



Strike Vote FAQ | Unit 4 (ResLife)

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

Your elected union Bargaining Committee has met with McMaster's Bargaining Committee twelve times since the end of August, 2024. Both parties (the Union and the Employer) tabled their monetary packages in July, 2025. Although some progress has been made, the Employer and the Union are far apart on key issues including compensation, housing, hours of work, meal plans, and the duration of the contract. The Bargaining Team is requesting Unit 4 members' participation in a strike vote to help negotiations progress in a fair and timely manner.

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 bargaining teams have asked for a strong strike vote from its membership during virtually every single contract negotiation in the past 35+ years. Despite this, there have only ever been 3 strikes (and 1 "wildcat" strike) since the formation of CUPE 3906 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.

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 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% of the membership voting "yes". What we've seen time and time again across our negotiating history is that **when we have a strong strike vote, we end up with a strong collective agreement.** It may sound 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 collecting bargaining process and to ensure that your union works for you. 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 will be 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 than one you're indifferent about.

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.



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Who can vote in a Unit 4 (Residence Life) strike vote?

Only members of CUPE 3906 Unit 4 may vote in a Unit 4 strike vote. (CUPE 3906 Unit 4 members include: Community Advisors (CAs), Guest Registration Assistants (GRAs), Project Assistants (PAs), Graduate Community Leaders (GCLs), and Residence Orientation Planners and Assistants (ROP/As). Other positions below the rank of Residence Life Area Coordinator (RLAC) fall within the bargaining unit too.

The following members of Unit 4 may vote in a strike vote:

1. Members who are currently working as a CA, GRA, PA, GCL, and ROP/A;
2. Members who hold a contract to work as a CA, GRA, PA, GCL, and ROP/A in the 2025-2026 academic year (i.e., “contract in hand”).

Some members (especially those members who have not been paid or completed training) may require proof of membership to vote. (Proof of Membership is a letter of appointment for employment in the CUPE 3906 Unit 4 Bargaining Unit.)

Members who have not begun work as a CUPE 3906 Unit 4 member should contact mary@cupe3906.org to obtain a voting ballot. You will be required to provide an electronic copy of your Letter of Appointment as a CA, GRA, PA, GCL, and/or ROP/A.

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 performing CA, GRA, PA, GLC, and/or ROP/A duties, you have a responsibility to fulfill your employment duties. 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.” (Please see the link to this policy here: <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/06/Rights-Responsibilities-of-Undergraduates-During-Work-Stoppages.pdf>.) You can also feel free to direct students to our website, www.cupe3906.org, for answers to commonly asked questions about the negotiations.



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Will I be evicted from Residence if we go on strike?

While not impossible, an eviction of a worker who is on strike—even a worker who lives in residence—would be unlikely. Workers have charter-protected rights, and it is unlikely that the Employer would want to face the legal and public relations challenges of evicting their own student-workers.

Will I get paid if we go on strike/get locked out?

In the event of a strike or lockout, the Employer will stop paying you the normal wages that you would receive as a CUPE 3906 Unit 4 member. Instead, the Union pays you \$300/week for the completion of strike duties (e.g., walking a picket line, or performing other strike duties if you are unable to walk a picket line due to a disability). It is important to note that anyone who continues to perform their CA, GRA, PA, GLC, and/or ROP/A duties during a Unit 4 strike or lockout does not have the protection of a Collective Agreement, or a Union.

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 4 work on campus. This includes research activities or classes that you are required to attend to on campus as a student. Please note that no one can be required to do your CA, GRA, PA, GLC, and/or ROP/A duties in the event of a strike or lockout.