

ON STRIKE

GSU's Guide to **STRIKE & LOCKOUT**



In Grain and General Services Union (GSU) we take our family, community, work, and union responsibilities very seriously. Each of us has values which provide guidance in times of difficulty. In our employment relationship we recognize that our individual efforts are enhanced by the efforts of coworkers. We also recognize an employer's obligation to provide a workplace based on respect for good wages, good working conditions, and the freedom to express views about the employment relationship.

In our collective agreement we contract with our employer to deliver a fair day's work in return for a fair day's pay, benefits and working conditions. The collective agreement is the embodiment of a balanced economic exchange.

Periodically we bargain the renewal of the collective agreement and we reserve the right to withdraw our labour if the employer is not prepared to agree to terms acceptable to the majority as expressed through a secret ballot vote.

what's the difference?

strike versus lockout

A strike is a collective work stoppage initiated by the members of a labour union as a form of protest or negotiation tactic.

During a strike, workers refuse to perform their regular job duties, aiming to put pressure on their employer to address specific issues such as better wages, improved working conditions, or other employment-related concerns.

Strikes are typically organized and authorized by the union leadership, and they serve as a means for workers to leverage their collective strength to achieve desired changes in their terms of employment.

A lockout is a labour management strategy in which employers, or management representatives, prohibit employees from entering the workplace or performing their job duties.

Employers may use a lockout as a tactic to gain leverage in negotiations with a labour union or to press for concessions from employees, such as accepting certain terms or conditions of employment. Lockouts are part of the broader collective bargaining process and are intended to exert economic pressure on employees and their union to reach an agreement that is favourable to the management.

The decision to withdraw our labour is not made lightly since it involves sacrifices as we do our best to bargain acceptable terms for a new collective agreement. The decision to withdraw our labour is only made by a secret ballot vote after careful consideration of the issues and implications.

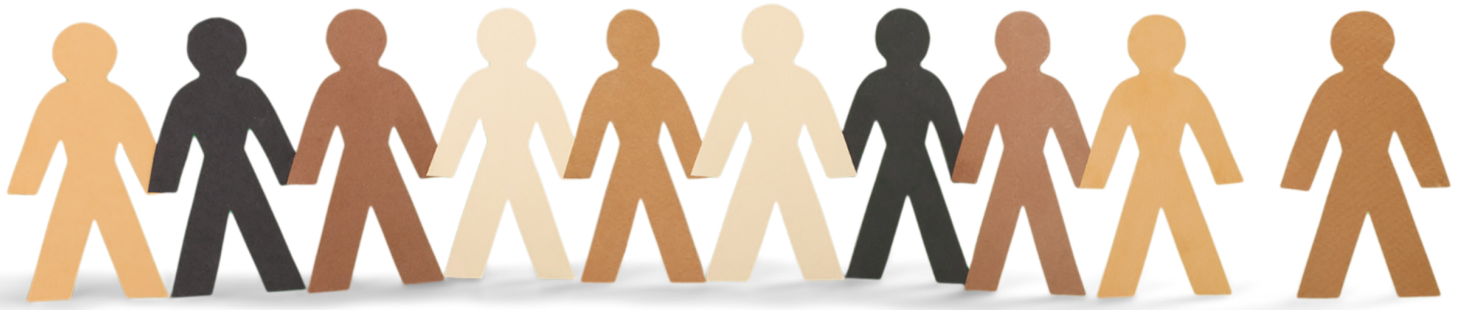
Each member of the bargaining unit has the right to participate in formulating bargaining proposals and electing representatives to lead the bargaining process. Each member has the right to review the bargaining process, the proposals and counter-proposals under consideration. Each member has the right to voice their opinion on the direction that bargaining takes. When the democratic process unfolds and a vote is taken, each of us has an obligation to support the decision of the majority.

When the majority of members in a GSU bargaining unit have voted to authorize strike action, the elected officers of the bargaining unit will make the decisions as to the timing and conduct of strike action.

When a date for strike action is chosen members will be given as much advance notice as possible. All affected members of the bargaining unit(s) in question are expected to participate to the fullest to make the strike effective.

Our sole objective in striking is to obtain renewed collective agreements acceptable to the members of the bargaining unit(s) affected.

When authorization to conduct a strike is given by the members of the bargaining unit(s) in question, a date to begin strike action will be selected. Commencement of a strike may be delayed or postponed to meet the requirements of legislation or to accommodate conciliation, mediation, further bargaining, or other considerations, but the action will only be called off after members of the affected bargaining unit have voted to accept the terms of a settlement.



How a Strike will be Organized

- The strike action will begin at a time and date selected by the Executive Committee or Executive Board of the GSU bargaining unit(s) involved.
 - From the time and date a lock out or strike action commences, all employees covered by the collective agreement(s) with the employer in question must cease working for the employer in accordance with the form of strike action decided on by the elected officers of the bargaining unit.
- Members of the bargaining unit are required to report to the strike headquarters selected by the elected officers of the bargaining unit(s).
- Any return to work must be authorized by the elected officers of the bargaining unit(s).
- Any person in a GSU bargaining unit who works for a struck employer during GSU strike or lockout will be contravening the Constitution and Bylaws approved by GSU members and subject to the full disciplinary procedures set out in the GSU Constitution and Bylaws.
- Since a GSU bargaining unit often involves more than one work location, the bargaining unit will be sub-divided into locals, districts or regions where necessary.
- Notice of central gathering or rallying points where people can gather in the event of a strike or lock out will be communicated in advance of any action.

Determination, solidarity, discipline, and unity are essential.

Leading Up to a Strike or Lock Out

As an organization that supports working people, we are always preparing for potential strikes or lock outs. As different bargaining units move through their bargaining process – including mediation and conciliation – various steps of preparation are taken to be ready should members choose to strike or and employer chooses to lock the members out.

Training

Elected Officers will be trained on how to manage a strike or lock out at their location. Topics include where to setup a picket line, how to submit documents for members to receive strike pay, how to act on a picket line, what to tell your producers or customers, how to setup a strike office, etc.

GSU Staff

Before, during and after a strike, your GSU staff will be there to help. Staff representatives will work with members to prepare and plan, and they will be walking on picket lines. Other GSU staff will help coordinate and pay strike pay, send communications, prepare information for traditional media and social media and everything else that needs to happen.

Defense Fund

As Locals enter and complete negotiations, the Board of the Defense Fund monitors the ongoing negotiations. If a Local is at impasse, or into mediation or conciliation, the Board proactively prepares to have assets available should the Local go on strike or be locked out. This includes preparing a system to pay strike pay to members in the most effective and responsible manner possible.

Organization

Efforts to manage a strike or lockout will fall to the Local's elected officers, Board of Delegates or Executive. As the officers elected to represent their members, they will be involved in the preparation, planning and action of the strike or lockout.

Materials

GSU and the Local will assess what materials will be needed and provided to support striking workers. This may include picket signs, cell phones, safety vests, strike pay forms, flags, maps, first aid kits, etc.

Day One of a Lock Out or Strike

Shutting Down

GSU members work in a lot of different situations. **For many, the process involves not reporting to work after the time selected by the elected officers of the bargaining unit on Day One of a strike or lockout and each day thereafter. For members on shift, striking means leaving the job at the time selected by the elected officers of the bargaining unit on Day One of the strike.**

For all members, a strike or lock out means not working for your employer from the selected time on Day One and in the days following until a return to work is approved by the Executive Committee or Executive Board of the bargaining unit(s) in question.

Facility Shutdown

Some members are in charge of elevators, agro centres, or other facilities. Our advice to members in those situations is to shut down the facilities to ensure that they are free of hazard and secure from any tampering.

- Make sure to record your activities leading up to the shutdown.
- Do not return to the premises until the dispute is resolved.

Report and Register

On the first day of a lock out or full-fledged strike, each member should report to their local rallying point at the time selected by the elected officers for the purpose of registering and participating in the plan of action.

Once registered, each member should report to the rallying point(s) on each successive day of the strike or lock-out action until the action is over as announced by the Executive Committee or Executive Board of the bargaining unit(s) in question.

Stopping Vehicles

When vehicles cross the picket line it is a good time to stop them by picketing across the road or driveway and talk to them for a few minutes about why the strike or lockout is happening and how they can support the workers. All too often the public isn't aware of the reason for a strike, so having an open conversation to share information and ask them to not cross the picket line is what is needed.

- Safety is key. Do not put yourself, your fellow members or others at risk or into a dangerous situation.
- Do not stop vehicles indefinitely. We want to build bridges, not burn them.

If someone from the public is being rude, disrespectful, yelling or swearing or threatening violence, do not engage with them. Document what they are saying and doing and don't make it worse. Talk to your picket captain right away and if needed call the police or RCMP.

Set Rallying Points or a Picket Gathering Point

Having a picket gathering place or headquarters is a good base to manage your picket. It could be someone's kitchen, a garage, a trailer or even a rented building. The purposes of a rallying point are:

- somewhere to store picket signs and materials,
- a place to meet and to provide the mutual support members require,
- a convenient consistent location and efficient way of communicating actions and developments,
- central location to provide a dispatch point for picketing crews and other tasks such as information gathering, information distribution, policing, and support.

Action Plans

The following list of activities is suggested for Day One and each day thereafter.

1. Reporting to and registering at the local GSU rallying point(s).
2. Compiling the head count and confirming facilities shutdown.

3. Review of the *Members' Guide to Striking*.
4. Report of attendance to the Central Strike Headquarters in Regina (weekly or as requested).
5. Compiling a list of any facilities operating and who is operating them.
6. Selecting picket line sites/locations.
7. Assigning picketing crews, rotations, and locations.
8. Gathering ideas for other actions (including support actions like BBQs and other community events).
9. Dispatching of picketing crews and captains.
10. Compiling records to facilitate strike pay.

On Day Two and going forward, the strike program will continue until there is a settlement.

Operating Procedures

To make the strike effective it is essential that each local organize itself into a well-functioning unit. **Everyone has a role to play and every role is important.** If we work cooperatively, our disciplined approach will play a decisive part in the struggle.

1. Phoning

Each elected Representative should prepare a communications tree of members' cell phone numbers and email addresses. These will be the primary ways of communicating with one another during the strike or lockout. Elected representatives should not be expected to do all the phoning; therefore, a Contact Committee can be established to share the task.

2. Picketing

Each rallying point will have a supply of GSU picket signs. Since employers usually say they intend to operate some or all facilities in spite of a strike, those locations will be obvious targets for picketing. Depending on the number of picket locations, the size of picketing crews should be sufficient to provide a solid showing as well as enabling periodic rotation.

Family members are welcome on picket lines and we should all bear in mind the feelings and needs of those with us. Common sense is the rule.

3. Picketing as a Right

Each person has the right to engage in lawful picketing along public thoroughfares and roadways. The purpose of picketing is to demonstrate that the rightful employees have withdrawn their services or have been locked out. You are entitled to stop and converse with people approaching the picket line so as to convince them not to trade with the particular place of business while it is being struck or while the employees are being locked out.

Normal courtesy and friendly public relations are the most effective tools for winning support. Explain our cause and ask for support. Consumption of alcohol on picket lines is not allowed and it detracts from our image. Similarly, rude or coarse remarks should not be directed at any member of the public.

4. Picket Captains

We encourage each picket crew to elect a captain for the purpose of serving as spokesperson for that crew. By selecting picket captains, the communication links can be shortened and enhanced.

5. Policing the Strike

It will be necessary to assign people in each local to conduct surveys of facilities to determine the scope of employer countermeasures.

Survey/Policing crews should report back to the local rallying point with their findings. If they suspect that a member of the bargaining unit is working in defiance of the majority, every effort should be made to verify the situation. If the suspicion is confirmed, the situation should be discussed locally in order to decide on the best way of convincing the individual to remedy his/her error. The Central Strike Headquarters in Regina should be advised of all situations of this sort.

6. Taking Temporary Employment or Time Off

Occasionally strikers or locked out workers have the opportunity to undertake temporary employment. As long as it is not with your employer and does not involve doing business with your employer, this is okay, but it is important to also bear in mind that one of the conditions for receiving strike pay is active participation in the strike. If you take temporary employment advise the local Strike Headquarters of your intentions and whereabouts to avoid any misunderstanding.

7. The Media

Inevitably the news media covers a strike or lockout. Their job is to report the facts and our job is to give them the facts. At the same time, we must be mindful that most of the media are looking for an angle. Do not believe everything you hear reported.

Occasionally reporters can get under your skin. **Don't take the bait of provocative questions or comments. Just tell our side of the story, why we are out, and why we will win. Avoid rhetoric or inflammatory remarks.** Common sense is the rule. The strike we are about to engage in is a matter of rights and principles.

It is done in support of the fundamental belief that workers have the right to work under conditions they agree to and to withdraw their labour if they do not agree.

8. GSU Media & Social Media

Your fellow members want to hear about your experiences. **Share your pictures, videos, or stories with us at strike@gsu.ca**, and we'll feature them on our socials, newsletters, and updates to let everyone know what is happening on your picket line. **Please be mindful and ensure that when you are sharing your updates that you have express permission from the people who are featured to publicly share their likeness.**

A quick reminder to be mindful about your own social media presence during a strike or lockout. Please be cautious about what you post during this time. It's not the moment to share anything that could compromise the integrity of our picket line or reflect negatively on our cause. Avoid using derogatory terms or name-calling, especially when referring to the company and its managers. Remember, what we post can have repercussions, and we want to keep the focus on our shared goals

while keeping our communication focused on unity, strength and respect. Your discretion ensures our collective message remains clear and impactful.

9. The Police

Occasionally police officers will visit a picket line to talk with the individuals on the line. Respond to their requests and inquiries and direct them to the picket captain or GSU central strike headquarters in Regina if they have further inquiries or information.

Your Right to Strike

The strike you engage in is a matter of rights and principles. It is not without careful consideration. As stated above, going on strike is done in support of the fundamental belief that workers have the right to work under conditions they agree to and to withdraw their labour if they do not agree.

Myths

There are a lot of myths about strikes.

Here are important facts about a strike or lockout:

1. You cannot be fired because of participation in a legal strike.
2. Your pension benefits cannot be taken away or jeopardized.
3. You cannot be replaced and denied the right to return to your job at the end of a strike.
4. Your right to strike, to picket, and to bargain is guaranteed by law. Intimidation tactics and threats against strikers are illegal.

Strike/Lock out Pay

The GSU Defense Fund Board of Directors have decided that for each regular work day that a member of the bargaining unit participates in the strike/lockout activities of GSU and does not receive any pay from or perform any work for their employer, her/his strike/lockout pay will be 75 percent of her/his gross regular salary – not including overtime pay, call-out pay, standby pay or shift premiums.

The maximum amount of strike/lockout pay will be based on a five-day week.

The minimum strike/lock out pay is \$75 dollars per day that a participating employee in the bargaining unit is on strike or locked out and is denied her/his regular pay.

In addition to strike/lockout pay, the GSU Defense Fund will pay the premiums required to maintain the group insurance benefits coverage for employees who are on strike or who are locked out.

Strike or lockout pay is income tax exempt.

Eligibility for Strike/Lock-out Pay

1. To be eligible for strike or lockout pay you must not be working for your employer during the period of strike/lockout action.
2. You must register at the local strike/lockout rallying point and participate in picketing or carrying out other strike/lockout support activities assigned by the local elected officers.
3. Vacation plans: GSU will request that your employer honour its employees' pre-approved vacation plans and pay employees the vacation pay they have earned even though they are on strike or are locked out.
4. If you intend to follow through on your pre-approved vacation plans, please register that fact with your local elected GSU officers and you will be recorded as being absent with leave.
5. If you follow through on your pre-approved vacation and receive vacation pay from your employer, you will not receive strike/lockout pay.
6. If you follow through on your pre-approved vacation plans and do not receive vacation pay from your employer you will not receive strike/lockout pay while absent on vacation, but your group insurance benefit coverage will be maintained.
7. You will be able to arrange to double shifts on the picket line in order to bank some time off for vacation purposes.
8. If you obtain alternative temporary employment with an employer other than the employer of GSU members in your Local/Sub-Local during the period of strike/lockout action and you won't be participating in picketing or related strike/lockout support activities, please register the situation with the local elected officers of the GSU and you will be recorded as being absent with leave. Employees in this type of situation will not receive strike/lockout pay.
9. If you participate in picketing and/or related strike/lockout support activities and also obtain alternative temporary employment with an employer other than the employer of GSU members in your Local/Sub-Local during the period of strike/lockout action, you will receive strike/lockout pay in accordance with your participation in the strike/lockout actions of your bargaining unit.

This guide is rather lengthy, but even so many situations will occur that we have to address in stride.

Common sense, determination, solidarity, and unity will see us through.

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Web page
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Email

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