



FAQ

Strike Vote FAQ

Frequently asked questions about the strike vote and what it means for QUFA Members

Here are some answers to frequently asked questions about strike votes, why they are important, and what they mean for QUFA Members.

What is a strike vote?

A union holds a strike vote to give strength to its bargaining team. A vote in favour of a strike signifies that members support the bargaining team's efforts and are prepared to go on strike, if needed. Unions must hold a strike vote before taking any job action, including strike or work-to-rule.

How is a strike vote taken?

QUFA uses SimplyVoting software to issue each Member a ballot by e-mail. Your vote is secret and never revealed to other Members or to the employer. Only the result is publicized.

If we vote "Yes" now and, later on, the QUFA Executive believes it is necessary to strike, will there be another vote?

No, this ballot authorizes the Executive to call a strike if the Bargaining Team is unable to negotiate a new Collective Agreement (CA). There will not be another vote. There will be more meetings and opportunities to discuss the issues, and to plan for a strike. The chance that QUFA will go on strike still remains low at this point, but it will not be impossible if there is a positive strike vote.

Does this mean we are going on strike?

Not necessarily. The Bargaining Team will continue to negotiate after the strike vote, believing that a strong strike vote is an expedient tactic to assist these negotiations. A strike is not inevitable, but should one be necessary, Members will be informed of any developments. As per the QUFA Policies and Procedures, "A vote to approve a strike does not initiate a strike but empowers the Executive to do so if necessary."

Why is a strike vote important?

A strike vote vastly increases bargaining power. A strong vote in favour of a strike sends a message to university administration that QUFA is serious about our position and wants our Bargaining Team to come out with the best possible CA. Because the Executive Committee cannot decide to authorize a strike without a strike vote by the general Membership, QUFA needs to hold a vote early enough in the process so that the appropriate preparations can be made.

For a nuanced analysis of the value and importance of strike votes in Canadian labour relations, please see "The Folly of Not Voting to Strike in Canadian Collective Bargaining Law"¹ and "Without a Successful Strike Vote, York Faculty Are Sitting Ducks"² Work, Law, and Labour-Relations Professor David Doorey of York University.

The QUFA Executive and Bargaining Team is asking me to vote "Yes," but what happens if I vote "No"?

The Bargaining Team has been negotiating for three months over about forty days. Conversations with the employer remain cordial but they are not productive of movement towards QUFA's positions. In some areas, the employer has been clear that they are not willing to make any changes. They have also offered salary increases of 1% for 2026, 1% for 2027, and 1.25% for 2028. With inflation running between 2% and 3%, this represents a net reduction in purchasing power. A weak "Yes" vote, or worse, a "No" vote from Members would signal to the employer that QUFA Members are satisfied with a low wage offer and do not support any further changes to the CA. A strong "Yes" vote tells them that QUFA Members support their bargaining team and want a better deal than what is currently on the table.

Can the employer retaliate if I openly support my union?

No. In Ontario Labour Law, it is illegal to take any negative actions towards a person who is lawfully participating in union matters such as strike votes, legal strikes, ratification votes, and so on. If you fear that you will face reprisal for supporting QUFA, please be in touch immediately, as this is a serious breach of the law.

Why now?

The Bargaining Team is currently in conciliation with the employer. A conciliator is a government-appointed third party who assists the two sides to reach a deal. Conciliation is

required by the Labour Relations Act before a strike or lockout position becomes legal, and it is a normal part of negotiations. It is important to realize that both sides have been negotiating since May for forty-six days. Even with the recent help of a conciliator, there has been little progress. For the most recent update on conciliation see *QUFA Bargaining Alert!*.³

If QUFA and the employer cannot reach an agreement after conciliation, the conciliator, who reports to the Ministry of Labour, will file a “no-board report.” The release of this report begins a seventeen-day countdown to QUFA being in a legal strike position and to the employer being in a legal lockout position. Once the Ministry releases the no-board report, we would be able to communicate the exact date at which job action (strike or lockout) becomes possible. However, this is just the date on which job action becomes *possible*; it does not mean that job action must commence on that date.

Having a strike vote during the conciliation process is advantageous to prepare for the possible no-board report and legal job action position.

If the employer believes they cannot negotiate a CA, what can they do to put pressure on QUFA?

Following the same steps of asking the Ministry to issue a no-board report and waiting seventeen days, the employer would be in a legal position to enforce a “lockout,” in which they prevent QUFA Members from doing their jobs, and dock their salary and benefits. During this time, if the union does not have a positive strike vote, it cannot authorize and pay for strike duties, so Members would have no financial support. Also, at this time, the old CA is no longer in force, and the employer can impose the terms and conditions of work that it wishes to operate with. It is best that if we need to go this route (“no-board”), QUFA Members have authorized a strike so that Members are not stranded if the employer locks us out.

What happens in bargaining after this vote?

For now, nothing changes. There are negotiations planned for this week and two days with the government-appointed conciliator next week (18-19 August 2026). We hope that a strong strike vote (11-14 August 2026) will make these days more productive than bargaining has been so far. If negotiations do not conclude in this time, more days will likely be scheduled with the conciliator. If anything changes, you will be alerted immediately.

The list of outstanding proposals has a lot of “Withdrawn” comments. Why has QUFA withdrawn so many good proposals?

The process of bargaining is designed to allow the parties to test each other for where there are common interests and to solve those problems first. As the process unfolds, there is pressure on both sides to focus on fewer issues so that, with

creativity and good will, a deal can be reached. Some of QUFA’s proposals this time around are ground-breaking in our sector, so it is not surprising that there is resistance to writing them into the CA. If we can get a few proposals through in each major area of our list, we can consider that a success and come back next time to expand these rights and protections.

Why is the Queen’s administration refusing what seem to be sensible proposals to put guardrails around the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

We can never be certain of specific motivations at specific points in time, but in general, employers resist changes that are unprecedented in their sector. So, for example, no university wants to be the first to figure out how to deal with AI in the workplace even though, by that logic, nothing would ever change. QUFA has proposed this language to protect its Members and will continue to try to make the Queen’s-QUFA CA innovative in this regard.

What’s ultimately at stake in this round of bargaining?

A good summary of a few of the most important issues can be found in *QUFA Job Action Alert!* 6,⁴ and as that document makes clear, the big issue is that the employer hasn’t fully engaged with the concerns QUFA has brought to the table. They need to show more regard for the role of QUFA Members in making Queen’s the university it is.

Specific Concerns About Strikes

This is not a comprehensive Strike FAQ, but we wanted to address the questions that Members raised. If we move towards a strike deadline, we will prepare a much more detailed FAQ dedicated to questions about how strikes work.

What impact does a strike have on people coming from other countries?

A strike is the withdrawal of labour from an employer; it does not end the employment relationship. However, some Members may need further advice, depending on their immigration status, should we approach a strike deadline. Those Members should get in touch with us should a strike be called.

What happens to me, a Term Adjunct, if I am also a student or postdoctoral fellow at Queen’s, and QUFA goes on strike?

You would withdraw your QUFA work from Queen’s but continue your studies and research work. Teaching Fellows and Teaching Assistants, who are members of PSAC 901, would also continue to work through a QUFA strike.

If QUFA Members go on strike, won't that negatively impact our students?

A strike is the lawful withdrawal of labour and is meant to be disruptive in order to put pressure on an employer to negotiate differently. Most strikes in our sector are relatively short so that the long-term impact on students is minimal, but there will be inconvenience. If the strike is long, that inconvenience will intensify. We are hopeful that a strong strike vote now will enable us to get a good deal without job action.

For more detailed information about Job Action (strikes and lockouts) please see *QUFA Job Action FAQ*⁵ released on 9 July 2026.

Notes

¹<https://lawofwork.ca/strikevotes/>

²<https://lawofwork.ca/without-a-successful-strike-vote-york-faculty-are-sitting-ducks/>

³<https://qufa.ca/bargaining/#ale>

⁴<https://qufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/1-JA-Alert-6-Aug-2026.pdf>

⁵<https://qufa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/4-Alert-9-July-2026.pdf>

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