

Email to Members

Date: July 31, 2025

Subject Line: URGENT! Access, Research, Leaves and more During Work Stoppage

Dear colleague,

Let me begin with two essential items that require your immediate attention, and follow with key updates about what to expect during a work stoppage.

- 1.** Sign up for Picket Duty – Picket shifts will be required in the event of either a lockout or a strike. If you have not already done so, please [click here to register](#) for picket duty before August 5. Alternate duties can be requested and will be assigned when and where appropriate. We have decided on a maximally flexible strike pay policy for the month of August in the event of a lockout: no pre-approval is required for missing picket shifts due to vacation or other obligations that prevent you from being able to complete picket duty; you will receive full strike pay. A more strict attendance and participation strike pay policy will be adopted from September 1 onward. Please note that ‘strike pay’ is granted for a lockout as well as a strike.
- 2.** Complete Your Payworks Registration– Over 300 of you have still not registered with Payworks. If you do not register with Payworks we have no mechanism to pay you during a strike or lock-out, so you will not get paid. Those who have not yet registered successfully will receive a targeted email with the link and instructions. We can only pay you during work stoppage if you are registered with Payworks. If you are successfully registered you will not receive the targeted email, and there is no need to email the DFA office to ask about your status. If you experienced difficulties when trying to register, and you have notified DFA Administrative Assistant Kristin Hearn, please be patient. She is working diligently to address all issues.

Months after requesting the information, we received official answers from the Board to many of our outstanding questions regarding access during job action. The overview is below. If you have further questions, please email 2025.strike.dfa@gmail.com and someone will get back to you as soon as possible. We have a very large and growing list of email inquiries so we ask for your patience if it takes a few days to receive a response.

Email Access

After months of telling us that members would maintain access to their @dal.ca accounts, the Board has reversed its position. During a work stoppage, they have told DFA they will cut your access to Dalhousie email. We apologize for the confusion the Board has caused by reversing their position. WE WILL REACH OUT INDIVIDUALLY TO THOSE FEW MEMBERS WHO HAVE NOT PROVIDED US WITH THEIR NON-DAL EMAIL. If you do not hear from us with a direct request, PLEASE DO NOT send your address again – we already have 900+ on file.

Some DFA Members have multiple roles: employee, student, and/or alumnus. If you are a Dalhousie alumnus, your email will be blocked. If, however, you are enrolled as a student, the email address linked to your student account will NOT be blocked. Accounts that do not belong to “individual” DFA members (e.g., accounts for “roles” or “groups”) will also not be blocked.

Members on Leave

If you are on sabbatical leave, education leave, special leave, administrative leave or vacation, you will be considered to be on strike or lockout. Your leave and pay from Dalhousie will cease during work stoppage.

From the DFA perspective, any loss of leave or vacation arising from a work stoppage will be a topic for return-to-work negotiations, and we would push strongly for Members so affected to receive the lost leave restored one way or another. Also, from the DFA perspective, Members on affected leaves will be eligible for strike pay and required to participate in picket duties or alternative duties as appropriate; as noted earlier in this message, special allowances will be made for Members on vacation during the month of August in the event of a lockout.

If you are on sick leave, pregnancy or parental leave at the time of any work stoppage, you will not be considered part of the strike or lockout and will continue to receive pay and benefits.

DFA Members will be permitted to start pregnancy and parental leave during work stoppage.

Requests for sick leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Essential Services

Members jointly agreed by the Board, DFA, and the affected DFA Member as providing “essential services” are not considered to be on lockout or strike, and are expected to continue their duties on the terms communicated through the Association Board Committee. As is usual during collective bargaining, the Board provided a list of DFA members they proposed as “essential services”. The DFA carefully considered the list and all but one of the requests was denied: while the proposed Members and duties were certainly important, they did not meet the much higher standard of being

“essential”. Services are necessarily disrupted when DFA Members stop doing their jobs during lockout or strike. This is an unfortunate, but natural consequence of the important work done by our Members.

The DFA accepted the Board’s argument that some DFA Members on the various research ethics boards at Dalhousie are essential in order to respond to adverse events on an emergency basis that might directly affect the health and welfare of research participants, and for whom there is no legitimate alternative. The Association Board Committee will reach out to the affected Members to seek consent to be deemed essential for this particular purpose. In the event of such an emergency, the designated Members will be paid a per diem rate by Dalhousie for their labour.

Research Grants

DFA members will not have direct access to their research grants during a strike or lockout. However, grant accounts will not be frozen and appropriately authorized expenditures can continue during a work stoppage.

Grant Funds Administration

Grant funds can be administered by authorized signing authorities during a work stoppage, but those signing authorities cannot be DFA Members. This issue is addressed in the message to DFA Members from Vice-President Research and Innovation Dr. Graham Gagnon sent July 31, 2025.

DFA Travel Funds

DFA travel funds cannot be used to reimburse expenses relating to travel occurring during the period of a work stoppage. It is not clear whether Dalhousie-administered grant funds will be treated similarly for reimbursement of expenses (including travel) incurred by DFA Members for activities occurring during work stoppage. Our best advice is to avoid travel during work stoppage, purchase cancellation insurance, and/or cancel planned travel if it seems likely to overlap with a lockout or strike.

Contingency and Continuity Plans for Research Programs During Labour Disruption

DFA Members received an official communication from Vice-President Research and Innovation Dr. Graham Gagnon earlier today.

The default position of the Board is that research activities normally supervised by a DFA Member will cease during a work stoppage, unless otherwise approved under a Biosafety Permit, Access, or Essential Services agreement. If you are comfortable with this, then you are not required to take any action in advance of a work stoppage – it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure the safe shutdown and maintenance of research spaces and equipment in the event of a work stoppage.

Furthermore, the Board is responsible for any students or paid research personnel who are affected by the loss of supervision by a DFA Member during a work stoppage: this includes any contractually agreed wages or benefits. Let me reiterate that it is the Board's responsibility to plan for and deal with the consequences of a work stoppage in the default situation where all activities normally supervised by a DFA Member cease. That said, if you wish for research activities to continue during a work stoppage, then you will need to complete the documents and forms included in Dr. Gagnon's message.

Let me remind you that the DFA has been very clear that we have no intention of triggering a strike during the month of August. However, there is a reasonably high possibility that the Board will trigger a lockout on August 12. I encourage you to alert your Dean to all the responsibilities that will fall to them in the event that a lockout is initiated in August, particularly the supervision of graduate students and the continuity of contractually agreed terms and conditions of employment for research personnel.

Access to "Public Spaces" on All Campuses

All public spaces on campus will remain available to DFA Members during work stoppage (e.g., Dalplex and other fitness facilities open to public members, paid parking spaces, childcare facilities, libraries, and so forth). The Student Union Building in Halifax is not owned by Dalhousie and therefore remains open to DFA Members during work stoppage.

Health Spending Account

The Health Spending Account will remain available for regular use during a work stoppage, simple because it is administered externally by Blue Cross.

Tuition Waivers

The processing of DFA tuition waivers will be paused during work stoppage but will be honoured once the job action ends.

August Pay Run from Dalhousie

On August 27, you will receive your pay from Dalhousie prorated to cover the days worked in August prior to work stoppage.

Benefits Premiums and DFA Dues

The DFA will pay the employee and employer contributions for your health and dental benefits during the period of a work stoppage, and you will not be required to pay DFA dues. That said, the timelines for processing the August 27 payroll run make it probable that some or all of the regular deductions will come out of your pay: we have agreed with the Board that we will work together to

return these deductions to you once the labour disruption is concluded since it will require some coordinated financial administration. We apologize for any confusion this might cause.

Insured Benefits Coverage

Group Life, AD&D, Survivor Income Benefit, Major Medical, Travel, and Dental: coverage can be extended for 120 days. Any Voluntary Group Life and AD&D coverage can be continued indefinitely however the amount of coverage cannot be increased during the period of the labour disruption.

Long Term Disability (LTD): coverage will remain in force for up to 120 days, provided premium payments are made. DFA will pay all premiums during work stoppage. This will ensure that a Member would be eligible to apply for LTD coverage following the labour disruption. There will be no interruption of payments for those already receiving LTD benefits prior to the commencement of the labour disruption.

Sincerely,

Dave Westwood
DFA President 2025-2026

Working together to #KeepDalStrong.