

Some Basic Rules for Interpreting Collective Agreements

- Read the agreement as a whole. One piece does not stand alone.
- If there is a potential conflict, provisions that come first override provisions that come later, and specific provisions override general provisions.
- Definitions at the beginning of the collective agreement can be used to interpret any provisions in the agreement, unless a specific definition or exception is noted somewhere else. If a word is not defined, use its ordinary, dictionary meaning.
- Your collective agreement is considered to include all the rights set out in human rights and work-related laws, whether these laws are specifically referenced in the agreement or not.
- “May” means optional. “Shall” and “must” mean mandatory.
- “And” means both/all. “Or” means either.
- A “working day” and a “calendar day” have different meanings. Pay attention especially when calculating time limits in your grievance procedure and other kinds of notice periods.