



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
faculty ASSOCIATION

Published on *University of Toronto Faculty Association* (<https://www.utfa.org>)

[Home](#) > Prof. Zorić - UTFA Presidential Statement #3

Prof. Zorić - UTFA Presidential Statement #3

As provided in the [UTFA Presidential Guidelines](#), below is communication #3 from Professor Zorić, candidate for UTFA President. The communications of the candidates reflects the views of the candidates rather than the Association.

Dear Colleagues,

We write to you as the elected Vice-Presidents and Treasurer of UTFA and the immediate past Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload & Co-Chief Negotiator, to express our profound dismay with spurious claims that Professor Levine is circulating. These claims anchor his negative campaign against Terezia and transform it into a frontal attack on UTFA. We hold first-hand knowledge of the events and people that Professor Levine mischaracterizes. None of his allegations withstand the scrutiny of those colleagues who possess direct knowledge of UTFA's internal governance, division of labour, and decision-making checks and balances. Professor Levine's distortions are clearly false, and they harm our members' interests.

Throughout a campaign marked by his own relentless mudslinging, misinformation, and disparagement of his colleagues, Professor Levine has repeatedly invoked as strengths his own agreeableness, honesty, and sense of fair play. In light of this contradiction, we feel compelled to speak out.

We wish we could simply continue to focus on [our positive campaign about the gains we've made and the issues that matter to you most](#), including salaries, retiree benefits, workload, housing, job security, and more. But the other candidate's disparaging comments, against individuals and against the organization, demand a more direct response. Repetition does not make Professor Levine's tales real, and yet we are aware that *if one repeats a falsehood often enough, that falsehood can begin to seem like the truth*. Thus, in addition to standing united before you to highlight the fact that a ["super-majority" of two-thirds of elected local UTFA Council representatives have publicly endorsed Terezia](#) (including some with extravagant praise), we feel compelled to briefly correct some key factual inaccuracies.

HRT0 Complaints & Complaints that Ask to Overturn Elections

Ethical leadership should not support politically-motivated complaints that use the complaints process as

a sword (rather than as a shield)

Anyone can file a complaint at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, regardless of its merits or motives. ***Despite his frequent references to transparency, Professor Levine fails to disclose that the complainants in both HRTO cases are among his closest political allies and prominent members of his Presidential campaigns.***

One HRTO complaint involves a baseless accusation of antisemitism, which Jewish colleagues diagnosed in [2022 and again in 2024](#) as a strategic weaponization of the accusation for political gain. The second complaint involves an allegation that UTFA discriminated against a person in Professor Levine's inner circle on the basis of his race, sex, and gender. The complainant does not claim to belong to any recognized minority or equity-seeking group, to UTFA's knowledge. UTFA has applied to have both of these politically-motivated complaints summarily dismissed and anticipates a favourable decision at the Tribunal. Equally disturbing is the repeated lobbying by Professor Levine and one of these complainants to cancel UTFA elections results when they are unfavourable to them.

UTFA Office Culture

Under Terezia's leadership the UTFA office has been restructured to improve services to members while saving significant amounts of money.

UTFA is a busy and sometimes demanding place to work, no doubt. But it has fair and appropriate accountability measures in place as we have [detailed here](#). The vast majority of UTFA staff are unionized. During Terezia's presidency, no staff member has brought forward a toxic or discriminatory workplace complaint, and no grievances have been filed with the UTFA Office Staff Relations Committee that oversees staffing matters (and regularly updates the Executive and Council). Our current staffing model reduces the duplication of efforts of internal and external lawyers; assigns matters based on the advisor's area of expertise; and has the Vice-President, Grievances, playing a more active leadership role. This means that **we provide the same, or better, excellent advice, service, and support to our members**. See ["Professor Levine Spreads UTFA Office Staff Misinformation" within our "Washing Off the Mud\(slinging\)" page](#).

One of the very same colleagues involved in the political use of complaints cited above more recently made unfounded allegations about UTFA's workplace culture. We note the timing of this complaint: the member seems to recall an event that allegedly happened several years ago, when he was a member of the Executive, *but he raises it for the first time in the midst of an election when it is politically opportune for him to do so*.

It is true that a large number of staff left UTFA in the past few years. Some retired in their 70s (with lovely celebrations attended by current and past staff and executive members) after serving UTFA for many years. Some departures reflected normal attrition and turnover (including pandemic-era turnover common in many organizations), and some are associated with changes that UTFA has undergone in the last couple of years, including doing more now than ever before.

We find Professor Levine's politicization of staff relations to be deeply unethical. He has repeatedly circulated staffing misinformation because he knows that UTFA officers do not comment publicly on employment matters concerning individual staff. Moreover, changes in staffing have not had the negative financial effects that Professor Levine wrongly claims. Instead, the effect has been the opposite, exceeding a combined net \$350K savings per year over the previous model, an amount that UTFA is now using to re-invest in improved services for our members.

UTFA's Finances

Under Terezia's leadership we eliminated UTFA's structural deficit and established new accountability mechanisms for work done at UTFA—all while significantly increasing the levels of service offered to UTFA members. Executive and Council members have regular opportunities to question UTFA's financial decision-making and all UTFA members have direct online access to audited financial statements.

We are very proud to be able to report, *again*, that UTFA's financial picture is stronger today because of Terezia's leadership. UTFA has demonstrated a clear commitment to financial transparency. Every year the UTFA Leadership Team prepares an *interim* budget for detailed discussion at Executive and then at the June Council meeting (answering all questions that arise). We then present a *final* budget for Council's approval at the October Council meeting and answer all questions that arise. UTFA's Treasurer has carefully and skillfully overseen the investments of the Association to ensure that they are made judiciously. UTFA's Financial Advisory Committee has closely monitored the Association's finances, including our adherence to our internal investment policy, and has raised no issues or concerns. Each year, an external auditor has approved UTFA's financial statements which are available for members to see, as they are published alongside our [Annual Newsletters](#) that document the broader work the UTFA Executive does on behalf of our membership. ([Check out last year's Newsletter; it's excellent!](#))

UTFA's 'Tough' Approach to the Administration

Under Terezia's leadership UTFA's negotiating teams have secured historic and sector-leading achievements of 10% salary increases, major benefits expansions, and a thorough defense of equal health benefits improvements for retirees. All of these were gained by refusing to settle for the Administration's final offers in bargaining.

Terezia and her Negotiating Team recognize that to win gains for members, you need to stay strong at the negotiating table. In Professor Levine's view the Administration will be likelier to agree with what UTFA asks for, if we ask for fewer and smaller things *more nicely*. That means salary increases below the rate of inflation, or pay cuts, in effect, since Professor Levine often repeats Administration talking points about the University's financial woes and its inability to pay.

Professor Levine confuses institutional power relations defined by sometimes conflicting interests and uneven legal tools, with an individual sense of fairness and acting 'nice'. This reveals that he has no first-hand experience either in leading UTFA teams engaged with the Administration (or any UTFA teams, for that matter) or in complex labour negotiations. **Rather, Professor Levine's sense of solidarity seems to rest primarily with the Administration.**

One of the best ways to see why Terezia is best able to deal with tough issues in a fair and effective manner is to watch [the recent UTFA Presidential Candidates' forum \(debate\)](#). If you are short on time, you may want to focus on the candidates' responses to questions, about halfway through each of the videos.

Conclusion

We know from our collective experience serving on UTFA Executive that the Association is in a much stronger position financially, operationally, and in terms of staffing now than six years ago, when Terezia first became President. We are grateful for the dedicated staff who make UTFA work, as well as for the remarkable talents of the Executive Director. UTFA is proud of its track record as an employer, of being excellent stewards of members' dues and trust, and especially of our direct and skilled support for members who need our help.

UTFA's actions under Terezia's leadership speak louder than the degrading words of the other candidate. Again, these include:

1. Winning a 10% across-the-board salary increase and securing the increase for 475 recent hires.
2. Negotiating major improvements in mental health and other benefits for all members, including retirees-against the Administration's efforts to reduce them.
3. Defending academic freedom and collegial governance as core values of UTFA and the University.
4. Preventing any repeat of the Administration's withholding of PTR payments as a bargaining tactic.
5. Expanding and further democratizing UTFA's membership outreach via Town Halls, surveys, focus groups and panel events.
6. Championing UTFA's Policy for Librarians negotiations. After years of work and decades of waiting, a new deal was reached!

And more! See [here](#).

Terezia's team-focused campaign offers a positive vision of what we will continue to build together. We tell you the truth about [what we have done](#), and describe (in detail!) [the extraordinary things to come](#). We focus on real issues of lasting importance to our members, like salaries, workload, housing and our membership's growing precarity. We stand together as serious people, from different backgrounds, with different areas of expertise and, often enough, with views and values that differ. This is healthy, and means we consider multiple angles on problems and hold each other accountable in collegial and collaborative ways. Our joint words here are a testament to that fact, as is our commitment to 'Team Terezia', a team of teams, consolidated by Terezia Zorić's capable leadership.

We invite you to join us at this critical juncture. Let's build together.

Sincerely,



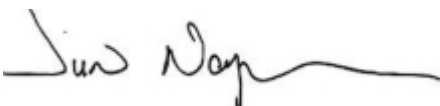
Jeffrey Bale
Vice-President, University and External Affairs



Sherri Helwig
Vice-President, Grievances



Ariel Katz
Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload



Jun Nogami

*Former VP Salary, Benefits, Pension and Workload, UTFA Council Representative for Constituency #402,
Professor, Materials Science and Engineering*



Maureen Stapleton
Treasurer

Source URL (modified on Mar 28 2024):<https://www.utfa.org/content/prof-zori-utfa-presidential-statement-3>