

The ISSUE

On July 14 CAAT Support bargaining unit members voted 77 per cent in favour of giving their bargaining team a strike mandate. What happens next? What do our members need to know?

When could we go on strike?

Before we go on strike, all the following events must take place, but not necessarily in the order in which they appear:

- Notice to Bargain has been filed.
- The current collective agreement has expired.
- The employees voted in favour of a strike. (Done)
- A conciliator must be appointed by the Minister of Labour. (Done)
- A conciliation officer makes a report to the Minister of Labour.
- The Minister of Training, Colleges & Universities notifies both parties of the conciliator's report.
- 16 days have elapsed after the Minister notifies both parties of the report.
- The Union must give five days written notice of its intention to strike to the Council and the Colleges.

When would a strike be called?

A strike date has been set for Sept. 1, 2011.

Could the union extend the strike deadline?

Yes, the union could extend the strike deadline past Sept. 1, 2011. However, the employer would have the right to impose terms and conditions of work once our contract expires on Aug. 31, which might mean: reductions in pay, reductions in work hours, or changing of shifts.

Can a strike be avoided?

A strike can be avoided if both parties work towards a fair and reasonable contract by Aug. 31. The last thing we want is to withdraw our services. The goal of the bargaining team is to reach a negotiated settlement – not a strike. Contracts are settled at the bargaining table and not on a picket line. A negotiated settlement by Aug. 31 would eliminate the disruption that a strike would cause for students, our members and the colleges.

Why can't we strike in August?

Many people believe the optimum time for a strike is August; however, we cannot legally strike until our contract expires on Aug. 31, 2011.

Who will participate in the strike?

All full time support staff workers, including Appendix D workers.

Are there any support staff jobs the College can require you to perform during a strike as an essential service?

No.

Can I picket at another college?

If you wish to picket at another college you must first put this request to your Local Strike Duties Committee for consideration.

I pay for parking at the college. If we go on strike may I still park on college property?

No.

If I have been hired to teach a continuing education course, or if I have been acting faculty or management, am I expected to be at work?

You may be expected to go into work; however, the primary strength the bargaining unit enjoys is to withdraw its services. Crossing a picket line could weaken the impact a strike may have and may result in a lengthier strike, causing members to go without pay for a longer time. It also may have an impact once the dispute is over and members return to the workplace.

What happens if I'm registered or taking a continuing education course?

We encourage members not to attend courses while we are on strike.

Will I receive any money while we're on strike?

Yes, if you meet the following criteria:

- You have signed a union card, therefore, you are an OPSEU member
- You have signed a MPIF, you can fill it out at: www.info.caatsupport.org
- You perform strike duties (i.e. picket duty)
- The strike continues beyond three days.

	Weeks 1-3 (per day)	Weekly Maximum	Weeks 4+ (per day)	Weekly Maximum
Member	\$30	\$150	\$48	\$240
Dependents	\$4.80	\$24	\$4.80	\$24

What happens to my benefit coverage during a strike?

The employer will stop all benefit coverage. All members who perform strike duties will receive coverage for extended health, which includes prescription drugs and life insurance. OPSEU picks up the cost of the premiums. No other benefit coverage is maintained.

If I am on vacation when a strike is called what happens to my vacation?

When a strike is called you have no Collective Agreement. **You are on strike, not on vacation.** No vacation pay will be paid to you once the strike has started.

What happens to my pension contributions while I'm on strike?

Under the Joint CAAT Pension Plan both the employee and employer contribute equally based on the employee's salary. If you are on strike you will not be receiving a salary and consequently the employer is not required to provide contributions on your behalf to the plan.

Once we negotiate a new collective agreement you will be eligible to buy-back any service contributions missed while on strike. To buy this service, you would pay two times your regular contributions based on the salary you had at the beginning of the work stoppage. You can choose to make this purchase in a lump sum, with cash or through RRSP transfer, any time up until you retire or leave your job.

What happens if I'm on developmental leave when we go on strike?

You are on strike and not on developmental leave. If you are registered to attend a Community College course/program, you should attempt to get a refund for your tuition if a strike is called.

Can I get short term disability when I'm on strike?

No, you have no collective agreement and therefore no short term disability.

What happens if I'm on Short Term Disability when a strike starts?

The employer will stop short term sick leave benefits, but you can apply for employment insurance (EI) sick leave benefits.

What happens if I'm on long term disability when a strike starts?

Your benefits would still continue because LTD is not paid directly by the employer.

If I'm getting WSIB benefits, will they continue during a strike?

Yes, provided you continue to qualify medically and co-operate with WSIB approved programs.

If I am on maternity or parental leave do I receive any benefits?

Yes, you will still receive your EI entitlements, but you will not receive your sub benefits (the top up to 93%) from the employer. You will also receive strike pay if you perform strike duties.

How can I prepare for a possible strike?

- Do not make any major purchases.
- Pay off your credit cards if you can.
- Talk to your financial institutions, if necessary
- Prepare a resumé for the possibility of getting a part time job (with another employer) to supplement any strike pay you receive.
- Put aside as much money as you can.

I have financial commitments that I must make such as mortgage payments, car loans, etc. What happens to them?

You are still responsible for paying your bills. We have provided a sample letter below that you can use to advise your creditors of your situation.

Tips for budgeting for a strike

- Mortgage or rent: talk to your bank or credit union and negotiate a plan for the duration before the next payment is due.
- Taxes: ask if an accommodation can be arranged to defer property taxes.
- Utilities: request to spread out your payments
- Loans: if your lender won't allow a deferral, consider refinancing to reduce the payments
- Credit Cards: Paying for purchases by credit while on strike is not recommended; pay the minimum charge or use a line of credit with lower interest
- Insurance: Investigate ways to spread out the premiums

How can I help my local prepare for a strike?

Your local will need many people to help run a successful strike campaign. Volunteer to assist local communications, finances and strike duty committees. Painting signs, scrounging items needed and other tasks will need to be performed to have a well-organized strike.

Who do I contact if I have further questions?

Any other questions that do not appear here, please e-mail your CAAT Support bargaining team at: bargaining@rogers.com and someone will respond to you.