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Report of the Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload, 2021-2022

April 15, 2022

SBPW Bargaining

This past year UTFA's bargaining team engaged in a tough round of negotiations with the Administration, resulting in a three-year agreement covering the period from July 1, 2020, to June 30, 2023. The outcome of negotiations/mediation determined salary and benefits improvements for the first two years of the deal. The terms for the third year will be determined in the fall through arbitration.

Salary and benefits increases in this round were constrained by Bill 124 (the Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019), which restricts salary increases to 1% per year during the three-year period covered by this agreement. The legislation also puts a limit of 1% per year on total compensation, which means that the amount of money available for benefits improvements is also limited.

UTFA is a participant in OCUFA's Charter challenge against Bill 124, but it may be years before the court renders a decision on the constitutionality of the legislation.

To achieve the historic gains to benefits made in this round of bargaining, the UTFA bargaining team, led by UTFA President Terezia Zorić and myself, pushed back on the Administration's estimates for both the spending envelope for benefits and the costing of proposed improvements, which resulted in a larger suite of improvements. The benefits improvements that came into effect March 1, 2022, are summarized in the table below.

Year 1 benefits improvements:
An additional $180 is to be deposited into each active member's Health Care Spending Account (HCSA), with an effective deposit date of July 1, 2020. This is a one-time only adjustment that acknowledges that benefits improvements for 2020–2021 could not be utilized during that year. This additional money expires on June 30, 2022, if not spent by that date.

Year 2 benefits improvements:
An additional $50 is to be deposited into each active member's HCSA, with an effective deposit date of July 1, 2021. This is a one-time only adjustment that acknowledges that benefits improvements for 2021–2022 are available for only part of the year.

The following improvements, applicable to both active and retired members, were also achieved:

	Old coverage	New coverage
Mental health	$3000	$5000 Marriage and Family Therapist and Addiction Counsellor added as providers
Vision Care	$450 per 24 months	$700 per 24 months laser vision correction as eligible expense
Major Restorative Dental	$2800	$5000
Paramedical	$1250	$2500 Chiropodist added as provider
Orthodontics	50%, lifetime max of $2500	75%, lifetime max of $5000

At the beginning of bargaining in the spring of 2020, UTFA identified the following bargaining priorities through a series of member surveys and town halls:

- Fair compensation, including the payment of PTR;
- Fair and equitable workloads;
- Mental health benefits improvements;
- Streamlined accommodation procedures;
- Health and safety protections; and
- Keeping the retiree health benefits plan the same as that for active members.

Clearly, we have made progress on many of these priorities.

In arbitration, UTFA will continue to pursue the salary, benefits, and workload proposals for Year 3 that have been tabled as part of these negotiations. These include important policy changes related to

workload and an increase to the number of librarian research days.

You can read a complete list of items that might be tabled by either UTFA or the Administration in the appendices to the agreement.

With respect to benefits, UTFA has tabled a number of improvements for Year 3 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023). You will also see that the Administration has proposed cuts to benefits that likely impact retirees disproportionately, and that it has proposed to exclude retirees from any Year 3 benefits improvements. UTFA has been steadfast throughout bargaining in our refusal to differentiate retirees' and active members' benefits. Maintaining the same health benefits for retirees has been a long-standing, fundamental, principle for UTFA. We will resist any deviation from equal treatment related to the health benefits of active and retired members. The University of Toronto is in a very healthy financial position, with revenue and enrolments up. If the Administration continues to pursue its proposal to exclude retirees from Year 3 benefits improvements, we will engage our membership in a campaign to make clear that this is unacceptable to UTFA members.

The following outlines some of the other priority areas of UTFA's work in SBPW.

Joint Benefits Committee
The Joint Benefits Committee monitors the usage of benefits and addresses any concerns brought forward either by UTFA, on behalf of members, or by the Administration. We had expected your healthcare premiums to decrease due to reduced utilization of benefits during COVID. However, this did not happen. We have asked for the financial statements for the benefits plan so that we can analyze where the money is going, and exactly how much we are paying to Greenshield for administrative services. This data will strengthen our bargaining position for benefits in the future.

Policies for Librarians Negotiations
Negotiations to modernize the Policies for Librarians (PfL) are ongoing. The negotiation process has drawn out over many years. While UTFA has prevailed on some issues, we are now shifting to a formal facilitation process to resolve outstanding issues. UTFA President Terezia Zorić and I will continue to support the PfL team at this next stage.

For more details, see below the Report of the Chief Negotiator, Policies for Librarians. Congratulations to the team for the agreements negotiated to date.

University of St. Michael's College Bargaining
St. Michael's concluded its last round of negotiations in late winter 2021. As part of that agreement, three working groups were established to look at: the measurement of teaching effectiveness in light of the problematic nature of SETs; whether or not there's a gender-based salary gap at the University; and the possibility of St. Michael's joining the UPP. All three groups have been busy over the past year and expect to conclude their mandates in the coming months.

COVID LOU

Some of the most urgent bargaining issues that UTFA identified during its consultations with members were related to the pandemic. To address the urgent and pressing concerns of our members, COVID-related bargaining priorities were split off into a separate series of negotiations that resulted in a COVID Letter of Understanding (LOU) that was signed in August 2021.

The LOU provided:

- An alternative mechanism for the assessment of PTR for work during the 2020–2021 academic year;
- A modest amount of workload relief for those members with the heaviest teaching loads;
- Protections against dual delivery of courses;
- Making SET scores optional for PTR and promotions processes;
- Better communication to members about accommodations arrangements; and
- A separate fund, COVID-19 Expense Reimbursement Fund (CERF), to reimburse members for some of the expenses associated with the shift to remote work.

I am proud to report that the COVID LOU that UTFA negotiated with the Administration is described by our peer faculty associations as one of the strongest in the University sector.

In the Fall 2021 term, when it became apparent that the fifth wave of the pandemic would result in further public health measures, UTFA took immediate steps to negotiate a renewal of the terms of the COVID LOU. The agreement was renewed for the Winter 2021 term on February 24, 2022. This provided extensions of:

- the alternative mechanism for the assessment of PTR to work done in the 2021–2022 academic year;
- the workload relief for members with the heaviest teaching loads during the 2021–2022 academic year; and
- the eligibility period for expenses that could be reimbursed under the CERF.

In addition, UTFA will continue meeting with the Administration to discuss how the accommodation provisions in the COVID LOU have been implemented. We are concerned about unnecessary delays and difficulties many of our members have experienced when seeking medical accommodation and about reports of onerous documentation requirements that have acted as a barrier in some cases.

Thanks

I would like to end by thanking UTFA staff, especially our counsel, Reni Chang, and legal assistant Crystal Doyle for their support in bargaining; our Executive Director Kathy Johnson for her advice and wisdom; and Emma Phillips at Goldblatt Partners for her hard work.

Thanks also to the dedicated members of the SBPW bargaining team who persisted through an arduous round: Roy Gillis, Mary Alice Guttman, David Roberts, Arjumand Siddiqi, and Harriet Sonne de Torrens.

Most of all, I would like to thank UTFA President Terezia Zorić for all that I have learned from her this year, and for her willingness to co-lead SBPW and COVID LOU negotiations in addition to the many other good things that she does in her role.

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