

CAUT DEFENCE FUND



UCCB strike demonstration in Halifax, 2000 (photo: Alvin Comiter)

The CAUT Defence Fund dates from 1978, and its founding purpose was to provide unionized Canadian academic staff associations with a unified strike fund. Formed of associations that are members of CAUT, it now rallies 37 member associations representing over 17,000 academics from St. John's to Regina.

Since 1992 the Defence Fund has been incorporated under the laws of Canada. Each member association appoints a Trustee (associations with more than 500 members appoint a second Trustee, and those with more than 1,000, a third) and some CAUT officers are ex-officio members of the Board of Trustees, which meets in person at least once a year to oversee the management of the Fund.

Trustees play two roles. They have fiduciary responsibilities to ensure that monies are used solely to meet the objectives and purposes of the Fund. Secondly, they represent the views and interests of their own union.

The Fund's resources come from two sources: member associations' dues and the interest which the Fund earns from its invested assets.

The Fund's assets grew to \$1 million in the mid-1980s, to \$18.5 million in 2006. Given that the present situation and challenges facing universities in Canada often lead to labour disputes, and in some cases to threats of strike, it is important to give the Fund deep pockets to help its members defend their interests, and thereby the interests of faculty and librarians in general.

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF THE CAUT DEFENCE FUND?

The **PRIMARY PURPOSE** of the Defence Fund is to provide strike benefits to associations while its members are engaged in a strike or lock-out and experiencing loss of salary. These benefits are paid as a grant to the association, to be used at the local union's discretion, usually as strike pay (which is non-taxable) for individual union members. Strike benefits are currently set at \$75 per calendar day, and payments start on the 4th calendar day of the strike or lock-out. Benefits are calculated using the number of persons for whom monthly dues have been paid.

In addition, the Defence Fund:

- provides financial assistance to member associations which incur costs of mediation and/or interest arbitration in settlement of contract negotiations (including final offer selection) in situations where a member association has legal bargaining rights and where a collective agreement, or a reopener provision within a collective agreement, is being negotiated or renegotiated;
- provides financial assistance to member associations which incur costs in prosecuting employer actions alleged to be unfair labour practices or failures to bargain in good faith, and in support of applications for legal remedies against certain types of employer action that might otherwise lead to strikes;

- provides assistance to defend the interests of those member associations whose collective bargaining and/or strike rights are removed or restricted by legislation;
- provides financial assistance to aid member associations engaged in strike or lock-out, such as:
 - supporting mediation or similar mechanisms for settling strikes,
 - providing 6-month interest-free loans to cover premiums for insured benefits, such as group life, disability and health, should they be disrupted by a strike or lock-out,
 - extending 6-month interest-free lines of credit to help with strike expenses. The provision of such funds can also create media coverage, as occurred in the 1995 University of Manitoba strike (and later in subsequent strikes) when the Fund provided a cheque for \$1,000,000 which created beneficial media coverage and signalled to administrators the level of support the union had.
- lobbies on behalf of associations on strike or lock-out by writing letters and making phone calls to boards of governors, university presidents, administrators, and local politicians. Such activities serve an important purpose as they usually generate enhanced media coverage, including national coverage.
- sends visitors from member associations to demonstrate in support of a member association on strike. Since the 1995 faculty strike at the University of Manitoba, the Fund has organized local and national solidarity visits. Within the first week of a strike or lockout, representatives from other faculty unions travel on a given day to the strike or lock-out site, with subsequent visits if the strike continues. They join striking faculty on the picket lines and bring their striking colleagues psychological (and usually financial) support, which provides to them a sense of national unity and increases morale. These support visits display publicly the national solidarity of the university teachers and librarians represented by the faculty unions currently members of the Fund.



Visit of "driving and flying pickets" during the Université de Moncton strike, 2000 (photo: Alvin Comiter)

WHAT BENEFITS CAN MY ASSOCIATION EXPECT TO RECEIVE FROM THE CAUT DEFENCE FUND?

The CAUT Defence Fund offers invaluable support when negotiating a new collective agreement. During the bargaining process, faculty unions make use of important and proven-effective strategies such as the threat of strike action, the strike vote and the withdrawal of services. There are, however, occasions when all these methods fail and a strike or lock-out is invoked. At such times, the CAUT Defence Fund will provide faculty unions with essential financial, political and psychological support.

It is important to remember that strikes are not always about salaries. In 1995, our colleagues at the University of Manitoba were on strike for 23 days in a fight to protect academic freedom. The Defence Fund paid UMFA \$700,000 in strike benefits alone, and a six-month interest-free loan of \$1 million.

In 1997, our colleagues at York University were on strike for 55 days. The main issues were the administration's unilateral changes in the retirement plan and inequities in salary and workload. The Defence Fund paid YUFA

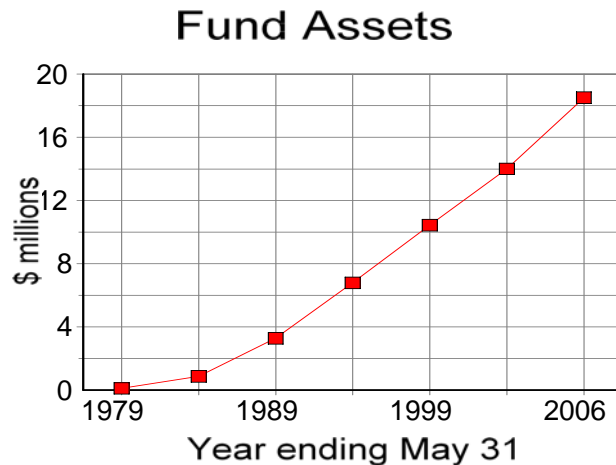
almost \$2 million in strike benefits alone, and a six-month interest-free loan of \$700,000. In addition, the Defence Fund provided YUFA with a grant of almost \$15,000 to assist with legal expenses related to a charge against the Employer for unfair labour practices.

The political and economic climate for higher education in Canada is more likely to worsen than improve in the foreseeable future. Strikes are going to be more frequent and of longer duration than ever before. More often than not, the main purpose of faculty strikes will not be salaries. More than ever before, academics across Canada are going to need the protection of a powerful national strike fund that can lobby on their behalf and provide them with financial, political and psychological support when they are confronted with recalcitrant employers who have become more and more inventive in their ways to give less and less and take away more and more from what we collectively gained so far.

This support can have a significant impact upon negotiations, as faculty unions gain considerable political benefits knowing that they are supported by academic colleagues from across Canada. It also demonstrates to their employers and the public at large that the impasse is not only a local but a nation-wide concern, and employers' bargaining teams, who are aware that these unions have access to considerable financial and other national resources, are forced to take the unions' position at the table more seriously.

For a faculty union which has been a member of the Fund for six months or longer, strike and other benefits will be paid in the form of a grant.

Faculty unions which have been members of the Fund for less than six months receive benefits in the form of interest-free loans.



HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO JOIN THE DEFENCE FUND?

A faculty union is expected to contribute to the financial assets of the Fund in two ways:

- 1) During the first year of membership, a union is required to pay a \$30 initiation fee for every dues-paying member in its bargaining unit or units. The initiation fee is reduced to \$20 for unions which join the Fund within one year of becoming certified. Such initiation fees are paid out in equal monthly instalments over the first year of membership.
 - 2) Each faculty union pays monthly dues for each dues-paying member in its bargaining unit or units. The level of dues is changed from time to time by the Board of Trustees. It is currently set at \$5.00 per person per month (non-taxable), a figure that has not risen since the 1990s.
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For additional information about the CAUT Defence Fund, including the By-Laws and Standing Rules and Regulations, please consult the web site at: <http://defencefund.caut.ca> or email the Fund Secretary at defencefund@caut.ca.

Member Associations of the CAUT Defence Fund (as of October 2006)

Acadia
Algoma
Bishop's
Brandon
Brock
Cape Breton
Carleton
Concordia
Dalhousie
Lakehead
Laurentian
Manitoba
Memorial
Moncton (Edmundston)
Moncton (Moncton)
Moncton (Shippagan)
Mount Allison
Mount Saint Vincent
New Brunswick
Nipissing
Northern Ontario School of Medicine
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
Ottawa
Prince Edward Island
Queen's
Regina
St. Boniface
St. Francis Xavier
Saint Mary's
Sainte-Anne
Saint Thomas
Trent
Western Ontario
Wilfrid Laurier
Windsor
Winnipeg
York