaining Team

- 2.6.1. OPSEU/SEFPO members in the OPS Unified bargaining unit are represented in the negotiations phase by an elected bargaining team.
- 2.6.2. The Unified team bargains all issues, including category issues, for all members within the bargaining unit.
- 2.7. To be elected to an OPS Unified bargaining team, a member must have been an OPSEU/SEFPO steward or a member of a MERC/LERC/RERC/H&S Committee for at least twelve months prior to their election.
 - 2.7.1. Members who have held positions outside the bargaining unit within the previous 12 months are not eligible to run for the bargaining team. Members who have not continuously held positions within the bargaining unit within the previous 12 months are not eligible to run for the bargaining team, with the exception of those who take positions with OPSEU/SEFPO.
 - 2.7.2. The Unified team shall consist of fifteen (15) OPS members:
 - a) one (1) member elected to represent each OPSEU/SEFPO region;
 - b) one (1) member elected to represent each of these categories: Institutional and Health Care; and Technical/Operational/Maintenance;
 - c) two (2) members elected to represent each of these categories: Administrative and Office Administration;
 - d) one (1) member elected to represent fixed term members;
 - e) Chair of the Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee (CERC) or designee from the CERC.
 - 2.7.3. The President of OPSEU/SEFPO or their designee is recognized as a member of all bargaining teams and shall participate in bargaining when necessary.
 - 2.7.4. The bargaining team will elect, from among its members, a chair and a vice-chair.
 - 2.7.5. The bargaining team chair shall:
 - chair all meetings of the team
 - authorize (along with the president of OPSEU/SEFPO) all negotiation bulletins from the team to the members;

- be responsible for the orderly conduct and discipline of the team; and
 - have voice and vote.
 - create agendas, call meetings of the bargaining team, call meetings of Local Presidents or highest ranking members (virtually)
- 2.7.6. To assist the fixed term representative(s) on the Central/Unified team, a working group of fixed term members shall be formed. The group shall include elected regional fixed term representatives, who shall foster communication between fixed term members and the bargaining team and help mobilize fixed term members in support of the team. The OPS negotiations budget shall provide adequate funds for the effective mobilization of fixed term members.

The vice chair would assume the Chair if the chair is unable to continue. A new election for the vacant vice chair position would take place.

- 2.7.7. Elected alternates only sit on bargaining teams if the regular member is permanently unable to continue. The same rule applies to the replacement of the first alternate by the second and the second by the third. If the member being replaced was the chair or vice-chair of a team, the alternate does not automatically assume that position.

2.8 Area Coordinating Groups (ACGs)

- 2.8.1. During the negotiations phase, locals within a geographical area shall work together to support each other and the bargaining team throughout the bargaining process. Locals shall form "Area Coordinating Groups" (also known as "clusters") to do this work. ACGs are an essential part of the OPS unified bargaining unit. They will operate during all phases of the bargaining cycle and will be supported by the Regional EBMs and assigned Staff Representatives. ACGs will meet at least quarterly to discuss current issues and ideas for campaigns, shared challenges and opportunities to mobilize in the workplace.
- 2.8.2. Each ACG shall consist of bargaining team alternates and OPS local presidents (or their designees) from the area.
- 2.8.3. Assigned staff and Executive Board Members from the region shall provide help, support, and direction to the ACGs as needed. The ACG will elect a chair and vice chair at their first meeting. These positions will be filled by election when vacancies occur. The Vice chair automatically takes the chair's position if the chair steps down. The Chair will set agendas, call meetings at least quarterly and ensure minutes are kept of the meetings.
- 2.8.4. Bargaining team members will become members of the ACG in their region after a new Collective Agreement has been ratified.
- 2.8.5. ACGs will work with the Provincial Coordinating Group to ensure fast, accurate, two-way communication between local mobilizing committees and the bargaining team.
- 2.8.6. ACGs will be called on to assist with campaigns led by the Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee.
- 2.8.7. Within thirty (30) days of the ratification of the renewed collective agreement, all the ACGs in each region shall have a virtual meeting with the regional elected bargaining rep and regional mobilizers to debrief the recently completed round of negotiations. Any recommendations arising from the debrief will be sent to the Contract Negotiations Division and the CERC immediately following the teleconference.

2.9 Provincial Coordinating Group (PCG)

- 2.9.1. During the negotiations phase, the bargaining team shall establish a Provincial Coordinating Group (PCG) to coordinate member mobilization in support of the bargaining team. The PCGs will be established after the team has been elected.
- 2.9.2. The PCG is responsible for providing overall strategic direction and making decisions regarding mobilizing and member activities during the negotiations phase. The PCG will be made up of:
 - a) Chairs of the Area Coordinating Groups
 - b) The chair and vice-chair of the bargaining team;
 - c) Staff and additional members as assigned
- 2.9.3. The PCG shall be chaired by the Chair of bargaining team or their designee.
- 2.9.4. The chair of the bargaining team will have the authority to call a meeting of the PCG at any time during the negotiations phase.
- 2.9.5. As soon as possible but no later than sixty (60) days after the ratification of the renewed collective agreement, the bargaining team and the PCG shall meet to debrief the recently completed round of negotiations and to review the recommendations from the ACG debriefings. This meeting will occur at Head Office.
- 2.9.6. The PCG shall request resources from OPSEU/SEFPO to book off and train up to 27 member mobilizers to support the work of the bargaining team.

2.10 Employee Relations Committees

The Ministry Employee Relations Committees are the Divisional Executive for their Ministry committees.

- 2.10.1. Improving the wages and working conditions of members is not limited to the negotiation of new collective agreements. Contract enforcement is a vital part of the union's work. In addition, issues may arise that are not covered by the collective agreement, e.g., shift schedules, local details of compressed work week arrangements, and so on. It is the job of OPSEU/SEFPO's Employee Relations Committees (ERCs) to enforce the collective agreement, help identify needed improvements, deal with special cases and negotiate with the employer on issues outside the scope of the existing contract.
- 2.10.2. During the negotiation phase with the employer, Employee Relations Committees may not propose or agree to any measures that conflict with the collective agreement.
- 2.10.3. The CERC is recognized as the central leadership group for members in the OPS bargaining unit. Notwithstanding this, the CERC shall take direction from the bargaining team on issues relating to contract negotiations during the negotiations phase.
- 2.10.4. The role of ERCs is further discussed in Article 16 of the OPS collective agreement, where they are referred to as "Employee Relations Committees."

No ERC shall meet with the employer once Notice to Bargain has been sent by either party unless authorized to do so by the bargaining team Chair. Any agreements reached at an ERC meeting during bargaining must be sent to the bargaining team for approval before being signed.

3. Bargaining Timeline

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1 As a general goal, OPSEU/SEFPO bargaining teams shall work to achieve a new collective agreement prior to the expiry of the existing one.

3.1.2 During demand setting and negotiations, OPSEU/SEFPO members and staff shall follow the steps outlined in the OPS Unified bargaining timeline (Appendix 1). Where employer actions affect this timeline, staff and bargaining teams shall use their discretion to achieve the goals set out in these procedures.

The CERC will ensure that the timelines for preparing for bargaining are followed. OPSEU/SEFPO will provide the necessary resources to achieve these timelines.

3.1.3 Enforcement of the collective agreement is an ongoing union activity. It happens prior to, during, and after the demand-setting and negotiations phases of the bargaining cycle.

3.1.4 Prior to the start of demand setting, all OPS locals covered by the Unified collective agreement shall conduct a canvass of all worksites to record the number of members in each, the type of service provided to the public, the job status of members, the number of new members, the number of grievances filed in the worksite, and other information that may aid in the negotiation of the new contract.

Area Coordinating Groups will provide instruction, information and support to locals prior to help them conduct the canvass of worksites.

3.2. Demand Setting Survey and Local Demand Setting Meeting

3.2.1. At least eighteen (18) months prior to the expiry of the Collective Agreement the ACGs will meet to discuss and make recommendations on the content of the demand setting survey and information for the training of Locals for demand setting. ACGs will provide training to Locals on the demand setting process and will be a Regional resource for the Division.

3.2.2. At least fourteen (14) months before the contract expires, staff and MERCs shall provide their written input, to the Contract Negotiations Division, on issues needing resolution in the upcoming round of bargaining. CERC will schedule an all MERC Chairs meeting specifically to solicit input for the demand setting survey.

3.2.3. At least thirteen (13) months before the contract expires, a tele-townhall will be scheduled to provide members with a report on the bargaining climate and key contract enforcement issues as well as information about the demand-setting survey. Members will be given three (3) working days after the virtual meeting to make suggestions about the content of the survey.

3.2.4. At least eleven (11) months before the contract expires, all members in the Unified bargaining unit including members in good standing on regular seasonal, and/or short-term layoff, will be invited to participate in an on-line demand-setting survey. The results from the survey will constitute the bargaining demands and they will be distributed to all affected OPS Locals at least nine (9) months before the contract expires. In special circumstances, such as remote locations where members do not have easy access to the internet, with approval from the OPSEU/SEFPO President, surveys will be mailed to members on request. Local presidents and highest ranking will be provided with the breakdown for their Local. CERC will be provided with the breakdown for every Local.

3.2.5. At least ten (10) months before the contract expires, the survey results, indicating the top demands, will

be distributed to all locals with members in the Unified bargaining unit. At the same time, the local will be provided with a template for completing the priorities and minutes of the demand- setting meeting. Area Coordinating groups will provide support for Locals during the demand setting process.

- 3.2.6. Within six (6) weeks of distribution the survey results will be reviewed by the membership of each local at a demand setting meeting. For clarity, a member subject to regular, seasonal, an/or short- term layoffs, may remain in good standing for up to one year, and may attend the demand setting meeting. At the same meeting, the local will elect their category delegate(s) to the Regional Bargaining Conference based on Convention formula per category. The union will provide locals with a copy of the OPS bargaining procedures, meeting facilitation notes, report-back forms, instructions on how to elect delegates to the Regional Bargaining Conference, and local mobilizing committee information. Area Coordinating Groups will assist in mobilizing members and staff will be available to help ensure that meetings are effectively run.
- 3.2.7. Quorum for local demand setting meetings shall be as specified in Article 29.8.2 of the OPSEU/SEFPO Constitution, based on the number of OPS Unified members in the local. No quorum is required for the category meetings described in Article 3.2.9 and 3.2.1. For clarity, lack of quorum does not preclude holding delegate and alternate elections.
- 3.2.8. At the local demand setting meeting, the local shall first meet as a whole for a general discussion of the provincial demand setting survey.
- 3.2.9. The meeting shall then break into bargaining categories, each of which shall:
 - a) Discuss category issues,
 - b) Elect delegates and alternates to represent the category at the regional bargaining conference, according to the convention formula, except that the local president is not an automatic delegate from their category.
- 3.2.10. Members wishing to stand for election who are unable to attend the meeting must provide a signed letter confirming their willingness to stand. A copy of such letter must be included with the local minutes.
- 3.2.11. All positions, including alternates, must be elected by a majority (more than 50 per cent of those voting), with runoff ballots if necessary.
- 3.2.12. Alternates must be elected separately from delegates. Where a category is entitled to more than one alternate, they shall be ranked.
- 3.2.13. All OPS members in the Unified bargaining unit in good standing have equal rights to run for election as delegates and alternates.
- 3.2.14. Following the category meetings, the fixed term members shall meet to elect one of their members as a delegate to attend the Regional Bargaining Conference in addition to the local's regular entitlement. They shall also elect one (1) alternate.
- 3.2.15. Following the category and fixed term meetings, the local shall reconvene as a whole to:
 - a) Discuss category issues, including wages,
 - b) Identify the local's top demands in conjunction with the survey results.
- 3.2.16. Within two (2) working days after the local demand-setting meeting, locals shall forward their priorities along with minutes of the demand-setting meeting, to their OPSEU/SEFPO regional office. Priorities will only be considered official if they are adopted by the local, signed by two officers of the local, and accompanied by the minutes of the demand-setting meeting. Minutes must be signed by two officers of

the local to be official. Regional office staff will date-stamp and vet priorities to ensure that they meet these conditions. No later than two (2) weeks after the last demand-setting meeting, all materials (electronic and original paper copies) shall then be sent to the Contract Negotiations Division and the CERC.

- 3.2.17. Provincial priorities shall be tabulated and distributed to the bargaining team on their first caucus day. The survey results, as prioritized by the locals, will set the union's priorities for the new collective agreement. The bargaining team may identify additional demands that may arise as a result of special circumstances that impact negatively on the bargaining unit after the completion of the survey.

3.3 Essential and Emergency Services Bargaining for Unified Bargaining Unit

- 3.3.1. As per the OPSEU/SEFPO strike policy, the union will only bargain essential and emergency service (EES) levels where required by law. The union's bargaining goal will be, in all cases, to minimize the number of EES workers and to include management offsets to allow the union to have a meaningful strike. The union will, in all cases, look for ways to enhance the participation of EES workers in any strike to help make it a meaningful strike.
- 3.3.2. Area Coordinating Groups will assist locals in providing the necessary information for EES negotiations. Staff Reps. assigned to the OPS Unified will assist. OPSEU/SEFPO staff shall provide local presidents and unit stewards with copies of the EES agreements used in their locals during the last round of bargaining. If no EES agreement was negotiated in the previous round and no EES agreement has been negotiated within the last five (5) years, a blank template will be provided.
- 3.3.3. All locals with OPS members in the Unified bargaining unit shall canvass each worksite in the local to record workplace contact information, the minimum number of staff needed to provide essential and emergency services, and the minimum number of essential and emergency tasks. Staff shall provide advice and assistance to the locals as required.
- 3.3.4. No later than five (5) months before the contract expires, each local shall submit an EES report to its OPSEU/SEFPO regional office. Regional office staff shall review all reports and provide additional comments or notes.
- 3.3.5. No later than one (1) week following the deadline in 3.4.4, regional office staff shall forward all EES reports to the Contract Negotiations Division and the CERC.
- 3.3.6. The Contract Negotiations Division shall review all EES reports and provide additional comments or notes for the OPS Unified Bargaining team.
- 3.3.7. Before essential services bargaining begins, the OPS Unified Bargaining team will be brought in for training. Following training, the EES team shall review the EES reports from the locals and, in consultation with the locals, make such changes as the team deems necessary. If bargaining has commenced, the issues bargaining team shall return to the workplace or be assigned to mobilizing as determined by the PCG/President.
- 3.3.8. The OPS Unified Bargaining team shall present the union's EES proposals to the employer at a time determined in consultation with the Unified bargaining team. EES agreements are to be completed as soon as reasonably possible in advance of issues bargaining. The OPS Unified Bargaining team will deal with any disputes related to EES agreements and shall determine the timing of the distribution of eligibility lists to worksites.
- 3.3.9 All members selected to perform essential and emergency services shall receive specific training on how EES workers can support their bargaining teams during a work stoppage.

3.4. Regional Bargaining Conferences

- 3.4.1. A Regional Bargaining Conference shall be held in each OPSEU/SEFPO region on a Saturday no later than nine (9) months before the collective agreement expires.
- 3.4.2. Delegates to the Regional Bargaining Conferences are elected at the local demand-setting meetings by category as per Convention formula. Elected alternates may attend with voice but no vote, at the expense of the local. The alternate may only replace a voting delegate if replacing the delegate permanently.
- 3.4.3. The highest-ranking available OPS member in the region shall chair the regional bargaining conference. For clarity, members of the Central Employee Relations Committee and Ministry Employee Relations Committees are included in this ranking. A MERC Chair or Vice Chair may chair this meeting. The conference will be chaired by the RVP or their designate, if a region has no CERC or MERC member in their region.
- 3.4.4. The agenda of each Regional Bargaining Conference shall include:
 - Election of a regional representative and three (3) alternates to the bargaining team;
 - Election of a delegate to the Central Bargaining Conference and one (1) alternate, for each Unified bargaining category (Administrative; Office Administration; Institutional and Health Care; and Technical/Operational/Maintenance);
 - Election of a fixed term delegate and one (1) alternate to attend the Central Bargaining Conference;
- 3.4.5. Regional Bargaining Conferences do not have a mandate to set demands or establish bargaining priorities.
- 3.4.6. All positions, including alternates, must be elected by majority vote (more than 50 per cent of those voting), with separate elections held for each position and runoff ballots as necessary. For clarity, delegates can only vote or run for the category or fixed-term for which they are elected by their local.
- 3.4.7. Following the election of the regional bargaining team member and alternates, delegates and alternates shall meet by category to elect the category delegates and alternates to the Central Bargaining Conference.
- 3.4.8. At the same time as the category meetings, fixed term delegates shall meet to elect their delegate and alternate to the Central Bargaining Conference.
- 3.4.9. All delegates to the Regional Bargaining Conferences shall receive training in the steps to be taken to support the bargaining teams. Area Coordinating Groups will provide information, instruction and support to all delegates to the Regional Bargaining Conference. CERC and the Area Coordinating Groups will meet prior to the regional bargaining conferences to develop this training in conjunction with the education department.

3.5. Central Bargaining Conference

- 3.5.1. The Central Bargaining Conference shall be held in Toronto on a Saturday two (2) weeks after the Regional Bargaining Conferences.
- 3.5.2. Delegates to the Central Bargaining Conference are the category and fixed-term representatives elected at the Regional Bargaining Conferences. Alternates elected at the Regional Bargaining Conference may

attend the central meeting only in the absence of the respective elected regional delegate. Regional representatives on the bargaining team and the CERC Chair shall also attend but they are not entitled to vote in the election of the category or fixed-term representatives.

- 3.5.3 The Chair of the Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee shall chair the Central Bargaining Conference.
- 3.5.4 The agenda for the Central Bargaining Conference shall include election of a representative from each of the four categories and one fixed term representative to the bargaining team and three (3) alternates for each position.
- 3.5.5 Elections at the Central Bargaining Conference follow the same rules as elections at the Regional Bargaining Conferences.
- 3.5.6 Category and fixed term delegates shall meet in their respective groups to elect bargaining team members, as follows:
 - The Institutional and Health Care, and Technical/Operational/Maintenance categories shall each elect one (1) bargaining team member and three (3) alternates to the team.
 - The Administrative and Office Administration categories shall each elect two (2) bargaining team members and five (5) alternates for each category to the team
 - Fixed term delegates shall elect one (1) member and three (3) alternates to the team.
- 3.5.7 Upon completion of the central elections the bargaining team is complete, consisting of the CERC Chair, or designee, regional, category and fixed-term representatives. At the end of the Conference, the fifteen (15) members of the bargaining team shall elect the Chair and Vice-Chair of the team.

4. Member Support for the Bargaining Teams

4.1. Mobilization

- 4.1.1. Each local shall form a Mobilizing Committee. The job of the committee is to assist and support the bargaining teams with member mobilization through the demand setting and negotiations phases. The Area Coordinating Group will provide support to Locals with campaigns and tasks for the Local mobilization committees to do.
- 4.1.2 The committee is responsible for two-way communication between the members of the local and (through the ACGs and the PCG) the bargaining teams. Area Coordinating Groups will hold meetings regularly and will invite members of the Local Mobilizing committees. These meetings will take place at least quarterly during the contract enforcement phase and more often during the demand setting and bargaining phase of negotiations.
- 4.1.3 In the event that the bargaining team calls a strike vote, the committee in conjunction with the Local Executive Committee, shall hold a General Membership Meeting to inform all members of the issues in bargaining and the recommendations of the team. Area Coordinating Group members will be available to attend meetings if requested.
- 4.1.4 The local is responsible for funding the work of the Mobilizing Committee. OPSEU/SEFPO will provide materials for mobilizing.
- 4.1.5 An educational program will be delivered by qualified staff and/or member instructors to

- 4.1.6 Following the election of the bargaining team, twenty-seven (27) mobilizers shall be recruited and trained and begin mobilizing the membership.

4.2 Communication

- 4.2.1 A strong bond of communication between the bargaining teams and the members is critical to successful negotiations. Throughout the bargaining process, the union will communicate directly with members through bulletins. Publications shall be produced by Communications staff in consultation with team chairs and assigned staff negotiators. All publications shall be authorized for distribution by the team chair, the assigned staff negotiators, and the President of OPSEU/SEFPO.
- 4.2.2 To ensure two-way communication between the teams and the members, team members shall communicate regularly with the Area Coordinating Groups and vice versa. ACGs shall communicate regularly with local Mobilizing Committees.
- 4.2.3 If, upon signing a tentative collective agreement, a team member dissents from the team's recommendation, the dissent will be noted in a negotiations bulletin.
- 4.2.4 Contact information for the bargaining team will be published.

4.3 Local Presidents' Meeting

- 4.3.1 The OPSEU/SEFPO President, in consultation with the elected bargaining team and the Provincial Coordinating Group, shall call a Local Presidents' meeting and/or have virtual meetings to inform affected OPS local presidents about bargaining issues and to discuss strategy. Hybrid meeting options will be available.
- 4.3.2 Any meeting shall be held in the Greater Toronto area (GTA) on a Saturday prior to any strike vote.
- 4.3.3 The agenda for the meeting will be determined by the bargaining team in consultation with the Provincial Coordinating Group. **The meeting will be chaired by the Bargaining team Chair or designate.**
- 4.3.4 All bargaining team members and the highest ranking OPS officer in the Unified bargaining unit from each local shall be entitled to attend the Local Presidents' meeting as delegates. Elected alternates may attend, if funded by their own local.

5. Contract Bargaining

- 5.1 Negotiations will take place in the Greater Toronto area (GTA). A hybrid option will be available.
- 5.2 All bargaining team members shall receive specific training on bargaining strategy and the Solidarity and Dissent policy.
- 5.3 To achieve the best possible collective agreement, the bargaining team, working with assigned staff, shall analyze the forces working for and against the bargaining unit in the current round of bargaining. This analysis shall evaluate the strength of the OPS members in the Unified bargaining unit and their allies, the employer and its allies, service users, the community, the news media, municipal and provincial politicians, current events, and so on. The team shall pay particular attention to the timing of strike votes and strike deadlines.
- 5.4 The bargaining team shall begin negotiations towards a new collective agreement at least six weeks before the contract expires as long as EES bargaining has been completed and will continue until an agreement

or impasse is reached.

6. Ratification/Strike Votes

- 6.1. Any collective agreement negotiated in the name of the union with the employer must be ratified by the members and signed by the members of the team and the president of OPSEU/SEFPO.
- 6.2. When a tentative collective agreement is reached, or a strike mandate is sought as a result of an impasse, there shall be a provincial in-person/hybrid option Unified Local Presidents meeting. In addition each region shall hold information/vote meetings of the affected OPS members. The OPS Unified Bargaining Team Chair, in conjunction with the regional bargaining team members, is responsible for calling the meetings within the time requested by the teams. All locals shall receive at least three days' notice before the meeting date. The OPS Unified Bargaining Team Chair shall consult with the ACGs before setting meeting dates, times and locations.
- 6.3. All ratification votes will take place using electronic voting. Locals can identify special circumstances where electronic voting creates barriers for their members. In these circumstances, OPSEU/SEFPO will provide an alternate method to cast a vote.
- 6.4. When a tentative collective agreement is reached by the bargaining team, team members must support the decision of the bargaining teams. Where a team member has communicated a different message than they agreed on at the time of the tentative agreement, unless they have voiced their dissent to the team and the staff negotiator, they will immediately be removed from the team.
- 6.5. OPS Unified members shall have access to a written summary of the proposed contract changes, or in the case of a bargaining impasse, a summary of the issues and/or offer to be voted on. The summary will be posted on OPSEU/SEFPO's website.
- 6.6. The purpose of information/vote meetings is to explain the proposed contract changes and their impact on members. The meetings shall be conducted by a knowledgeable person, e.g., a local president, a bargaining team member, or an OPSEU/SEFPO staff member. Members shall be encouraged to ask questions and discuss the changes prior to the vote. It is recommended that the Regional Bargaining Team member or other Bargaining Team member attend these information meetings. Hybrid meeting options will be provided.
- 6.7. In the case of a vote to reject a tentative settlement, the union shall make it clear to members that a rejection also constitutes a strike mandate for the team.
- 6.8. Members who have not provided their information prior to the ratification vote will be provided an opportunity to sign up for an electronic ballot. The employer should be asked to allow the use of the work email system to circulate this information.
- 6.9. Non-members are entitled to vote on a tentative collective agreement. Membership in OPS Unified bargaining unit must be verified.
- 6.10. A meeting will be held in each region after the ratification vote to review the regional totals. Local Presidents or their designate can attend this meeting. This meeting will be held within 24 hours of the close of the ratification vote. The purpose of this meeting is to scrutinize the vote totals in each region.
- 6.11. The results of the vote will be sent via email to the President or highest ranking OPS Unified member in each Local. The results will include the number of ballots cast for, against and spoiled.
- 6.12. The names of the members who were present for the meeting scheduled to scrutinize the vote will be

- recorded and kept at the Regional Office for at least 30 days.
- 6.13 The Regional Office vote result shall be forwarded by e-mail to the Contract Negotiations Division where a tally by local will be kept.
 - 6.14 When all results have been tabulated, they shall be communicated first to the OPSEU/SEFPO President and bargaining team, then to the regional offices and then to the local presidents, who will ensure that the results are communicated to their members. Only the provincial results are released.
 - 6.15 A member has five (5) business days after the results are posted to the OPSEU/SEFPO website to allege that these voting procedures were not followed. The OPSEU/SEFPO Executive Committee shall investigate the complaint and decide whether or not the vote shall be overturned. In making this decision, the President shall only order a new vote when, in their opinion, the failure to comply with the procedures has materially affected the outcome of the vote.

OPS bargaining timelines

At Least 18 months before expiry	• ACG's will meet to discuss content of demand survey and information on training for locals for demand setting
At least 14 months before expiry	• MERCs and staff provide their written input for demand-setting survey to Contract Negotiations Division • CERC to schedule an All MERC Chairs Meeting specifically to solicit input for the Demand Setting Survey
At least 13 months before expiry	• Preparation of enforcement issues materials and draft demand-setting survey • A virtual meeting on key contract enforcement issues and information about upcoming survey
At least 11 months before expiry	• Members invited to participate in on-line demand-setting survey
At least 10 months before expiry	• Survey results indicating top demands distributed to all affected OPS locals • Locals receive essential and emergency services (EES) agreements from previous round for comment/revision
At least 9 months before expiry	• Regional Bargaining Conferences to elect regional category and fixed-term delegates to Central Bargaining Conference; regional bargaining team members; and alternates for all regional reps. • Central Bargaining Conference to elect category and fixed-term members to the bargaining team and alternates • The results from the survey will be to affected OPS locals • Local presidents will be provided with their locals break down • CERC will be provided with breakdown for every local
At least 7.5 months before expiry	• Local demand-setting meetings to be held for prioritizing top ten demands identified through the survey and for election of delegates to Regional Bargaining Conferences and alternates
At least 7 months before expiry	• Priorities to be submitted to regional office along with minutes of local demand-setting meeting within two days of meeting
At least 5 months before expiry	• Deadline for locals to submit EES reports to regional offices and to be sent to Contract Negotiations Division to be shared with Unified Bargaining Team
At least 4 months before expiry	• Deadline for regional office staff to forward EES reports to OPSEU/SEFPO Head Office
At least 3 months before expiry	• Bargaining team training • Team commences formulation of proposals
Within last 3 months before expiry	• Notice to Bargain submitted • Team tables opening proposals with employer when EES is complete • Issues bargaining starts only when EES is complete