

A Statement from the Global Labour Research Centre

The Global Labour Research Centre (GLRC) supports the efforts of the York University Faculty Association (YUFA) to reach a fair and equitable settlement that addresses equity and collegial governance, workload and working conditions, and transparent and accountable dispute resolution mechanisms. In the event of a strike or lockout, the GLRC will cease its public programming in solidarity with YUFA members.

For additional information concerning unresolved issues at the bargaining table:

- [YUFA Bargaining](#)
- [York University](#)
- Twitter: You can follow various hashtags, including #YorkUStrike2022, #YUFA, and #YorkU

Background and context:

For decades now, in Canada and around much of the world, the post-secondary education sector has been locked into a period of sustained austerity. These pressures have resulted in increased tuition fees for students, administrative tolls on research funds and conference organization, the erosion of collegial governance, and unrelenting pressures to do more with less. Contractual, contingent, and otherwise precarious employment has proliferated, dramatically increasing workloads and work-life conflicts in the context of reduced government supports and broader marketization initiatives.

In response, college and university administrators are demanding real wage and salary cuts, supported by legislative efforts that constrain free collective bargaining in the public sector ([see Bill 124 in Ontario](#)). Many administrators in the post-secondary education sector have also adopted a governance model of top-down managerialism and hired corporate law firms to lead their collective bargaining to force wage and work condition concessions.

In November 2020, the Ontario government announced its intention to push ahead and fully implement its [performance-based funding plan](#), which imposes 10 indicators largely based on narrow labour-market outcomes, commercialization, and economic imperatives. By 2024-25, 60 percent of Ontario universities' operating funds will be determined by their performance on these [10 metrics](#). See [here](#) for an analysis on why this performance-based funding is bound to fail.

In the face of chronic underfunding, compounded by decades of regressive tax policies and metric-based funding structures, the higher education sector faces a breaking point. In the UK, more than 50,000 members of the Universities and College Union (UCU) have gone on strike and almost all of its 110,000 members have taken job actions in an unprecedented wave of union militancy over pensions, pay cuts, and working conditions across 68 universities.

In Canada, recent job action has taken place for similar reasons at Acadia University, the University of Manitoba, the University of Lethbridge, Concordia University in Edmonton, and Ontario Tech. The University of Alberta, Athabasca University, and the Université Sainte-Anne in Pointe-de-l'Église, N.S. have all been facing similarly difficult collective bargaining situations. The recent 'restructuring' process that was forced on Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario that led to the closure of the majority of its undergraduate and graduate programs (58 undergraduate programs and 11 graduate programs) is part of this larger trend of retrenchment of higher education.

Since April 30, 2021, members of the York University Faculty Association (YUFA), representing full-time faculty, librarians and archivists, and postdoctoral visitors, have been without an agreement. After 25

years of successful contract negotiations, the union is in a strike position for the first time since 1997. Across Ontario, some 16,000 faculty at 24 public colleges (represented by OPSEU) have been without a contract since July 2021. They are on the precipice of province-wide strike action over similar issues of real wage cuts and deteriorating working conditions.

All of these global, national, and provincial trends, combined, point to the urgent need to act against this widespread devaluation of higher education, a trend that we are also witnessing at York University. The crisis in labour relations with faculty and staff is becoming a permanent fixture of the university experience in Canada for students and staff alike. Post-secondary faculty and staff are exhausted with pandemic work conditions, the attacks on collegial governance by university administrations, and the lack of proper funding and respect from governments. The attacks against higher education and public services more broadly must stop.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has shown anything, it is that the world of work must radically break from a model of flexibilization, contingency, and reduced collegiality. This will require building more inclusive labour market policies and pursuing a model of decent work. In developing this model, we urge the university sector – and York University in particular – to take the lead.

For more sources, see:

- Robin Vose. 2016. [Governance Nightmares](#). CAUT.
- Jamie Brownlee. 2016. [The Roles of Government in Corporatizing Canadian Universities](#). Academic Matters.
- Henry Giroux. 2021. [Education, Politics, and the Crisis of Democracy in the Age of Pandemics](#). Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 21(4), 5-10.
- Reuben Roth. 2021. [Subjects of the New Corporate University: The Sabotage of Laurentian University](#). Socialist Project.

YUFA asks for your support:

- **Share YUFA [infographics and posters](#).**
- **Write York's President:** Email the president (president@yorku.ca) to let the university know they should negotiate an offer that is fair for YUFA.
- **Write the Premier and other politicians:** It is the Province of Ontario that decides how much funding universities get, and their chronic underfunding of the university system has led to both rising tuition fees and eroding working conditions and governance. Let them know they should repeal Bill 124.
 - Premier Doug Ford: call (416-745-2859), email (doug.fordco@pc.ola.org), or reach out on Twitter (@fordnation)
 - Minister of Colleges and Universities, Jill Dunlop: call (705-326-3246), email (jill.dunlopco@pc.ola.org), or reach out on Twitter (@JillDunlop1)
 - [List of MPPs by riding](#)

Global Labour Research Centre Executive Committee
March 17, 2022

Global Labour Research Centre, York University

In the event of a strike by YUFA, the administrative office of the GLRC will remain open

glrc.info.yorku.ca

glrc@yorku.ca

416-736-2100 x44704