

## STUDENT UPDATE: Part I

July 10, 2025

*This is Part 1 of our Student Update, providing key information about the contract negotiations happening between Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) and the Dalhousie Board of Governors. Part 2 will be available in the coming weeks and is designed for those students wondering about the issues at the heart of this round of collective bargaining.*

**The Dalhousie Faculty Association (DFA) is the collective bargaining agent for almost 1000 faculty members at Dalhousie, including professors, instructors, librarians and counsellors.**

### 2025 Collective Bargaining

The DFA and the Dalhousie Board of Governors began negotiations on May 26, 2025. On June 2, after only a few days of bargaining, the Dalhousie Board unexpectedly filed for conciliation. The DFA contested the filing, saying it was too early in the process and full discussions on many proposals had not yet taken place. The Minister of Labour agreed to wait until the DFA Bargaining Team and the Board's team met one last time on Friday, June 20, 2025.

On June 23, the Labour Board appointed Mr. Rick Rose as the conciliation officer. Conciliation begins July 9. Outstanding issues will be discussed during conciliation and we are unable to share details at this time. You have undoubtedly read much of the Board's narrative about the financial situation they are in. Like most post-secondary institutions across Canada, Dalhousie is facing financial challenges that are created by several external factors beyond our direct control. In bargaining, the DFA has asked the Board to walk us through their current financial situation so that we can be certain that we understand exactly what these impacts look like today and in the near future. Several aspects of the operating budget remain mysterious and we await further explanation and clarification.

The DFA has conducted external reviews of Dalhousie's Financial Statements for many years. The Board has a long-standing history of moving substantial funds out of the operating budget and into capital projects. Between 2003 and 2021, for example, Dalhousie's audited financial statements show a cumulative operating surplus of more than \$464M.

Even if Dalhousie's revenues are down as much as we are being told, there is plenty of money available to fund adequate cost-of-living adjustments for all Dalhousie employees, including professors, instructors, librarians and counsellors.

### **The Conciliation Process**

As is typical in bargaining, the conciliator meets with both sides to try and reach agreement. If an agreement cannot be reached, the conciliator files a “no board report” with the Minister of Labour, which triggers a 14-day countdown.

At the end of that 14-day period, job action can begin, which means the Dalhousie Administration could lock out DFA faculty members, or the DFA could go on strike.

### **Questions You May Have**

#### **Are faculty members going to strike? And if so, when would it happen?**

From June 23 to July 4, the DFA held a strike vote. Over 85% of DFA members voted, and over 91% of those voting supported going on strike if necessary. This does not mean that there *will* be a strike, but rather that the faculty is *prepared* to go on strike if no agreement is reached during conciliation.

The DFA Bargaining Team and leadership are committed to reaching a settlement without job action. We will continue bargaining in good faith and do our best to secure a fair agreement for our members without job action which causes unwanted disruption for faculty and students, alike.

That said, at this point, the earliest you might expect job action (lock-out initiated by the Board of Governors, or strike initiated by the DFA) is mid-late August, which would allow the month of July for conciliation followed by the required 14 day-countdown period.

#### **If there is a strike, how long will it last?**

There is no way to predict how long a strike would last. In the 47-year history of the DFA, there have been four strikes: 1985, 1988, 1998 and 2002. They ranged in length from one day (1985) to almost four weeks (2002). In the post-secondary sector in Canada, the average length of a strike is three weeks. It is important to note that DFA and the Board reached agreement in conciliation in 2012, 2017, 2020 and 2022.

#### **What activities would be interrupted?**

Job action (strike or lock-out) will interrupt specific activities including: in person classes, online classes, access to course materials, tests, grading, and communication with students on academic matters. These activities will all be interrupted.

Senate will be suspended.

Supervision of research students (both undergraduate and graduate) will be paused. Thesis defences, other presentations, and access to librarians will stop. There will be reduced access to some counseling services.

Internships and practica might be disrupted depending on the specific details and supervisory responsibilities.

This will happen at all campuses.

The Administration may communicate to you additional programs and services that will be affected by job action.

There will be physical pickets around campuses, so to get to the campus you may have to cross the picket line. Our faculty members will not prevent you from doing so. There will also be a significant social media presence, with posts and messaging related to the strike.

### **How can students keep their studies moving forward?**

In the event that a strike occurs this summer, many of you will not be in class. The best thing you can do is monitor the progress of the strike by checking our social media platforms and our website <https://wearedal.ca>

If you are taking classes during the summer, we suggest that you treat the temporary cessation of classes like a “working study break” and continue reading, studying, learning, writing papers, etc.

Many course instructors will provide specific examples of what to focus on prior to a strike. Because your workload may be more intense than normal after classes resume, stay current or ahead in your courses; at the end of a strike, faculty would try to work out a revised completion of courses that is fair and reasonable.

Finally, although we cannot predict exactly how long a strike would last, we fully expect that you would have an opportunity to complete your courses. Both the DFA and the Dalhousie Administration have every motivation to make this possible.

Regular updates will be provided via X, Instagram and Facebook (@dalfacultyassoc), on Bluesky @dalfaculty.bsky.social and posted to the [DFA website](#) in the Student Info tab.