



Dear fellow Contract Faculty,

Contract Faculty Strike Preparedness FAQ: November 2, 2022

The WLUFA CF Negotiating Team (**NT**), has been bargaining with Laurier's Administration for a new collective agreement since the spring.

While the NT will continue to bargain, now with the assistance of a mediator, they requested a "no-board" report. The "no-board" report was issued yesterday, which will put us in a legal strike or lock-out position seventeen calendar days from November 1. No union enters negotiations with the intention of facing a strike (or lock-out), but WLUFA would be remiss in its duty to represent Contract Faculty (**CF**) and further our goals to the maximum extent provided by labour law if it did not plan for the possibility of a strike.

Strike preparedness sends a strong message to Administration about the unity and conviction of the CF bargaining unit. It also sends an unequivocal message that CF stands behind its Negotiating Team.

The following FAQs provide important background information, as well as some logistical information for you:

What does CF's 95.4% strike vote mean?

A strike vote is a vote taken among employees in a unionized workplace to authorize a strike. Frequently, this vote is taken well in advance of the last stages of negotiations – which ours was. Our majority strike vote gives the WLUFA Executive the authority to call a strike if and when it concludes that such a step is necessary in order to reach an acceptable agreement. The stronger the vote, the less likely a strike may be, as it alerts the Administration to the collective strength and resolve of our members. In fact, a strong YES vote is the best way to secure a fair and equitable collective agreement without the need for a strike.

CF voted 95.4% in favour of a strike mandate – the strongest CF strike mandate vote ever at Laurier. Significantly, offering the strike vote online also meant that this was the largest turnout for a strike vote that WLUFA has ever seen.

Does a strike mandate lead to a strike?

In most cases, NO. Often a strike mandate is sufficient to get the Administration to take the union seriously in negotiations. There is a process designated by the Labour Relations Act that must occur before WLUFAs could or would take a strike position OR the employer could or would lock out its employees. The process is as follows:

1. After regular negotiations seem to have come to an impasse, one or both of the negotiating parties may request conciliation. (this step has already occurred)
2. A conciliator is appointed by the Ministry of Labour. (this step has already occurred – Greg Long was appointed as conciliator)
3. There is at least one conciliation meeting in the attempt to reach an agreement. (conciliation occurred on October 24)
4. Conciliation either brings about an agreement OR it fails to do so. (conciliation failed to produce an agreement)
5. If no agreement is reached, the conciliator requests a no-board report from the Ministry. (the no-board report was issued November 1)
6. A seventeen calendar day waiting period ensues before any strike or lock-out can occur. Negotiations can – and frequently do – continue during this period with the help of a mediator. The mediator is frequently, but not always, the same person that undertook the role of conciliator.

After all of these steps, WLUFAs can call a strike if and when there seems to be no other way to reach an agreement. Similarly, after the waiting period, the Administration can lock-out CF. A strike or lock-out does not happen overnight, however. As you can see, there is advanced warning and significant planning involved.

What is conciliation?

Either an employer or a union may ask for third-party assistance, including conciliation. Conciliation is the process by which a facilitator appointed by the Ontario Ministry of Labour (**OMoFL**) acts as a broker between the opposing parties in order to facilitate communication and reach a settlement. The process is non-binding, but at least one meeting with a conciliator is required by provincial law before a strike or a lock-out can occur. If conciliation fails, the parties must

wait seventeen calendar days after a "no-board" is issued before engaging legally in a strike or a lock-out.

What is a “No-Board” Report?

It is not the function of the conciliator to make judgments on the merits and positions of each side; he or she may make suggestions to either or both sides, but these suggestions are not binding. If conciliation leads to agreement on a proposed contract, the proposed agreement would be submitted to the CF bargaining unit membership and to the Laurier Board of Governors for ratification. After one session with a conciliator, either side can call for a no-board, though negotiations can (and usually do) still continue. If the conciliator feels they cannot affect an agreement or if either side calls for a no-board, the OMofL will issue a letter stating that a Conciliation Board will not be appointed (the so-called "no-board" report). After a period of seventeen calendar days following this no-board report, a strike or lock-out is legally possible. A no-board report does not mean a strike (or lock-out) will occur; the decision to strike or lock-out can be kept in abeyance until any point in time.

What is a Strike?

Legal strike action is the right of unionized workers to withdraw their services or refuse to work with the aim of demonstrating the collective concern and resolve of the bargaining unit. A strike is not an end in itself, but rather a means to obtaining a fair and equitable collective agreement. Legal strike action does not happen overnight and it is not a decision that is taken lightly.

What is a lock-out?

A lock-out occurs when the employer denies access to the workplace in order to exert pressure on the union and its members to settle on the employer's terms.

Do I need to be worried about a possible strike or lock-out?

Whenever a no-board report is filed, the possibility of either a strike or lock-out increases. **Since the No-Board Report has been issued, it is clear that we need to prepare for the possibility of a strike.** Because of this, you should become familiar with the vocabulary and practice of legal strike action. It is also important

to learn about the issues at stake. For the latest NT news go [WLUFA CF Negotiations](#). For more information, as well as regular updates and other resources, follow your Action Committee on Twitter: @PrecariousWLU.

Should we discuss the possibility of a strike in our classes?

As there is a distinct possibility of a job action, it is inevitable that your students will have questions. Answer your students' questions thoughtfully as they come up but try to **avoid using your classroom as a political platform**. Frequently, you will be expected to answer students' questions about how the course would be handled in the event of a strike. But discussion beyond the logistics of your courses could result in sanctions against you, or the Union, by the Administration. WLUFA is in contact with the student union leadership and they will communicate about the strike with their members. Should we proceed with an actual strike (or in the unlikely event of a **lock-out**) any **back-to-work** protocol that would be negotiated on reaching a settlement would include provisions for making up class time. An academic term has never been lost due to a strike in Canadian history.

Are there other things I should be doing right now?

Yes. **We ask every member to provide WLUFA with their alternative (non-Laurier) email address** so, in the event that access to our Laurier email is restricted, we can continue to communicate important information. It is also useful to **begin thinking now about what you might need to remove from your office or lab** prior to a strike deadline.

For information on what life will look like in the event of a strike or lock-out, please see the “Strike Work and Benefits Guideline” (coming soon to your email!)

CF Negotiating Team

Anne-Marie Allison, Co-Chief Negotiator

Jim Gerlach, Co-Chief Negotiator

Brennan Connolly

Sobia Iqbal

Carl Simpson

Terry Poirier, WLUF Executive Director
Linda Watson, WLUF Staff

Action Committee

Kimberly Ellis-Hale, Chair

Elin Edwards

Brent Hagerman

Michele Kramer

Karen Lothead

Marybeth White