



**The United Church  
of Canada  
General Council**

# **GC45 CW01 Mediation of COL Group Assignment Disputes for Summer 2025**

True Document Date: June 28, 2025

**Origin: Chinook Winds Regional Council**

## **1. What is the issue? Why is it important?**

The current formulation of the Cost-of-Living Group Assignments (COL) are creating inequities between pastoral charges located in the same city. Final decisions on appeals of COL assignments are made at the General Council Office using third party data, however using the hard data alone has created unhelpful disparities between churches in the same community. There is currently no mechanism for those with local knowledge of their own communities to correct these irregularities.

## **2. What is happening now?**

In 2015, the comprehensive salary was implemented, folding base salary and housing allowance for ministers not living in a manse into one comprehensive salary with a regional cost of living component based on median house sale values. Each community of faith was assigned to one of six cost of living (COL) groups based on data from Realtor.ca.

COL group assignments are to be re-assessed every three years. In 2019, COL group assignments were reassessed based on this data, though in 2021 Triennial re-assessment was postponed due to the volatile housing market across Canada making it an unstable single metric for measuring regional cost of living.

Working with regional compensation specialists at Mercer, the General Council Office developed an approach to COL based on Canadian regional data set which incorporates

expanded housing (+ property taxes and utilities), taxes, goods and services.

In 2022, they adjusted the current UCC COL group community of faith assignments to reflect the following elements using a Composite Approach:

- Increases in home values
- Elements for utilities and property tax
- Tax differences between provinces
- Cost of goods and services

[https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2022-12/ucc-col-measure-revisions\\_2022.pdf](https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2022-12/ucc-col-measure-revisions_2022.pdf)

Salaries for ministry personnel serving in locations where the regional COL group assignment has been adjusted down maintain their current salary as per the terms of the appointment or call. This includes those whose appointments renew. Ministry personnel serving locations where the COL group has been adjusted up will received an adjusted salary starting in July 2023, according to the figures in the [2023 Minimum Salary and Reimbursements for Ministry Personnel](#)

### **3. What is the recommendation?**

We suggest that Regional Councils be given the ability to mediate in these COL disputes to ensure there is equity between pastoral charges located in the same community.

### **4. Background information:**

We acknowledge that these assignments do need to be based upon hard data or the whole process would become unravelled. However, the current process has created situations where congregations that are only 15 city blocks apart are placed in different COL group assignments. For example, Lethbridge, Alberta has four United Churches located in the city, three are in COL group 3 and one is in COL group 2.

This is an unhelpful disparity. Even if local policies are created to agree to pay at the same COL rate as the other pastoral charges in the city, this has the potential to undermine negotiations for new ministry personnel being called to the charge, as they can be told they are already being paid above the mandated minimum.

If Regional Councils were granted the ability to mediate in these situations, informed by their own local knowledge, these situations of inequity could be remedied by having the COL group changed at the Regional Council's request.

## 5. How does this proposal help us to live into our church's commitments on equity?

The proposal is based entirely upon a desire for equity. Equity for those employed by the denomination to be compensated at the same COL rate as their colleagues located in the same community. We are seeking a reasonable mediation process to address these situations.

### **For the body transmitting this proposal to the General Council:**

Please select the appropriate option and provide the key discussion points for items being forwarded to the General Council:

- Agree
- Disagree without forwarding to the General Council
- Disagree and forwarding to the General Council

If you have questions regarding this proposal, please send them to: [GCinfo@united-church.ca](mailto:GCinfo@united-church.ca)

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Originating Body: [Chinook Winds Regional Council](#)