

November 15, 2006

UWOFA strike vote: Frequently asked questions

Q. If there is a positive strike vote, can the UWOFA Board call a strike at any time after November 22?

A. No, there is an extensive process that must occur before we would be in a legal strike position. These are the steps involved: first, the Association, the Employer, or both would have to apply for conciliation; second, a conciliator would be appointed and conciliation dates agreed to; third, conciliation meetings would occur in the attempt to reach an agreement; fourth, conciliation would have to fail; fifth, the conciliator would have to issue a “no-Board report” (indicating that a Conciliation Board should not be appointed); and sixth, a 17-day waiting period would occur. After all of that, the UWOFA Board could call a strike **if and when** there seemed to be no other way to reach a collective agreement, or the Employer could lock out faculty members.

Q. How long might this process take?

A. We don’t know. During the last round of negotiations it took longer for a conciliator to be appointed than we had expected. Certainly, steps one through six could not be completed before the new year.

Q. Do university administrations lock out faculty very often?

A. No, this has only occurred twice at Canadian universities in the last 35 years, and only in the context of a strike (at Brandon there was a three-day strike/lock out in 1998, and at Dalhousie there was a two-and-a-half week strike/lock out in 1988).

Q. What issues might be difficult to resolve without going to conciliation?

A. The two negotiating teams are still far apart on the following issues:

SALARY:

- proper catch-up (addressing the salary gap); and
- proper attention to the rate-structure of the career progress components (break points, value of salary points) so that our salaries don't continually fall behind those paid at comparator institutions.

BENEFITS:

- a co-payment plan is proposed for full-time faculty members under 65 years of age; and
- the elimination of drug benefits and pension contributions is proposed for many faculty members who work past 65.

RENEWAL:

- the Employer refuses to discuss faculty renewal and complement.

WORKLOAD:

- the Employer refuses to acknowledge that workload creep is a problem.

CONTRACT ACADEMIC STAFF:

- the Employer is unwilling to improve conditions for many contract faculty; and
- will not provide Employer-paid benefits to part-time faculty, unlike some comparator universities.

RETIREMENT:

- in the phased retirement proposal from the Employer, retirement allowances would be at the discretion of the Dean, instead of providing for uniform decent treatment.

Q. Are negotiations continuing?

A. Yes, both teams are still negotiating seriously.

Q. In the past has it been necessary to go to conciliation to get a collective agreement?

A. Yes, in the first round of bargaining the Employer called for a conciliator. The Association had not had a strike vote, and therefore we were not in a legal strike position. In the second round, UWOFA called for conciliation, we did have a strike mandate from the members, and we achieved a collective agreement without a strike.

In the event of a strike....

Q. Would faculty members get strike pay?

A. Yes, the CAUT Defence Fund provides strike pay of \$75 per day, per member, seven days a week. This pay would begin after the third day of a strike, and would be tax free. All bargaining unit members who perform strike duty (such as picket duty or other duties in the strike headquarters) would receive strike pay; however, bargaining unit members who refuse strike duties would not receive strike pay. No distinction would be made between those faculty who have opted to join the Association and those who have not; similarly, no distinction would be made between full-time and part-time members of the bargaining unit.

Q. How else would the Association mitigate the financial effects of a strike on members?

A. Normally, during a strike a faculty association also provides special help for members experiencing financial hardship. Following a positive strike vote, UWOFA would establish a committee to recommend to the Board specific ways to assist members in serious financial difficulty in the event of a strike.

Q. What are the financial resources available to the Association in the event of a strike?

A. In addition to the strike pay that will be provided by the CAUT Defence Fund, UWOFA has its own reserves that amounted to \$1,286,687 on October 31, 2006. The Defence Fund also makes available to striking member associations interest-free loans to assist with expenses such as replacing Employer contributions to benefits plans for members, to ensure that benefits are not interrupted during a strike. It is also common for other faculty associations and local unions to provide financial donations in support of striking associations.

Q. How long might a strike last?

A. We don't know. What we do know is that since 1990 the median length of faculty strikes at Canadian universities is 15 calendar days. See <http://www.uwofa.ca/news/current/U-StrikesinCda.htm> for a list of faculty strikes in Canada since 1990 and their lengths.

Q. Would faculty members on official leave from the university be on strike?

A. The Association's position is that those on leave would not be on strike. However, sabbaticants would be urged not to undertake their research activities on campus during a strike.

Q. Would there be picket passes for people whose presence on campus is required?

A. The Association would establish a committee to recommend the kinds of passes that would be appropriate. These might include passes for people involved in essential services, and for those who can demonstrate that research would be lost without their presence on campus.

UWOFA Strike Vote	
Regular Poll Tuesday, November 21, 9:30 am- 7:00 pm Social Science Centre Foyer (second floor) Wednesday, November 22, 9:30 am – 5:00 pm Middlesex College Foyer (first floor)	Advance Poll UWOFA offices (Elborn College 2120) Thursday, November 16, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Friday, November 17, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm Monday, November 20, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm