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# Prof. Levine - UTFA Presidential Statement #1

**As provided in the UTFA Presidential Guidelines, below is communication #1 from Professor Levine, candidate for UTFA President. The communications of the candidates reflects the views of the candidates rather than the Association.**

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Dear Colleagues:

I am running for UTFA President because I think that after four years of controversy and turmoil, UTFA needs a change. After fixing serious issues within its own organization, UTFA can be a more effective advocate for faculty and librarians without being perpetually combative.

**Why I am running to be UTFA President: to restore strength and sanity to UTFA's organization**
I have seen how UTFA has helped people at every rank, and how much of an important role the UTFA President plays in communicating to the administration what faculty and librarians need to thrive. An effective President ensures that when challenges arise, the administration consults the faculty on the best way forward and protects our rights and freedoms. Only the UTFA President can represent the views of UTFA when speaking to the Provost, the Premier or the Prime Minister, so it is important that every member take a moment to consider their options before casting a vote, because right now, it is crucial that UTFA changes direction.

Past UTFA Presidents made tremendous strides ensuring that our pensions were on solid foundations and could grow without excessive management fees holding it back, fighting for the right to go to binding arbitration on salaries and benefits, securing health and dental coverage for both part-time and retired faculty and librarians, and working collaboratively with the administration by establishing a working group that eliminated mandatory retirement. In contrast, the current President negotiated for fewer benefits than we were entitled to under Bill 124, took a long list of demands to an arbitrator and came away with a salary boost in-line with inflation for only one out of three years, built a long list of unresolved grievances, and failed to institute a functioning harassment and non-discrimination policy.

Our track record of negotiated gains is meagre, and overshadowed by controversies that accomplished little more than dividing colleagues from each other. Several colleagues have emailed me, concerned that a third term in office will be marked by even more divisiveness caused by a certification drive.

*Before even considering a certification drive, UTFA must make sure that its own house is in order.* UTFA's internal governance is dysfunctional, lacking both transparency and accountability. Elections are a time to hold leaders accountable by asking tough questions about their performance. After four years, the facts about upheaval within UTFA are clear:

- Almost every staffer left the organization including at least eight staff attorneys who departed in the past two years.
- An experienced Vice President and several Executive Committee members abruptly left in the middle of the academic year.
- There is an ongoing Ontario Human Rights Tribunal (OHRT) complaint against Terezia Zoric, and an unrelated complaint against UTFA itself alleging unaddressed discrimination and bias (download details here).
- UTFA's Constitution and By-laws are selectively applied, and conflicts of interests are rarely disclosed.
- Opaque budgets hide expenses and employees with vague job titles and unclear responsibilities whose purpose & job descriptions were never shared with Council. Details and documentation can be found here: https://www.renanlevine.com/utfa-dysfunction

*Can a labour organization which operates like this effectively advocate for the working conditions of the faculty and librarians at the University of Toronto? Is it a surprise that almost every interaction between UTFA and the university administration is characterised by conflict that is neither collegial nor productive? UTFA members not only deserve better, we need better, more effective leadership during the challenging times to come!*

**What I will do as President**

As President, I will fight for fairness, respect, and for the rights and resources that allow our members to achieve continued excellence in teaching and research that is recognized around the world. I will work with able colleagues who volunteer their time to work with UTFA to focus on identifying the issues that are most important to our members. UTFA members will work together, bridging across ideological divisions rather than as part of partisan teams, to find creative solutions to the many challenges facing faculty and librarians in the coming years. We will:

- Re-establish trust with the administration to advocate and negotiate effectively for UTFA members.
- Rebuild UTFAs decimated legal team, which ensures cost effective and critical protection for all UTFA members.
- Help with housing costs in – and out- of the GTA.
- Expand access to childcare subsidies, including aftercare programs, to help our members achieve a better work-life balance.
- Protect every individual's academic freedom and work to improve civility on campus.
- Advocate for scholars in the lab sciences whose needs are often overlooked by UTFA, but would benefit from additional support to lobby for better opportunities for international graduate students.
- Encourage, not fight, university advancement efforts that benefit our research and our students.
- Ensure that PTR in every department fairly rewards merit and diligence.

- Strive for more consistency across departments in what items can be billed to PERA accounts and enable parents to reimburse plane tickets for children accompanying them on conference trips.

Of course, protecting the pensions, health and other benefits of retired members is a sacred trust, and as UTFA president I will have no priority higher than ensuring this protection! This applies to ALL of us, both those currently retired and those of us not yet retired!

On my website, you can read more about me, my vision for UTFA, my platform, and some of my policy proposals. You can also email me if you have any questions.

Please vote for a more pragmatic UTFA that seeks to avoid unnecessary divisions and conflict to make our collective bargaining more effective, and, in doing so, enables us to better shape policies that will make our university a better place to work.

*Thank you for your support!*

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