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Report of the Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload, 2014–2015

April 15, 2015

Bargaining

Our last three-year agreement expired on June 30, 2014. As per Article 6 of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), UTFA's President and I met with the Administration in January of 2014 to formally announce our intention to bargain a new settlement. Since the last AGM, we have met with the Administration to engage in bilateral negotiations on a dozen occasions.

The Administration has stressed government directives calling for "no net compensation increases" for public sector employees. They have also indicated an interest in cutting the cost of some of the benefits that our active members would be eligible for in retirement. UTFA's bargaining team has questioned the need for such cuts and has resisted the pressure to submit to generic and stale "austerity" threats.

UTFA's bargaining team seeks to secure a hybrid (percentage and fixed dollar) ATB award for all three streams that would be retroactive to last June, and we have proposed increases to the total pool of funds available for PTR. We have made the case for specific improvements to librarian salaries and have expressed our concern about the large disparity between teaching stream and tenure stream PTR awards. We continue to argue for full pension augmentation for our retirees, although the Administration claims full augmentation is impossible under current circumstances. A more complete list of the proposals tabled by the UTFA team can be found in Bargaining Report #2 (February 17, 2015).

While we plan to continue talking with the Administration, we have also agreed to sit down soon with the mediator, Mr. Kevin Burkett, in an effort to reach a settlement. We understand any frustration felt by our members with the slow pace of the process. While PTR amounts agreed to in the last round of bargaining have already been applied to your 2014–15 salary, any ATB increases secured in this round will have to be applied retroactively to July of 2014. Thank you for your patience as we try to secure the fairest deal possible for our members.

Pensions

UTFA remains concerned about the pension landscape at U of T and in Ontario. The history of U of T's pension plan creates concern that UTFA members might be asked to bear the burden of past mistakes. The University of Toronto, like many others, has agreed to the terms of a provincial solvency relief plan that includes demands for increased employee contributions. UTFA agreed to such increases in the last round of negotiations, trying to secure offsetting improvements in other areas. In this round, we have agreed (along with other employee groups and the Administration) to participate in a joint committee to look into a possible conversion of our plan to a single-employer Jointly Sponsored Pension Plan (JSPP) model. The province, COU, and OCUFA have also all been considering reforms that might pool pension investments or create a sector-wide JSPP for Ontario universities and colleges. Many questions remain about the relationship between such reforms and current plan deficits, and about the specific virtues of a sector-wide plan for the University of Toronto. Ettore Damiano, Professor of Economics and an UTFA Executive member, sits on the Governing Council's Pension Committee, and has been diligently representing UTFA at meetings of the OCUFA/COU JSPP working group over the past year. The working group's recommendations will be made public this spring.

Workload

This year, UTFA tabled comprehensive revisions to the Workload Policy, crafted in response to workload implementation problems identified particularly in the work of the Vice-President, Grievances, Cynthia Messenger. We look forward to agreement on changes, especially as the Administration's own research indicates some shared concerns with implementation.

Finally, thanks to my fellow bargaining team members (Bobby Glushko, Paul Hamel, Linda Kohn, Cynthia Messenger, George Milbrandt, Scott Prudham, and Katharine Rankin) and to all the other members of the Salary, Benefits and Pensions Committee (Mounir AbouHaidar, Tom Alloway, Michael Attridge, Ettore Damiano, Lino Grima, Jody Macdonald, Andreas Motsch, Anthony Sinclair, Harriet Sonne de Torrens, Judith Taylor, Terezia Zoric, Peter Dungan, Rosa Sarabia, Mary Alice Guttman, and Kent Weaver) for their hard work and commitment to UTFA. Thanks also to Heather Diggle and the rest of the UTFA staff for their patience and expertise.

Paul Downes
Vice-President, Salary, Benefits and Pensions

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