

## FAQ: Joining central bargaining

### What is central bargaining in simple terms? How is it different than bargaining for CUPE 5001?

CUPE 5001 negotiates a collective agreement (or contract) directly with the University Hospital Network.

Most other CUPE Locals – 52 to be precise – in the hospital sector negotiate as a group of unions that are all affiliated with the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU-CUPE).

OCHU bargains centrally with the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA), which represents the hospitals.

Note that **CUPE Locals in central bargaining also negotiate Local issues** directly with their employer.

### What is the difference between central and local issues bargaining?

Central bargaining covers a broad range of items including general wage increases, benefits and vacation entitlements, shift premiums, job security and contracting out language.

Local issues bargaining pertains to wage adjustments, scheduling, local committee formation, uniform allowances, protective equipment, union leave and much more.

### What is the benefit of joining central bargaining versus bargaining independently?

The agreement reached at the OCHU-CUPE central table (representing about 40,000 workers) sets the pattern for the rest of the hospital sector. CUPE Locals that bargain independently thereby tend to match the provisions of the central agreement, as part of an informal “me too” clause.

The rationale here is that if the two parties - the CUPE Local and the hospital employer – are not able to negotiate a settlement, the collective agreement is determined by an arbitrator.

Arbitrators tend to replicate what has already been achieved in the sector. Therefore, the OCHU-CUPE settlement typically sets the standard for CUPE hospital Locals.

**Here's an example:** In the 2021-23 agreement, OCHU/CUPE was awarded a 8.25% wage increase over two years. In the ensuing bargaining for CUPE Hospital Locals, no union exceeded the 8.25% improvement in wages. At the same time, no employer could reasonably deny the CUPE Local the centrally awarded wage increases.

Thereby, resources spent by CUPE Locals on bargaining independently may be allocated elsewhere.

**Strength in numbers:** The OCHU-CUPE central bargaining team negotiates in close partnership with the central bargaining teams of SEIU and Unifor, with the three unions representing more than **65,000 members** cumulatively.

The **tri-union coalition** wages strong public campaigns premised on improving health care through investment in good working conditions for staff.

The campaigns employ a range of tactics including media relations, rallies, info picketing, social media communications, and more to advance the interests of staff and the public alike.

The campaigns by OCHU-CUPE are strengthened by the addition of more members to the coalition.

### How does OCHU-CUPE set priorities for central bargaining?

POCHU-CUPE undertakes a robust consultative process to set priorities for central bargaining including:

- Membership surveys
- Consultation with union leaders at regional meetings across the province
- Democratic voting and discussion on central priorities at OCHU's bargaining convention
- Feedback and input from a team of CUPE National staff representatives who provide expertise in research, legal matters, health and safety, and communications.

### How would I participate in the membership survey for central bargaining?

POCHU sends the survey to the leaders of every Local union participating in central bargaining. You will receive multiple emails from your union leaders inviting you to participate. The survey link is also posted on OCHU-CUPE's social media channels and its website.

### Who sits on the bargaining committee of the OCHU-CUPE central table?

The central bargaining committee comprises the 11 OCHU-CUPE executive board members plus CUPE National staff representatives.

### How can CUPE 5001 members join the central bargaining committee?

Any CUPE hospital member belonging to a CUPE local affiliated with OCHU can run for elected office at the OCHU convention.

CUPE 5001 members can run for officer positions (president, secretary-treasurer, or first vice-president) or a regional vice president role for Area 3 (the Greater Toronto region).

### How much would it cost CUPE 5001 to join central bargaining?

Due to CUPE 5001's existing affiliation with OCHU-CUPE, members of the Local already pay a membership fee. Therefore, joining central won't include additional costs.