

IMPORTANT: We are not on strike - yet.

The UNBC Faculty Association Executive Committee unanimously authorized the President to give 72 hours' notice of the initiation of a strike at UNBC. This morning, at 7 AM, the President notified the Employer and the Labour Relations Board that the UNBC Faculty Association will be withdrawing its labour beginning at 7 AM on Thursday, November 7th, 2019.

There will be a membership meeting this afternoon at 4:30 pm in Canfor to explain what brought us to take this step, and to advise you on how to apply pressure to prevent a strike, which is still possible.

There will also be a rally for the campus community at noon on Wednesday, November 6th, in the Wintergarden to show support for the Faculty Association and to demonstrate to the employer that we refuse to accept their proposals that would undermine UNBC's future success.

For more information, read on.

1. Will a Strike Take Place?

Why did we give 72 hours' notice today?

Our bargaining team has spent several very long days this past week trying to be reasonable, to fit our salary restructuring into the PSEC mandate, to find mutually acceptable language on articles relating to promotion and tenure, the role of Chairs, a new senior instructor position, and a variety of other proposals that stand to fundamentally change the nature of the working environment at UNBC. The employer has given us unambiguous signals that they are no longer interested in finding compromises, and that in fact they expect that their proposals will drive us to take a strike.

Will a strike take place?

Many strikes are averted during the 72 hours' notice period, which in fact is usually a time of very active bargaining as well as pressure from outside groups, including students, parents, community members, and the provincial government. Nevertheless, the employer has taken steps that signal that they are expecting a strike, which we interpret as a sign that they are no longer interested in bargaining.

2. What If A Strike Were Called?

When would the strike start?

If agreement is not reached during the 72 hour notice period, the strike will start on Thursday at 7 AM.

Does bargaining stop once we are on strike?

No, bargaining continues at any time that the parties agree it would be constructive to meet. Many strikes are averted at midnight prior to the strike taking effect.

What form would a strike take?

If a strike takes place, it will be a complete work stoppage, with all entrances to the main campus, WIDC, and the Terrace campus shut down by our pickets. The employer has made it clear that they are expecting a strike, and taking no steps to avoid it, so anything less than a full strike would have no effect.

If we go on strike, would we be alone?

If the strike commences on Thursday, the CAUT Defence Fund would bring in “flying pickets” – our colleagues from Universities across the country – as a show of solidarity and a means to bring national attention to our situation. Also, CUPE and other unions generally show solidarity and would refuse to cross the picket lines. In 2015, many other local unions joined us on the picket lines as well.

Could the Employer lock us out?

Yes, the Employer could lock us out under the provisions of the BC Labour Code.

Would all FA members have to walk the picket line?

In general yes. Members who were on sabbatical or parental leave were not expected to walk the picket line during the last strike, but so far the employer has refused to sign a goodwill agreement making that guarantee, although we expect them to do so. Members who are unable to walk the picket line would make special arrangements with the strike committee.

Would I get paid during a strike?

Yes, all members who work on assigned picket or other strike duties will get strike pay of \$88 per day (not taxable), seven days per week. Your UNBC pay could be suspended during a strike; the employer will also cease to pay for benefits, which the Association will have to pay during the term of any strike. Strike pay begins on the 4th day of strike action, as this is the policy of the CAUT Defence Fund, of which we are a member.

Does strike pay come from our own FA funds and dues?

After the UNBCFA certified, we also joined the CAUT Defence Fund <http://defencefund.caut.ca> and part of our dues are used to have access to this \$33 Million fund. Strike pay and some other strike and mediation related expenses will be paid by the Defence Fund.

What if I want to continue working during a strike?

Any work duties performed would undermine the strike. This includes all teaching and supervisory duties as well as participation in conferences and workshops. This includes online and distance delivery courses- all work that is performed as part of your University work duties.

Would regional campuses be affected?

The strike would be in effect at all UNBC campuses. Local strike committees will coordinate with the central strike committee to arrange the local actions.

What about part-time instructors?

As an FA member, you can elect to participate in the picketing and receive strike pay the same as all other members.

How will I stay in contact with the FA during a strike?

The FA has rented space at the Bon Voyage hotel for an off-campus strike headquarters, and will communicate with members through email and the web page. Contact will also be maintained through “picket captains” as part of the strike organization

What about essential services (maintaining live collections etc.)?

In most strike or lockout situations, the parties negotiate a “goodwill” agreement to allow ongoing biological or other sensitive research projects to be maintained. While this is not guaranteed, we expect the employer to sign a goodwill agreement with us.

Would I still have my UNBC email and access to online systems?

The Employer could choose to restrict or remove access to all online services. It is essential that all FA members provide non-UNBC email and off-campus contact info to the FA as soon as possible if you have not already done so.

3. What Should I Do Now?

What can I do to help avert a strike?

You can email the Board Chair, Lee Ongman, at boardchair@unbc.ca, as well as President Weeks and any members of the provincial government that you know to alert them that the employer is forcing us to go on strike by tabling proposals that we cannot accept as they would jeopardize UNBC's future success.

Will someone tell me what to do while we are on strike?

Yes, you will be assigned to a picket shift, and your picket captain will be responsible for communicating with you about where and when you should report to strike headquarters.

What should I wear for picket duty?

Dress for the weather. You will be on the picket line for 4 hours, and it may be cold and raining or snowing.

Will there be food and drink on the picket line?

No, all of the food will be at strike headquarters, although friends and union supporters will probably bring coffee and doughnuts from time to time.