

## RAAS Strike Mandate Vote Frequently Asked Questions

The RAAS Executive has authorized holding a strike mandate vote to give the Negotiating Team a strong mandate to take into conciliation in late Oct/early Nov. We know that Members have different levels of understanding of labour relations and have had different capacities to follow the progress of bargaining. We have tried to bring together questions and answers related to a strike mandate vote here.

### What is a strike mandate?

A strike mandate is a bargaining tool to secure a better deal for members during negotiations and to force the employer to remove proposals that are harming our working conditions. A Union seeks a strike mandate when the employer rejects proposals for important improvements we need or will not move away from proposals that ask us for further, deep concessions. A strike mandate vote is achieved by holding a vote.

### What is a strike mandate vote?

A strike mandate vote is *not* a vote for an immediate strike.

A strike mandate vote is a secret ballot vote to enable the RAAS Executive to call a strike in the event that *all other efforts* to achieve a reasonable negotiated settlement fail.

All members of the bargaining unit are eligible to vote. The vote will occur online over a 24-hour period through WatVote (date to be shared via email). A strike mandate vote is a yes or no question, such as: *Do you authorize the RAAS Executive to call a strike?*

By law, the Union must take a strike mandate vote to make a strike a legal possibility (in case job action becomes necessary). The rules of bargaining, including strike votes, are explained clearly by the Ministry of Labour here: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/collective-bargaining>.

A strike mandate vote does not initiate strike action and usually does not lead to a strike at all.

### What are the implications of a “yes” or “no” vote?

A strong “yes” vote sends a signal to the Negotiating Team, the employer, and a Conciliator that RAAS members support the proposals of the union and do not support the remaining proposals being made by the employer.

A “no” vote does the reverse. A “no” vote suggests that RAAS members are happy with the employer’s proposal, and effectively prevents the Negotiating Team from making further advances at the table (i.e., increasing security of employment for Lecturers, ensuring replacement of tenure track appointments as people retire, rejecting proposals to withdraw or reduce teaching and research supports).

Please take a moment to read “The Folly of Not Voting to Strike in Canadian Collective Bargaining Law” <https://lawofwork.ca/strikevotes/>.

### **Why is RAAS leadership calling a strike mandate vote now?**

Despite compromising and accepting the Admin Team’s proposed changes on numerous items, the RAAS Negotiating Team has been unable to make further progress on key issues at the negotiating table, and has therefore applied for Conciliation services of the Ontario Labour Board. A strong, positive strike mandate vote would help conciliation by demonstrating to the employer and the Conciliator that we are united in the positions the Negotiating Team is taking at the table and into conciliation.

Also, should conciliation not result in an agreement, the employer will be in a legal position to take action (i.e., lockout) as would the union (i.e., strike), *as long as we have conducted a successful strike mandate vote*.

While both actions are only a remote possibility, RAAS must prepare for this.

### **Does a positive strike mandate vote mean we will strike?**

No. The goal of a strike mandate vote is to strengthen the Negotiation Team’s position so that they can negotiate a deal and *avoid a strike*. That said, a positive strike mandate vote does empower the Executive to call a strike *if that level of action becomes necessary*.

Negotiations will continue in good faith, following a strike mandate vote. We will ensure that there is considerable discussion and other actions in order to settle our agreement, before we would resort to a strike.

What is needed now is a clear strike *mandate*, not a strike. *A strong strike mandate vote usually helps to avoid job action*.

### **What would be the earliest possible strike or lockout date?**

The parties are obligated by law to meet with the Conciliator. No meetings have been scheduled yet, but we anticipate the first of those to occur by late Oct-early Nov. If the employer comes to the meeting intent on moving toward job action, they could ask the Conciliator to file a “no-board” report. Once the report is issued, there is a 17-calendar-day countdown to job action known as the “cooling off” period. The earliest strike or lockout is after those 17-days, but it is unlikely it would be that soon. The timing of a strike, *if it comes to that*, would be determined by the RAAS executive in consultation with RAAS members.

### **Is there anything I can do to help get a reasonable settlement now?**

Yes:

1. You can vote “yes” in the strike mandate vote.

2. You can make sure your colleagues understand the importance of voting “yes” for a strike mandate, and how that differs from voting to “go on strike.”
3. You can take some time to review the outstanding matters at the table (i.e., [RAAS Negotiation Bulletins](#)) and send an email to the Negotiation Team expressing your support for their efforts.

In the meantime, the Negotiation Team is ready to answer questions that you need resolved before you cast your vote. Please email any of the following Negotiation Team members: Rob Case, Edwin Ng, Arshi Shaikh, Kristina Llewellyn, Susan Cadell, or Crystena Parker-Shandal.

**The full RAAS Executive and Negotiation Team are asking you to vote YES and show that we are unified in protecting our working conditions.**