



# How a union negotiates on your behalf...

ONCE YOUR WORKPLACE IS UNIONIZED, you and your fellow members become an official “bargaining unit,” or “MGEU Local.”

The bargaining process begins at Local meetings, where you can put forward proposals that you’d like to see in your contract, or make suggestions for improving what currently exists. An elected bargaining committee, along with MGEU staff, then takes this package of proposals to the negotiating table on behalf of you and your fellow members.

The terms of the contract are negotiated between:

- A.** a bargaining committee of union members who’ve been elected by fellow members, and professional MGEU negotiating staff;
- B.** management representatives of the employer.

Most employment contracts are effective for two to three years and cover a range of employment-related concerns, including wages, hours of work, benefits, overtime conditions, and health and safety.

When a settlement is reached between the bargaining committee and management, the proposed contract is taken back to the bargaining unit for a vote.

The settlement must be accepted by the majority of the unit. Once it meets with this approval, the contract is considered “ratified,” and formal, written copies of the agreement are prepared for distribution.

When a settlement can’t be reached, the most frequent alternatives include:

- the bargaining committee and management can apply to the Manitoba Labour Board to have a third-party mediator assist with the negotiating process;
- they can apply to the Minister of Labour to have a third-party arbitrator review the situation and make recommendations to the Minister. Often, these recommendations are considered “binding,” and both management and the union are obliged to accept the decision of the arbitrator;
- the members of the bargaining unit can vote to take strike action in order to pressure the employer to come back to the table and bargain in good faith. A bargaining unit never goes out on strike unless the majority of the members are in favour of doing so.