

Labour Update: Student Information

Strike Notice and Upcoming Labour Action

The College Employer Council (who represent the 24 Ontario Public Colleges), and OPSEU CAAT-A bargaining team (who represent full-time and partial-load professors, instructors, librarians, and counsellors) have been in negotiations since July 2024. The parties are commonly referred to as CEC and CAAT-A Bargaining team/ Union.

Negotiations on employment contracts occur every few years between the Colleges and its employees. Both sides put proposals on the table for the betterment of the Colleges. Sometimes the parties have difficulty reaching an agreement or compromise. When this occurs, the Union can choose to engage in labour action as a way to apply pressure to Colleges to agree to their proposals.

On January 3, 2025, the CAAT-A bargaining team notified Colleges that they would like to be in a position engage in labour action, such as a strike, as of January 9, 2025.

At this time, we do not know what type of labour action academic employees will engage in. It could be work-to-rule, rotating strikes, or full walk-out strike (see below for definitions on what these mean).

Once the Union confirms the type of labour action it will be undergoing, the Colleges will communicate an update to students on next steps.

We have asked the CAAT-A bargaining team to join the CEC in binding arbitration, this is when a neutral third party (arbitrator) makes a decision on behalf of the two parties who are unable to reach a conclusion. If the parties enter into binding arbitration, then there is no need for a strike.

We remain hopeful that an agreement will be reached with the CAAT-A bargaining team to provide stability for students, employees, and the greater College community.

A glossary of terms is available [here](#).



FAQ

Q) Will there be a strike on January 9, 2025?

- We hope there will be no strike. Only the union controls whether it will call for a strike. The CEC (bargaining agent for the Colleges) remains committed to finding a solution to negotiations that will not impact students.
- We want to avoid any interruption to student learning.
- We urge the Union to reconsider taking action on January 9, 2025, and instead agree to join the CEC in binding arbitration for the sake of students, faculty, and the greater College community

Q) Should I go to classes January 6-8, 2025?

- Yes, classes are being scheduled as per usual.
- If the Union chooses to work-to-rule starting on January 9, 2025, classes will continue to run as scheduled.
- Visit your College website for more information on class schedules.

Q) If there is a strike what will happen and how long will it last?

- There is the potential a semester could be interrupted.
- A strike could result in an extended semester or delayed exams or convocation.
- However, if the semester is impacted, Colleges will do everything possible to ensure that all students have the opportunity to complete the semester.
- Historically, no semester has been lost to a strike. Students have always been provided opportunities to complete classes and graduate.
- If a strike occurs and if it runs for a few weeks, then the end date / and subsequent starting date of the affected semesters might change. This would be communicated to you by your college.
- Visit your College website for updates on the impacts to your semester.

Q) What are the other/ alternative types of negotiation?

- Mediation is a non-binding form of negotiation where a third-party neutral assists the parties in reaching a compromise. This is a voluntary action and neither party has to move from its position if they don't want to.
- Binding arbitration is where an agreed upon neutral third-party arbitrator makes decisions if the parties can't come up with a compromise.
- Binding arbitration has been used in the past two academic rounds of negotiations.

Q) When will I find out about a strike?

- The Union has provided the Colleges with 5 days' notice of strike action on January 3, 2025 to commence on January 9, 2025.
- At this time, we do not know what form the strike will take. (see below for different forms)
- The Colleges will share updates with students, faculty, and the College community as it becomes available.

Q) What is a strike?

- At the Colleges, strikes are peaceful forms of protest
- Picket lines are formed by striking employees and people can be delayed from entering campus.
- A strike may take different forms. In general, it is a refusal to work in the normal way that is designed to slow down, disrupt, or stop college operations. A strike is organized by a Union as a form of protest typically in an attempt to force the employer to agree to their demands.
- Unfortunately, in the Colleges, when faculty members choose to apply pressure by slowing down, disrupting or stopping work, these actions lead to varying degrees of negative impact on the academic delivery.

Q) Does labour action mean a strike?

- Labour action does mean a strike. Strike action can take various forms, which include: work-to-rule, partial walk-out, rotating strike, all the way up to a full walk out.
- Only the Union can determine what forms of strike action will occur and when.

Q) What are the different forms of strike?

- Work-to-rule, partial walk-out, rotating strike, and full walk-out are all forms of strike.
- In work-to-rule, employees perform only the duties that have been assigned, strictly adhering to policy and contract obligations.
- In a partial walk-out, employees refuse to perform some of their assigned duties.
- In a rotating strike, employees walk out entirely for short periods of time at different institutions.
- In a full walk-out strike, employees withdraw all their services and choose to walk the picket line.



Q) Will the Colleges force faculty to go on a full walk-out strike?

- The Colleges cannot force faculty to go on strike.
- Only the Union team can determine what form of strike action it engages in (work-to-rule, partial walk-out, rotating strikes, walk-out).
- The College has never locked the faculty out (which means the employer has never forced a work stoppage.)

Q) How long will a strike last?

- They can last for a day or for an extended period of time.
- In 2017, the Union engaged in a full walk-out strike that lasted for more than 5 weeks. Students were still able to complete their semester.

Q) Can I access campus if there is a full walk-out strike?

- Yes, campuses will remain open.
- When picket lines occur, picketers cannot prevent access to those looking to enter campus (however, as mentioned above, they can rightfully delay access for up to 10 minutes.).
- In the event of a full walk-out which includes picket lines, information will be provided by your College on how to safely access campus.

Q) If a strike occurs, what should I do?

- Go to your College website for updates on the labour dispute.
- If you plan to visit campus, leave extra time for travelling to the college as picket lines may be set up at campus entrances and limit traffic flow.
- If there is a full walk-out strike and you take transit to campus, be aware that transit buses will drop students off outside of the campus to respect picket lines.

Q) Where can I learn more about negotiations and strike action?

- The CEC website contains information on the bargaining process and an ongoing archive of proposals from both parties.
- Additionally, all news updates are published across CEC social media channels and the website.
- Please visit www.CollegeEmployerCouncil.ca or follow the CEC on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#).