

WE ARE CALLING A STRIKE VOTE IN ONE WEEK. VOTING WILL BEGIN AT 12:01 AM ON TUESDAY, MARCH 19 AND END ON THURSDAY MARCH 21 AT 11:59 PM.

Since October 2023 when we first began meeting with the University, your bargaining team has worked diligently toward a fair collective agreement. You have shown tremendous support for our proposals; in fact, 92.5% of you recently voted YES in our recent strike mandate vote. And yet, **the University remains unwilling to meaningfully move on any of our priority issues.** They have either outright denied or offered what we feel are unacceptable responses to our proposals for increased wages, expanded health benefits, reduced workload for TAs, tuition indexation, PhD completion fund, addressing the exploitation of international students, and improving job security for sessionals.

Having read through the notes from our bargaining sessions since last October, our government-appointed conciliator remarked that we have consistently bargained in good faith and have worked hard to find an agreement with the University. The University, however, has not offered real solutions to the financial and mental burdens that grad students and sessionals are experiencing, emphasizing repeatedly that they must prioritize cost-savings strategies. At the same time, however, they have offered sizable raises and expansions in benefits to other Union groups on campus. **It is evident that the well being of TAs and sessionals is simply not a priority for the University; we think it's time to make it a priority.**

We want to be clear that we do not want to go on strike. We recognize that it is disruptive and places a significant burden on not only all of our members, but faculty and undergraduate students, as well. However, we also know that many faculty and undergraduates support our initiatives because they not only will benefit our members, but they will ultimately improve students' experiences and learning, too. TAs and sessionals with better pay, less mandated work, and the means to support our mental health issues will be able to contribute more vibrantly to our community here at the University of Guelph.

Believe us when we say that we have worked tirelessly to avoid this point and do not call this vote lightly. However, given the circumstances of negotiations, we feel we have no other option but to **CALL ON ALL MEMBERS TO VOTE YES IN THE UPCOMING STRIKE VOTE.**

Why should you vote 'yes'?

At this point, **we truly have only one option to force the University to work with us** - to withdraw our labour as TAs and sessionals. If we do not vote for a strike at this point, it is very simple - we will not receive any of the improvements we are asking for. If we do not vote yes, we will be forced to accept the University's proposals.

What happens if we vote 'yes'? Will we definitely go on strike?

Maybe. A legal strike takes some time to set up, so we wouldn't be going on strike immediately. In the days and weeks following the strike vote, we will be meeting with the University and continuing to work toward a settlement with the help of our conciliator. Recently, UofT's union (CUPE 3902) was able to reach a settlement just before their strike deadline, avoiding the need

for a strike at the last minute; however, York's union (CUPE 3903) was not able to do the same and are now on strike. CUPE 3913 has never gone on strike. We have also never had the level of engagement with our members like we are currently experiencing. We have talked to many of you face-to-face, and know that you are angry, frustrated and anxious about how the University is treating us, and the University knows it. We need to keep applying pressure to ensure our proposals are taken seriously.

When would a strike start?

Around twenty-three (23) days once a No Board report is filed, and following the strike vote. This would place us in a legal strike position around the beginning of April.

What is a No Board Report?

This is a report submitted by our local's CUPE National representative informing the government that a mediated settlement between the parties is unlikely or cannot be reached. This does not mean that bargaining will end, only that it will continue without a conciliator, and that a strike deadline is now in place.

How does the voting work? Who is eligible to vote?

As with the recent Strike Mandate Vote, you will receive an online secret ballot from Simply Voting with a unique voter ID.

All of our members who have taken a work assignment as a TA or sessional since Winter 2023 are eligible to vote (e.g., worked in W23, S23, F23, W24)

I never received the recent strike mandate vote ballot. Who do I contact to make sure that I can participate in the upcoming strike vote?

If you have taken a work assignment in Winter 2023 or after but did not receive a ballot for the previously held strike mandate vote, please contact Scott at president@cupe3913.on.ca by Friday March 15 and he will add you to the list for the strike vote.

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT A STRIKE

1. Can I work or attend class while I'm on strike or locked out?

We ask all TAs and sessionals to stop performing all work duties in the event of a strike (e.g., marking, attending or teaching classes as TAs/sessionals, answering emails, student meetings). **Continuing to work while your peers are out on strike (known as "scabbing") weakens the union's position and actually prolongs the strike.** Most importantly, it jeopardizes the improvements that your peers have been struggling to attain during bargaining that is ultimately for your benefit, as well.

Please keep in mind, however, that your work as union members is different from that as a student. **Your work as a student can continue uninterrupted** - you can still access your labs

and other spaces to work on your research and dissertations, and you can still continue to contribute to research projects, and you can still attend classes and complete assignments in courses where you are enrolled as a student. **The strike only affects your work as TAs and sessionals.** Note that some grad classes may be held off-campus if tenured faculty choose not to cross a picket line.

*See question 10 for the difference between a strike and a lockout

2. Can my supervisor make me work during a strike?

No. It is illegal for your supervisor, department chair, or a member of the University Administration to compel you to perform your regular TA or sessional duties during a legal strike or lockout. Your supervisor should know this, because the Employer usually briefs other Employees on campus (including Faculty in supervisory roles) on what is legal and illegal in the event of a legal strike or lockout.

If you are asked by your supervisor or your Department Chair to continue your work as a Teaching Assistant or sessional Instructor, or to work as a “replacement worker” in the event of a legal strike or lockout (that is, to fulfill another worker’s duties), please SAY NO and let the Union know immediately because we can help you.

3. If I’m not working, how do I make money during a strike? Who is eligible for strike pay?

CUPE National takes on the burden of paying out strike pay and covering members’ CUPE health benefits from day one of a strike.

Strike pay is \$300 per week (non-taxable) for 20 hours of strike duties performed per week.

To receive strike pay, you must (a) currently hold a work assignment and (b) perform strike duties.

4. How do I get paid?

To receive your pay, you will sign in with your picket captain who will monitor your total hours of picketing work. Pay will be provided via cheque.

5. What picket line duties do I need to perform to receive strike pay?

The most common work for a member on strike is walking a picket line, though other support duties are possible. A picket line is a group of members blocking access to a university entrance

point (e.g. the entrance on Stone Road) by gathering there to peacefully protest. This action is meant to a) disrupt the everyday functioning of the university, including its ability to generate revenue, and b) to draw attention to our cause. All picket captains will have training on how to maintain the picketing site; the Union is committed to ensuring peaceful, safe picketing.

6. Can I picket even if I'm not currently working as a TA or sessional?

Yes! In fact, we strongly encourage you to join your colleagues on the picket line because you will also enjoy the benefits your peers are fighting for the next time you work as a TA or sessional. We need all the support we can get!

7. What will picketing be like?

At picketing, you can expect music, food and water, sign-making, drummers, speeches, chanting, community building, rest areas, and other things to help build solidarity.

8. I'm an international student member. Is it legal for me to participate in a strike?

Yes, it's legal for international student members to participate in a strike, perform strike duties, and/or show support for the Union during contract negotiations. Receiving strike pay and performing strike duties are allowable under your permit to attend the University of Guelph as a student and worker. A strike or lockout doesn't change the fact that The University of Guelph is your Employer and/or the place where you are going to school. **Do not let any employee of the University of Guelph tell you otherwise.** If they attempt to misrepresent facts about your rights or try to intimidate you, please contact Scott at president@cupe3913.on.ca or Kimber at grievance@cupe3913.on.ca

9. What do I do if my students ask me questions about a strike?

Until a strike begins, you are responsible for fulfilling your duties as a TA or a sessional. If your students ask you about what is going on, feel free to tell them about what we are trying to achieve, and that we believe improvements in TAs and sessionals' working conditions will also improve undergrads' experiences, as well. You should, however, also emphasize that undergraduate students have rights and protections in the event of a strike or lockout, as outlined in the University's Policy on Academic Continuity ([Policy 2.2 - Policy on Academic Continuity | University Secretariat \(uoguelph.ca\)](#)).

Undergrads can also be directed to our website, [CUPE 3913](#), for answers to commonly asked questions about the negotiations.

10. What is a lockout? How is it different from a strike?

Strikes - A strike occurs when employees collectively stop working as a form of protest or bargaining tactic against their employer. Strikes are typically initiated by the employees or their union representatives. During a strike, employees withhold their labor to put pressure on the employer to meet their demands, such as better wages, improved working conditions, or changes in employment policies.

Lockout - A lockout happens when an employer, rather than the employees, prevents them from working by closing down the workplace or withholding work assignments. Lockouts are typically initiated by the employer as a response to the employees' demands or as a preemptive measure to gain leverage in negotiations. The goal of a lockout is to put pressure on employees or their union to agree to the employer's terms. Lockouts are usually used when negotiations between the employer and employees or their union have reached an impasse.

In both cases, strikes and lockouts are regulated by labor laws to ensure they are conducted fairly and within certain legal parameters. These laws often include provisions for notice periods, bargaining requirements, and dispute resolution mechanisms. The Ontario Labour Relations Act governs the rights and obligations of both employers and employees regarding strikes and lockouts.

If the University of Guelph “locks out” its TAs and sessionals, all of the strike pay and benefits provisions will be in effect, and we will set up picket lines just as if we were on strike.

11. I have more questions about the strike vote or negotiations. Who do I contact?

- CUPE 3913 President - Scott Duchesne: president@cupe3913.on.ca
- CUPE 3913 Bargaining Committee: bargaining.committee@cupe3913.on.ca

12. Where do I get updates on bargaining information?

- www.cupe3913.on.ca
- Instagram: [@gryphons3913](https://www.instagram.com/gryphons3913)
- We are regularly emailing out updates on bargaining - please check your inbox!