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Bargaining Update: Major Breakthroughs and Increased Membership Engagement!

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Major Breakthroughs. Following 5.5 days of mediation, UTFA's Negotiating Team reached an historic agreement with the senior Administration to make significant improvements to Article 7, the grievance and arbitration process, of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). The parties also negotiated a Sexual Violence Policy Letter of Agreement (LoA). Both agreements were ratified by Council at our January 30th, 2025 meeting!

Membership Engagement. UTFA's Bargaining Update Town Halls for active members and retirees on January 20th and 21st were well attended, lively, and interactive. Our detailed bargaining update and Q&A were also very well received. On January 23rd, the UTFA Negotiating Team sought, through a "flash" survey, additional feedback and guidance from our members regarding 5 principles for prioritizing health benefits improvements. This significant membership engagement and support not only shapes and informs our proposals, it strengthens our positions as well.

Upcoming Arbitration. Salary, Benefits, and Workload issues that remain unresolved will be determined by Arbitrator Eli Gedalof. We are now preparing UTFA's brief for our first arbitration date, scheduled for Sunday, March 16, 2025 (likely to be followed by an additional hearing date TBA). *We anticipate receiving Arbitrator Gedalof's award before the end of this academic year, i.e. by June 30th.*

Grievance and arbitration process:
There are several excellent substantive and procedural changes, but the short version is that the archaic, uncollegial, and unbalanced process for resolving grievances and accessing third party arbitration has been significantly improved. Workplace grievances can now be heard much faster, and if they are not resolved may be adjudicated by a professional arbitrator who has significant powers under the *Ontario Labour Relations Act.* This is a huge improvement over the current system. Once Governing Council ratifies it, the agreed-upon language will be enshrined in the Memorandum of Agreement. The details of the changes can be found here.

Workplace investigations and sexual violence policy:
UTFA has been seeking to address concerns with the process of workplace investigations conducted under the Sexual Violence Policy for almost 8 years (since 2017 - details here). In response to a Fall 2024 Association grievance that identified major, serious, concerns in the Administration's conducting of workplace investigations, the parties reached an agreement to enter into a fact-finding and facilitation process. The aim is to improve members' rights within the Policy on Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment and to develop a protocol to ensure that members are protected by reasonable, appropriate, and procedurally fair workplace investigations. This is a significant step in the right direction for creating a safe and fair workplace for all members. The details can be found here.

Our thanks should go to the President, the Vice-President, Grievances, the Legal & Advice Team, UTFA administrative staff, and ultimately the UTFA Negotiating Team for achieving these historic gains.

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