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TRAINING ONTARIO'S FUTURE - ÉDUQUER L'AVENIR DE L'ONTARIO

Student and Faculty Futures, Together: Responding to Student Concerns About Potential Strike Action

As the workers in college classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and offices working directly with students, we know that our working conditions are student learning conditions. The idea of labour action can be stressful for students – it's important that we respond to student concerns, demystify strike mandate votes/strikes, and bring them on side as allies in our fight. Here are some common questions you might receive from students, and suggested ways to respond:

Are you going on strike?

- **Whether we go on strike or not depends on the CEC and the Colleges.** Your education is our livelihood, and we take it very seriously. As long as productive negotiations (“bargaining”) are ongoing, we will continue to work towards an agreement.
- **A strike mandate vote doesn't automatically mean you're going on strike.** Employers have a lot of legal advantages over their employees and decide important parts of your working conditions, such as hours of work and pay. Unionized workers can call a strike mandate vote *only once* during bargaining.
- **A strike mandate vote authorizes our elected bargaining team to call a strike if necessary.** The credible threat of labour action authorized by a strike vote is the most important legal tool at our disposal to pressure the employer to bargain fairly.
- **A strong, high-participation strike vote shows that over 15,000 faculty members across Ontario are united in our demands.** This gives us power at the negotiation table, so you'll see a lot of communication about the strike vote!
- **Faculty don't want to strike:** we love our work, and we want to be in our classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and offices working with you.



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- A strike will disrupt our lives just as much as it disrupts your education.
- A strike is a sacrifice for a better contract, not a holiday – the employer withholds payment and we risk financial hardship while balancing bills.
- If faculty strike, it is not a decision made lightly – but **a necessity we were forced into by the Colleges.**

How does this affect me?

- Our employer – the Colleges, through the College Employer Council (CEC) – **want to make it harder for college faculty to have good, stable jobs – and it impacts your education.**
 - Faculty haven't seen meaningful increases to the amount of time they can spend on student evaluation and feedback **since 1985** – five minutes per student, per week is *not enough!*
 - 14 out of 24 colleges no longer have librarians.
 - Many colleges no longer have student counsellors – during a province-wide student mental health crisis.
 - Colleges are spending money on more managers, new buildings, and vanity projects to attract investors and business sponsors – while the essentials, like student accommodation and mental health supports, are cut back.
 - The employer is pushing a definition of “teaching” which only focuses on classroom time, and not the range of supports that you need to succeed.
- **A College system where profits are prioritized over quality education hurts all of us.** We're invested in a better system for students and faculty. The Colleges are pushing forward a corporate model of education that doesn't centre your experience – but are more than happy to take your money!
- **Regardless of the story they tell, the Colleges have money to invest in education** – in the last year alone, the Colleges have accumulated a surplus of \$1 billion. There's more



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money for managers, but three-quarters of teachers, counsellors, and librarians working in Ontario colleges are on short-term contracts with little to no benefits or job security.

- **Your tuition and fees should fund a better system.** We're asking the CEC and the College Presidents to invest in your learning conditions, which are our working conditions.

Why is this happening?

- **We came prepared to reach a fair contract before our contract expiry** on October 1, 2024. An agreement could not be reached because the employer's proposals are pushing "concessions" on us: in other words, asking that we give up rights and protections related to our working conditions that workers have won in previous years.
- **We don't accept concessions because the rights we've won in the past are not ours to give away.** Accepting concessions means going backwards. All worker protections in our collective agreements – our contracts – were fought for by workers that came before us. This is the same for many things workers appreciate today: workers organized into unions had to fight to secure things like weekends, breaks, vacation, 8-hour work days, minimum wage, paid sick time, benefits, maternal/paternal leave, and so much more.
- **Our responsibility to each other as a work force is to bargain a contract that takes us forward:** fighting for changes that will improve quality of education, help us keep up with the rising cost of living, and adapt to changing conditions in the Colleges.
- **Our goal remains a fair, negotiated agreement** – and we remain hopeful that the Colleges will step up with fair agreement and avert a strike.

What about my grades?

- In the event of a strike, we will work with the Colleges to develop a student-centered success plan upon our return.
- **This puts that decision about your grades largely in the hands of the CEC and the Colleges** – as long as they negotiate fairly, we will continue to bargain.



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Will the semester be extended?

- **This is entirely up to the CEC and the College Presidents who administer the College semester.**
 - If there is more content that needs to be completed than there is time in the semester, it's possible that the semester might be extended. In the 2017 work stoppage, the fall semester was extended into January.

How can I support faculty?

- **In the event of a strike, student solidarity can help strengthen its impact.** The stronger a strike, the higher the likelihood it will be a shorter one.
- **Students are encouraged to [email concerns to their College President now](#)** to help us build pressure and reduce the risk of a labour disruption this semester.
- If the time comes when the Colleges fail to negotiate fairly and force a strike – join our picket line!

