

Dear Students,

By now, many of you have heard that our Bargaining Team has set a strike deadline: the 24 Colleges need to agree to binding interest arbitration by midnight March 18 or faculty will be on the picket lines. This isn't a decision we wanted to make, and we know it's a tough one for you to hear. We also know that our bargaining team has done their best to find a path forward and taken every possible step to avoid this. Unfortunately, there doesn't seem to be any appetite to do that on the other side of the table.

We've looked at all the scenarios and have concluded that taking this step now is the best chance to save the winter semester. This may sound backwards, but here's the logic:

- Since the College system was founded in 1967, there have been several strikes. **No Ontario college student has ever lost a semester to a strike.**
- This gives the provincial government a strong incentive to step in, whether to pressure the Colleges to resolve this, or to legislate us back to work (and into interest arbitration, like in 2017). **No government wants to be the first to let students lose a term.**
- The June election makes things complicated: the provincial government will stop meeting soon to campaign, and likely won't sit again until July if not September. So, if we wait any longer and there's no pressure on the other end, we could be out for months. **Everyone loses if that happens.**

In other words, **waiting longer in the semester is the bigger risk**: if we strike now, the most likely outcome is the government sends us to arbitration and back to work. Then, we can work together to save your winter semester, just like we've worked together the last two years through so many changes.

The simple solution is for the Colleges to agree to arbitration **now**. Here's what you can do:

1. Learn about the [issues](#).
2. Write to [Rob Kardas](#) and ask him to push the 24 Colleges to accept arbitration so we can finish the winter term.
3. Write to your [MPP](#) and tell them the same: the Colleges need to agree to arbitration.
4. Let your professors know you support them. The stronger the strike is, the shorter it will be. Come to our rallies. Join the picket lines with us for a bit. Students are always welcome where faculty gather. And we usually have snacks.

If you're here for the bullet points, those are the big ones. If you want a deeper dive, there's more below.

Thanks for reading,
Your Lambton Faculty Union

We want to remind you a bit about what we're actually fighting for.

None of what is happening is about personal financial benefits to faculty: no one, from the longest-serving Union president to the newest contract faculty member, will come away from the bargaining process with more money in their pocket. That is not what we are fighting for.

We are asking for a real account of what our work looks like, from teaching online to supporting diverse students' access needs. Our workload formulas have not changed since 1985, but our classrooms and our students have.

We are fighting to make sure the Colleges employ enough counsellors and accessibility consultants on a permanent basis to meet students' needs. Some colleges have cut their counselling staff or have contracted out to private companies and other colleges have plans to do the same.

We are fighting to make sure the Colleges cannot take the materials we develop and sell them to private colleges who can charge whatever tuition they want and pay an ever-rotating army of precarious workers unliveable wages to teach them.

We are fighting to make sure the Colleges don't just tweet about equity, diversity, and Indigenization processes, but that there are actual mechanisms to make real change. We are fighting to make sure the faculty from diverse groups so desperately needed across the system are hired into stable jobs with manageable workloads, not another layer of precarious exploitation with a different public face.

None of these things mean more money in our own individual pockets, but they are things that do require the Colleges to put their money where their mouths are when they say that they are "student-centered." **Our working conditions are your learning conditions.**

Our working conditions are also your working conditions (both present and future): we know many of you are intimately familiar with the effects of precarious work on your own lives, your families, and your communities. The 24 Colleges across the province are major employers who directly participate in creating the larger labour conditions we all face, whether you go on to work at a College (and many Lambton workers are former Lambton students) or outside of one: it's all the same economy, and the race to the bottom we've seen by management across the College system is inseparable from the same trends across sectors, industries, and fields.

We don't want to strike, but we know faculty and students can't wait for these desperately needed changes to the system. We have so many more interests in common than not, and we are stronger together. Let's #SaveOurSemester.