Dear Undergraduate Students of the University of Lethbridge Community,

The University of Lethbridge Faculty Association (ULFA) is on strike effective at 11:00am today, and the Board of Governors have declared a subsequent lockout, effective tomorrow at 11:00am. We are disheartened by the disruption of classes, especially considering the challenges of the past two years. Tuition in our sector is at an all time high. Students are paying higher than they ever have before, for online classes and self-directed learning; as of today students are paying top dollar to wait out this job action instead. Students are facing yet another disruption, willfully imposed by people, at tables they have no voice at, while both parties tout that they're pro-students.

Bettering the university by virtue of a solid collective agreement that both parties are proud of, is in the best interests of students; lockouts and strikes are not. For collective bargaining to be successful, it must be an interest-based negotiation– both sides need to be willing to make compromises and find common ground rather than focusing on the distance between them.
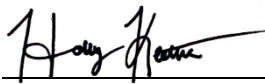
The ULSU is reminded of the days following the fall 2021 reading week. We received an outpouring of emails with concerns and anecdotes of how difficult it is to be a student. We responded to this in two ways; first was our speech addressing the Board of Governors, and the second was a call for collaboration to lobby the Alberta government to stop gutting the post secondary sector. At the time, we were satisfied that we were getting engagement from faculty and administration alike on the matter, but now it feels like we have lost so much progress. We fear this divisiveness is further justification for the provincial government to continue defunding and privatizing the sector.

On the morning of the cooldown period lapsing, ULSU President Kletke sent correspondence to both Mike Mahon and Dan O'Donnell, urging them to consider the weight of both of their decision-making power when it comes to job action. We regret to write today that it appears our words were not heeded by either party, as the situation has become increasingly hostile and tenuous between them. We agree that better working conditions are better learning conditions– this is critical for retaining and bolstering our quality of learning. We also recognize that the Alberta government has imposed unfortunate budget cuts to our institution and will likely continue to do so. The turbulence of the past two years has had negative effects on all those in the University community, but now is the time to work together to solve our problems. We are disappointed to see the leveraging of students in negotiations and messaging. We understand job action is a legitimate means of reaching an agreement, however we are disappointed to witness what appears to be the demonization of one another, rather than an active pursuance of coming together. We encourage that the parties re-read these calls for change and collaboration*, and we will issue as many reminders as necessary.
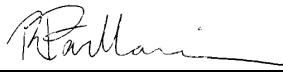
The Board and the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association will say they care about students. The Government of Alberta will say they care about students. Whether these groups genuinely do or do not, is up to you to decide. However, since we first considered the possibility of job action in Fall 2021, the ULSU has always advocated for students' interests at the U of L and always will. We refuse to let any party weaponize student emotions and fears for their gain, furthermore we will not stand idly as the word "students" is thrown around like a bargaining chip.

We have no plans to stop fighting for you, the students, and we certainly don't plan on giving up now. We invite and encourage you to engage with us in the coming days to get back to class.
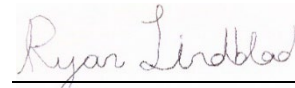
Yours in solidarity,

Holly Kletke, President

Rebecca Parkkari, VP Academic

Ryan Lindblad, VP External

Mitchell Nixon, VP Student Affairs

Mark Serebryansky, VP Operations & Finance

*Documents can be found at this link: https://ulsu.ca/jardocuments