



Strike Vote FAQ | Unit 2 (Sessionals)

Where are we in the negotiation process, and how did we get here?

Your elected negotiation committee has met with McMaster negotiation committee nine times since the end of August, 2024. Although some progress has been made, the Employer's bargaining team elected to file for conciliation on November 12, 2024. (Conciliation is an escalation of the negotiation process that entails the intervention of a Ministry-appointed Conciliation Officer who assists the parties find agreement where possible. Conciliation is a necessary step in the negotiation process before a legal strike or lockout may be called.) (See: Timelines question, below).

What is a strike vote and why is the Union calling for one?

It is normal for a Union to ask for a strong "strike vote" during the process of any legal contract negotiations in Canada. In fact, CUPE 3906's Sessional Faculty/Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty (HRSMF) bargaining teams have asked for a strong strike vote from its membership in virtually every single TA and RA (in lieu) contract negotiations in the past 35+ years, and there have only ever been 3 TA and RA strikes (and 1 "wildcat" strike by sessionals) since our unionization in the late 1970s.

A strike vote is called by the Union's bargaining team when the Union requires more leverage at the bargaining table. Generally speaking, the bargaining team feels that it has negotiated as much as it can with the Employer, and needs to demonstrate the membership's support for the union and the membership's bargaining priorities before any more progress can be made.

Since the Employer is escalating negotiations by filing for conciliation, it is important for members to make a strong statement that they are in support of our bargaining team and its proposals, and won't be "strongarmed" by the Employer into a bad deal.

The exact wording of the strike vote question may vary, but it always asks the same basic question: do you authorize your bargaining team to call a strike if negotiations fail at the bargaining table? A strong "yes" to this question with as many members voting as possible is the best scenario: it says to the Employer that they have a "last chance" to return to the bargaining table and negotiate in good faith to get a deal or else the members are prepared to proceed to the "next steps" in the legal bargaining process: conciliation, mediation, and, finally, a strike or lockout.



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Why should we vote yes if there's a strike vote?

It is important to vote yes during a strike vote for a number of reasons. First of all, more people voting yes means that we'll end up with a strong vote. In this situation, a strong vote means that we have 80 - 90 percent of the membership voting "yes". Based on past experiences, what we've seen time and time again, is that when we have a strong strike vote, we end up with a strong collective agreement. It sounds counter-intuitive, but the stronger the strike vote, the less likely we are to go on strike. This is because a strong strike vote sends a clear message to the employer that we mean business and are not interested in dragging things out at the negotiating table.

Secondly, voting "yes" in a strike vote is a great way to be involved in the collective bargaining process so as to ensure that your union works for you. Being a Sessional Faculty and/or HRSMF automatically makes you a part of the union, but that is simply not enough. This is a way for your voice to be heard and for you to be a part of the decision-making process of your union. As with so many things in life, if you do not make a decision, someone else will end up making the decision for you, and more often than not, the decision made for you is not going to be one that you like.

Finally, a strong strike vote often leads to a strong collective agreement. Paying union dues is part of being a member of the union. Put it this way: you're already paying dues, so why not be involved? Also, you will keep paying dues in the future, regardless of what kind of collective agreement we end up with. If that is the case, don't you want to ensure that you will be paying dues towards an agreement that you're happy with? It makes more sense to pay dues towards a collective agreement that works for you as opposed to one that negatively affects you.

How many strike votes are there? What is the difference between a "strike vote" and a "strike mandate vote"?

Under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, there is only one "strike vote" (which is commonly called a "strike mandate vote"). The strike vote/strike mandate vote asks you to give your elected bargaining team permission to call a strike in the event that the Parties reach an impasse at the bargaining table. There is no "second" vote or additional vote required (or recognized by law) to call a strike. To that end, your bargaining team will not hold a second vote.



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Who can vote in a Unit 2 (Sessional Faculty and HRSMF) strike vote?

Only members of Unit 2 (Sessional Faculty and HRSMF) may vote in a Unit 2 strike vote. The following members of Unit 2 may vote in a strike vote:

1. Members who are working as Sessional Faculty and Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty this term;
2. Members who hold a Sessional Faculty and Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty contract for the winter 2025 academic year (i.e., “contract in hand”);
3. “Political” members of the union (i.e., members who have held a contract work as Sessional Faculty and Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty in the last two academic terms—i.e., winter 2024 or spring/summer 2024).

Some members (especially those members in categories 2 and 3) may require **proof of membership** to vote.

Members who are not working as Sessional Faculty and/or HRSMF in the current term may need to contact brad@cupe3906.org to obtain a voting ballot. You will be required to provide an electronic copy of your Sessional Faculty and Hourly Rated Sessional Music Faculty employment contract (Letter of Appointment).

Is there proxy voting?

Proxy voting in strike votes is not permitted by the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

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

When you are in the classroom, you have a responsibility to fulfill your duties as a Sessional Faculty and HRSMF. That being said, questions may come up in conversation about the likelihood of a strike or lockout at McMaster. Feel free to inform students that they have rights and protections in the event of a strike or lockout. These rights and protections are outlined in McMaster University’s Policy on the [“Rights and Responsibilities of Undergraduate Students During Work Stoppages that Substantially Disrupt Academic Activities.”](#) You can also feel free to direct students to [our website](#), for answers to commonly asked questions about the negotiations.



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Does being on an international visa affect any of this?

No. All workers are covered by the Labour Relations Act and enjoy the same rights regardless of citizenship. You cannot lose your visa or work permit by voting in a strike or ratification vote or by taking part in a strike or job action.

I have another job on campus, and/or I am a McMaster Student myself. Would that affect my ability to do strike duties in the event of a strike or lockout?

No. In the event of a strike or lockout, you would be expected to attend to your non-CUPE 3906 Unit 2 work on campus. This includes research activities or classes that you are required to attend to on campus as a student.