

Teachers and Students: With One Voice

Dawson teachers, support staff, and professionals are striking on November 6th until noon. This FAQ was prepared by teachers to help answer common student questions about negotiations.

We want students to understand why we're negotiating, what we're asking for, and how it all might impact you.

Put very simply, teachers' working conditions—our salaries, job security, workloads—directly influence the quality of your learning environment.

We spend every day (and many nights) thinking about student success, and we are devoted to maintaining a world-class educational system here in Quebec. That's a huge part of what we're fighting to defend.

Teachers and students also share many common interests.

- Teachers and students **both** want smaller class sizes.
- Teachers and students **both** want more resources invested in the CEGEP network.
- Finally, we want better-paid teachers. (And we believe you do, too!)

But all is not well in the CEGEP network. Forty-two percent of CEGEP teachers are currently employed on a temporary basis. From one semester to the next, we do not know if we will teach again, nor how much work we will receive. We want to focus on our students instead of constantly searching for work.

We are deeply committed to student success. However, we are running out of steam. Teachers are chronically overworked, underpaid, and precarious—and they are currently leaving the college network in large numbers. This is bad for our profession and bad for the educational, economic, and social future of Quebec.

What is the Common Front?

The Common Front is a coalition of four of the largest unions in Quebec. We've decided to join forces and to negotiate as an alliance in order to increase the likelihood of a fair contract. The Common Front represents 420,000 Quebec public sector workers in education, health care, and social services.

Here at Dawson, the teachers, support staff, and professionals are all part of the Common Front.

How did we get to this point?

We have been attempting to negotiate a fair contract with the government since 2022 and we've been working without a contract for seven months. We have tried every available avenue to work with the government, but they are still proposing to reduce our real salary and to weaken the CEGEP system.

What is the government's overall salary offer? And what are the unions demanding?

The government is currently offering an overall salary "increase" of 10.3% spread over five years. But this does not even keep pace with the government's *own* estimates of 16% inflation over the same period.

In other words, the government is essentially asking public sector workers to agree to a decrease in real salary.

The unions are asking for our salaries to be automatically adjusted to offset severe inflation increases. We are also asking for modest raises of 2% this year, 3% next year, and 4% the year after.

Just out of curiosity, what kind of raise did the government ministers give themselves?

Excellent question. The government ministers *already* have inflation indexing automatically built into their salaries

. And *on top of that*, they voted to give themselves an additional 30% raise this year.

So, the strike is basically just about salary?

No. We are also fighting to protect the integrity of the CEGEP system.

For example, the government wants CEGEPs to offer more rapid-turnover job-certification programs in place of DEC's. Students would start working straight out of high school, with no General Education foundation. We view this as an attack on the educational legacy of Quebec's CEGEP system—and your right to a world-class public education.

The government also wants to:

- push more classes into the evenings and weekends.
- promote fully online, asynchronous courses in which students never meet in a classroom or interact with a real-life teacher.
- reduce access for leaves for teachers who need time off for personal reasons or to re-train in their discipline.
- shift more work to underpaid, precarious teachers.
- deny sick days for Cont. Ed teachers.

What is a “strike mandate”?

A mandate means that our union members have voted to “pre-authorize” the use of certain strikes. This mandate gives our negotiators leverage at the bargaining table and helps us pressure the government to come to a fair resolution.

95% of Common Front members voted to authorize strikes as they see fit until an agreement is reached.

This might include shorter strikes (such as a half day), longer series of days, or even an unlimited general strike, which would mean that we go on strike indefinitely - until the government makes a fair offer.

For now, only the half day strike has been called. We did this because we want to give the government every reasonable opportunity to make a fair offer. An unlimited general strike is, literally, our last resort.

All Monday morning classes and campus activities will be stopped by the strike. This first half-day strike will end at exactly noon on Monday, November 6th.

What activities at Dawson are affected by a strike?

No teaching activities will take place during a strike. No in-person classes, no online synchronous classes, no asynchronous activities, no direct or indirect supervision (*stages*), no evaluations, no course preparation, no grading, no answering emails/MIOs, no individual appointments.

So, it’s just time for teachers to relax?

No. During a strike, we are not paid by the college.

That means teachers, support staff, and professionals have to balance their passion for a fair contract against the very real pressures of rents or mortgages and groceries for our families. With elementary schools closed, many of us will have no choice but to bring our children to the picket line, which we need to walk despite any wintry weather. We would much prefer to be inside our classrooms with you. But we are taking this collective action because we believe that better working conditions will lead to a better future for Quebec.

What is a picket line? Why do people say “never cross the picket line”?

A picket line is the “boundary” formed by striking workers—in this case, the Dawson teachers, support staff, and professionals who will be standing (perhaps in the rain or in the snow) around the perimeter of the campus, demanding fair pay and improved working conditions.

Crossing the picket line—entering the campus while we’re striking outside—shows a lack of respect for our demands, for our right to organize, and for the vitality of the public sector in Quebec.

How will the strike(s) affect our academic calendar? Will there be make-up classes? Will the semester be extended?

Those decisions are made by Dawson’s administration (who are not part of the strike).

You should write to your sector Dean

(<https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/leadership/office-of-the-academic-dean/deans/>)

and/or to the Registrar’s office. (Feel free to tell them that you support the teachers and that you want a fair resolution to the negotiations!)

How can I support teachers and staff?

You are always welcome to join us on the picket line.

You are also a citizen of Quebec—either of voting age already, or soon to be of voting age. You have a political voice that is every bit as loud and valid as that of any other voter. You can contact your elected representatives and tell them how you feel about the chronic underfunding of the public sector and the state of permanent crisis in our educational institutions. (For the record, your parents and neighbors and friends can do this, too.)

To find the name and email address of your MNA (your locally elected representative in Quebec’s National Assembly), click this link <https://m.assnat.qc.ca/en/deputes/index.html> and enter your postal code.

While you’re at it, you can also write Sonia Lebel, the CAQ MNA who as President of the Treasury Board is overseeing these negotiations with public sector workers. Her email address is cabinet@sct.gouv.qc.ca.

It can be a really short message—just a few sentences—telling them who you are, how you are affected, and what you envision as a fair resolution to the negotiations. If you think the government should support teachers and other striking public workers, speak up. If you want these elected politicians to break the gridlock at the negotiation table by making a serious offer, speak up. If you want your government to invest in Quebec’s future, speak up.