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UTFA members and possible CUPE 3902 Unit 1 work stoppage

March 9, 2021

CUPE 3902, Unit 1 is currently bargaining on behalf of some 8,000 Teaching Assistants, Course Instructors, Exam Invigilators, and other students and postdoctoral fellows who perform teaching work on contract at the University of Toronto. Their bargaining priorities include overwork protections, employment equity and inclusion, mental health supports, health and safety, and job security. Notably, many of these priorities overlap with UTFA's own bargaining priorities.

CUPE 3902 and the University of Toronto Administration have spent over 130 hours at the bargaining table. CUPE 3902 has indicated they have made meaningful, but slow, progress. They have also advised UTFA that their priorities continue to be shaped by a series of meetings with their members and other student groups. To focus the attention of the negotiators, CUPE 3902 has taken the steps to trigger a legal strike or lockout as soon as March 22nd, should they and the Administration be unable to reach a timely agreement. The parties have five more days of negotiations scheduled**.** While a labour disruption is not a certainty, CUPE 3902, Unit 1 has indicated that they are prepared to take job action if a new and timely Collective Agreement is not achieved.

We very much hope that a settlement can be negotiated and a strike or lockout can be avoided.

However, given the possible work stoppage by members of CUPE Local 3902, Unit 1, we ask UTFA members to be aware of the following:

- UTFA is seeking to renegotiate the *UofT Policy on Academic Continuity* with the UofT Administration and has asked the Administration not to invoke a state of disruption related to any labour dispute while we do so;
- Currently, normal course evaluation procedures governed by the *University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy* may be suspended only if the Administration formally declares a state of disruption under the *UofT Policy on Academic Continuity;*
- Whether or not the Administration declares a state of disruption, **UTFA members maintain academic freedom** over how their courses are taught, including discretion on whether and how to

make alterations to course grading schemes and or the design of assignments;
- **No faculty member or librarian should be asked to do anything that would undermine their academic freedom as prescribed by Article 5 of the joint UTFA/Administration Memorandum of Agreement;** and**,**
- Faculty members and Librarians cannot be compelled to perform the work of striking CUPE workers. This would fall outside of the terms of our appointments and existing workload norms. UTFA will vigorously defend any faculty member or librarian represented by **UTFA** who feels pressured to take on extra work and who wishes to resist such pressure.

Taking on the work of striking TAs and/or Instructors or otherwise seeking to mitigate the impact of a strike or lockout has the effect, even if otherwise intentioned, of taking sides in a labour dispute that is not our own. We encourage you to be mindful of taking any actions that would undermine the efforts our CUPE colleagues to reach a fair outcome in this round of bargaining.

If you have any questions or concerns about the potential labour disruption and what you should do, or if anything in this letter is unclear, please be in touch at faculty@utfa.org.

For further UTFA communications regarding previous CUPE and UofT Administration labour disputes, please click here on UTFA's web site.

Sincerely,

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UTFA President

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UTFA VP University and External Affairs

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