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UTFA Wins Benefits Improvements for All Members; Update on Outstanding Issues including Workload

September 30, 2022

Dear UTFA Colleagues,

We write with three primary purposes:

1. to share good news about benefits for all UTFA members, active and retired;
2. to provide some of the more important (and egregious) examples of the issues that are still outstanding and are a part of arbitration hearings this weekend; and
3. to offer some "lessons learned" thus far in our multi-year negotiation process.

1. Agreement Reached on Benefits Improvements

As we previously wrote, on January 25, 2022, the UTFA Negotiating Team for Salary, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload (SBPW) and the University Administration reached a **three-year agreement**. Salary, benefits, and workload terms for the third year, ending June 30, 2023, would be subject to arbitration and continue to be constrained by the Ontario government's **Bill 124**, which restricts across-the-board (ATB) salary increases to 1% per year during the three-year period covered by this agreement. Benefits increases are also constrained by a cap of 1% increases to total compensation. To read each of the parties' arbitration briefs and to review UTFA's previous bargaining updates, see the **Ongoing Negotiations** page on UTFA's website.

On September 15, 2022, Arbitrator Eli Gedalof issued an interim award ordering a 1% ATB salary increase (in keeping with Bill 124) effective July 1, 2022, and an increase to the minimum per course stipend and overload rate from $18,255 to $18,438.

Yesterday, UTFA and the Administration reached an agreement on benefits improvements for the third year of this three-year agreement—to be implemented November 1, 2022—that applies equally to active and retired UTFA members.

It is very important to note that UTFA successfully resisted the Administration's efforts to deny benefits improvements to our retired members. Maintaining equal access to health benefits for active and retired members was a fundamental bargaining principle for UTFA's negotiating team and a key goal that UTFA Council had mandated us to pursue.

The benefits improvements for all three years of the SBPW Agreement are summarized here:

Benefit	Prior Coverage	Coverage for Years 1 & 2	Coverage as of Nov. 1st
Mental Health Maximum	$3000	$5000 & Increased the applicable reasonable and customary cap to no less than the Ontario Psychological Association's recommended hourly rate. Added to list of eligible service providers: Marriage and Family Therapist, Addiction Counsellor.	$7000 & Hourly rate protections and expanded list of eligible service providers continue.
Vision Care	$450 per 24 months.	$700 per 24 months. Added to list of services covered: laser eye surgery for vision correction.	$725 per 24 months. Coverage for laser eye surgery for vision correction continues.
Major Restorative Dental	$2800	$5000	$5000
Paramedical (includes Chiropractor, Physiotherapist, Registered Massage Therapist, Osteopath, Acupuncturist, Dietitian, and Occupational Therapist)	$1250	$2500 & Chiropodist added to the list of service providers.	$5000 & Full list of service providers continues.
Orthodontics	50% covered, lifetime maximum of $2500.	75% covered, lifetime maximum of $5000.	75% covered, lifetime maximum of $5000.
Dependent Scholarship Program	50% of the amount of the academic fees for five full courses in a general Arts & Sciences program at U of T for a first undergraduate degree for enrolments at eligible institutions.	50% on the same terms.	Effective the 2022-2023 academic year, 65% on the same terms.

2. UTFA Interest Arbitration Update

Improving benefits for all our members has been only one part of UTFA's efforts on your behalf during these protracted negotiations. Other issues, including ensuring fair and equitable workloads and the

timely payment of PTR awards while we are bargaining, remain subject to arbitration. UTFA and the Administration have both filed detailed and lengthy arbitration briefs. Oral hearings before Arbitrator Eli Gedalof are taking place this weekend.

UTFA has prepared a chart (that we will continue to update as the process unfolds) that provides a side-by-side comparison of the differences in the parties' positions on some of the most important issues that remain unresolved. These issues include reining in excessive teaching workloads; the need for transparent workload assignments; Librarian Research Days; the need for a minimum level of TA support campus wide. The chart, and the arbitration briefs on which it is based, can be found at UTFA's **Negotiations and Agreements** page on our website.

3. Some Lessons Learned in this Very Long Round of Bargaining

The extraordinary length of the bargaining process, the refusal of the Administration to respond meaningfully to longstanding concerns expressed by our membership about excessive workloads, and the importance to our members of the unresolved issues proceeding to interest arbitration all reinforce UTFA's view that our bargaining framework as defined by our Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is deeply flawed. It serves UTFA members very poorly in many respects. As an Association we must:

- Broaden the scope of items that we can negotiate.
- Eliminate lengthy and expensive delays throughout the bargaining and dispute resolution processes.
- Protect the terms and conditions of employment of UTFA members during periods between agreements (**for example, the payment of PTR which was initially withheld by the Administration last year**).

If we are to resist undue influence by the Administration during bargaining, we must ensure that all terms relating to salaries, benefits, and workload remain in effect during each round of bargaining until a final resolution is reached by settlement or award. This "freeze provision" is a standard right in unionized settings, but there is no requirement for an association to be unionized to have the benefit of such a provision. This freeze provision is one of the items that will be decided following the upcoming arbitration hearings.

We are working in various ways towards addressing these challenges and will say more on this in the coming days and weeks.

Until then, we remain very interested in hearing from you, our members. Please email us your thoughts via **faculty@utfa.org**.

Sincerely,

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On behalf of the UTFA SBPW Negotiating Team

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