

2. FAQ: Strike pay and benefits

What must I do to qualify for strike pay?

Strike pay is compensation for members who are on strike. To be on strike means to honour the picket-line, to withdraw your labour from the employer, remove yourself from campus and to engage in strike duty. Striking members must cease teaching, including part-time teaching, supervision, library work, service, and administrative duties. Members must not hold online or off-campus classes.

StFXAUT will not ask members to withdraw from research during a strike. However, if the Administration locks the doors to striking members we will ask that all members refrain from research to ensure fairness for all members, including those who require access to labs but are locked out of their labs.

Strike duty typically involves serving on the picket-line (normally one short shift each day), but it can also mean helping to run the strike headquarters, feeding picketers, writing leaflets, communications and media relations, participating in flying pickets, and serving on the Strike Support Committee and its sub-committees. The executive encourages its members to get involved in ways that are best suited to the abilities of members and the needs of the strike.

How much is strike pay?

Strike pay is \$84/day for seven days (\$588/week) for all members. It is non-taxable. While CAUT rules stipulate that Strike Benefits start on the 4th calendar day of a strike or lockout, the AUT will bridge this from its reserves, in part or in whole. Payments are made by cheque and are collected at the strike headquarters.

What happens if I am on vacation when strike action is taken? Will I be compensated?

When a strike is called the provisions in the collective agreement are suspended and all pay ceases, for those on vacation as well as those not on vacation. To receive strike pay you must participate in the strike by engaging in strike duty.

What happens if I am on sabbatical or parental/maternity leave, sick leave or disability leave?

When a strike is called, then the employer and union negotiate a strike protocol. This includes what happens to members on leaves and sabbatical. In the event that a strike is necessary, the StFXAUT executive will argue that sabbaticants and those on approved leaves should not be considered on strike because they were not engaged in teaching, or involved in supervisory or administrative duties. However, at this point we do not know what the employer's position will be on this issue.

If the Administration withholds payment from sabbaticants, or withholds top-ups from those on leave, StFXAUT will consider them eligible for strike pay, conditional on their performing strike duty, with the understanding that there may need to be some concessions for those who are out of the province or country, as well as those leave who are unable to perform strike duty. In the event of a strike, check the website <http://stfxaut.ca> for details or contact stfxaut@gmail.com for clarification.

I work part-time, but I am a Bargaining Unit Member. Am I eligible for the same strike pay as a full-time Member?

All members who engage in strike duty receive the same strike pay.

If I have a moral objection to the strike and will not picket, do I get strike pay?

It is possible that some members will decline to strike by opting out of strike duty or by crossing the picket line without authorization from the Strike Support Committee. While the AUT will honour its commitment to continue paying their health and dental benefits, members who decline to strike will be ineligible for strike pay.

Am I eligible for EI during the strike?

No, you are not entitled to EI benefits when participating in a labour dispute, including a strike or lockout.

How does the CAUT Defence Fund help in a Strike or Lock-out?

In the event of a strike or lock-out, the CAUT Defence Fund will provide benefits to the StFXAUT. These benefits are drawn from the contributions that AUT members, along with more than 50,000 members of CAUT members, have made to the Defence Fund. This is a form of solidarity that supports CAUT unions during strikes and lock-outs, and helps them to win their contract demands.

Strike benefits will be paid as a grant to the AUT, most of which would be used as non taxable strike pay of \$84 per day or \$588 per week (tax-free) for union members who are performing strike duty.

The Fund will also provide an interest-free loan to cover the payment of premiums for insurance plans such as group life, disability and health, should they be disrupted by a strike or lockout. These insurance benefits will be provided to all members, whether or not they are performing strike duty.

What happens to our medical, dental and other benefits during a strike?

In the event of a strike, the AUT will assume responsibility for paying the premiums on these benefits for all members of the union.

What happens to my pension during a strike?

The CAUT Defence Fund loan does not cover contributions to the pension plan. Pension plan contributions will be addressed in a back-to-work protocol that is a normal part of the negotiations that end a strike or lockout.

How will it affect my strike pay if I am committed to give a paper at a conference, defend my dissertation, am ill, or must attend to a family emergency that will take me out of town during the strike?

As much as possible we wish to accommodate the needs and circumstances of members. Contact the Strike Support Committee to explain your case, providing documentation if possible.

What if I have some extraordinary financial commitments that I can't meet, what can be done to help me?

We understand that some members will face greater financial hardships than others, and we will make every effort to address their needs. Members with extraordinary financial commitments will be able to apply to the StFXAUT Strike Committee for a hardship loan, the terms of which remain to be worked out.

Many banks, mortgage and credit card companies are understanding and will defer payment on bills and mortgages for a short time. StFXAUT Strike Committee will endeavor to meet with the leading financial institutions in town to make arrangements for individuals to defer payments. Appropriate information will be posted on the website, along with example letters for those who deal with financial institutions further afield.

I have young children and might have to care for them myself, or I might have to be home with a sick child; how will this affect my strike pay?

The need to provide care for children is a legitimate reason for not participating in strike duty. A member can contact the Strike Support Committee to explain his or her case, and provide documentation if appropriate.