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

My work this year as UTFA's Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions and Workload (SBPW) has quite naturally focused on bargaining, as our last Memorandum of Settlement, a two-year agreement, expired on June 30, 2020.

The impacts of the pandemic and [Bill 124](#) (which sets a 1% limit on salary and benefits increases for workers in the broader public sector) have significantly shaped our discussions to date.

UTFA's bargaining team submitted a full suite of proposals to our senior Administration counterparts in May 2020 that were based on a series of member surveys we conducted and other feedback we received early in the pandemic.

UTFA members identified the following primary bargaining priorities:

- Fair compensation, including the payment of PTR;
- Fair and equitable workloads;
- Mental health benefits improvements;
- Streamlined accommodation procedures;
- Health and safety protections; and
- Protecting retirees' access to the benefits plan available to active members.

The University's senior Administration forecasted substantial revenue losses early in the pandemic due to their prediction of sharp declines in enrolments in the fall. In actuality, U of T's enrolment increased by 8 per cent, as UTFA reported on [February 11, 2021](#). While it is true that U of T has experienced some budgetary impacts due to COVID-19, particularly in the area of ancillary services, the University also has a significant carry-forward of hundreds of millions of dollars. We know that senior Administrators at U of T can readily afford to provide UTFA members—and indeed all University employees—with fair compensation and benefits.

The negotiation process has been slow. We are disappointed that the Administration has not been forthcoming in scheduling sufficient time for meaningful bilateral (face-to-face) negotiations. Despite UTFA's repeated offers to meet more frequently, for full days, on evenings, and during weekends if necessary, to resolve negotiations in reasonable time, over the past year our counterparts on the Administration side of the table have only been prepared to meet with us for 6 to 8 hours a month—sometimes less.

We continue to advocate for policy changes in many areas that address our members' top priorities (see above). To date, the Administration has not been prepared to respond to UTFA in a timely manner with written proposals or enforceable commitments to resolve our disputes.

At the same time, over the past year our bargaining team was forced to engage in a lengthy and expensive legal challenge to oppose the Administration's ongoing refusal to pay PTR from the 2019-2020 academic year. That refusal was a stark departure from decades of past practice.

Following an expensive and time-consuming legal challenge that failed to resolve the issue, UTFA launched a petition asking our members to demonstrate their support (see the President's report, above). Our members responded swiftly and decisively in support of UTFA's position on PTR as per the terms set out in the petition, and shortly thereafter the Administration finally agreed to do the right thing.

The success of the PTR campaign demonstrates that a powerful resource for UTFA in bargaining with the Administration is a highly engaged membership that understands and actively supports our bargaining positions.

In keeping with this principle, UTFA's chief negotiators set up a series of constituency-based membership bargaining update meetings. These have continued into April of this year. President Terezia Zorić and I have found these meetings to be very rewarding as we hear directly from UTFA members about their concerns and about their experiences under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is clear is that while the impact of the pandemic has increased workloads for the overwhelming majority of our members, this impact has not been evenly distributed. Faculty in the Teaching Stream, as well as those who have family caregiving responsibilities (such as young children at home or dependent loved ones) have been disproportionately affected. Moreover, UTFA members facing significant workload pressures have been provided with widely varying and inconsistent resources across units.

Overall, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequities at U of T in the same way it has done in the broader communities to which we belong.

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

Joint Benefits Committee

The Joint Benefits Committee monitors the usage of benefits and addresses any concerns brought forward either by UTFA, on behalf of our members, or by the Administration. UTFA's benefits package, provided by Green Shield Canada, is on an Administration Services Only (ASO) basis. This means that the Administration sets the premium levels so as to recover the cost of providing benefits to all of our members and pays a percentage overhead to Green Shield Canada. The Administration sets new premium levels once a year.

Green Shield Canada provides UTFA with quarterly data, which we use to inform our bargaining goals in

this area.

Last year's benefits data shows that our members, as a whole, were unable to use the full scope of their benefits during the pandemic since public health protocols limited access to many services, such as dental procedures or massage therapy. It is our position that reduced usage should be reflected in reduced health care premiums for the coming year.

Tri-Campus Working Group

UTFA and the Administration have committed to setting up a working group that will examine inequities that exist across units and the three campuses and recommend remedies.

Policies for Librarian Negotiations

Negotiations to modernize the Policies for Librarians are ongoing. The negotiation process has drawn out over three years. While UTFA has prevailed on some issues, we are now shifting to a formal mediation process to resolve outstanding issues.

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

St. Mike's Bargaining

I congratulate the St. Michael's bargaining team for a successful round of bargaining, which took eight months to negotiate. For more details, see below for the report of the St. Michael's College Bargaining Unit.

Thanks

I would like to end by thanking UTFA staff, especially lawyers Samantha Olexson and Reni Chang, 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 bargaining team: Roy Gillis, Mary Alice Guttman, Marcin Peski, David Roberts, 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 negotiations in addition to all the many other good things that she does in her role.

Jun Nogami
Vice-President, Salary, Benefits, Pensions, and Workload

Report of the St. Michael's College Bargaining Unit

On February 17, 2021, we reached a tentative three-year agreement (July 1, 2020—June 30, 2020) that we have ratified.

Despite the stresses of the pandemic and the pressures of Bill 124 (as mentioned above), the experience was constructive and collegial.

Our bargaining team negotiated improvements related to three priority areas:

- Across-the-Board salary increases (ATB)
- Benefits
- Teaching Stream

Our ongoing bargaining position on ATB has been to follow the lead of UTFA's SBPW bargaining team, which means we typically defer our position for salary increases until UTFA has tabled its position. We also apply this tactic to PTR pool amounts and break points. Our bargaining team and the Administration agreed to maintain this approach for the recent round of negotiations.

In addition, our Administration agreed that, in any year when the U of T Administration has not reached a settlement with UTFA, St. Michael's College bargaining unit will receive a provisional PTR increment on July 1 (the typical date that PTR is issued), using the last available numbers. This provisional increment would be adjusted to reflect the agreement between the U of T Administration and UTFA, after settlement is reached.

On benefits, the St. Michael's bargaining team made a significant gain. Effective July 2021, our members will move into a new plan (Green Shield Plan), mirroring the benefits plan that all other UTFA members receive. Currently, the St. Michael's plan is part of the broad suite of benefits available for employees who are covered by the United Steel Workers' plan at the St. George campus.

On improvements for the Teaching Stream, the St. Michael's bargaining team achieved its goal of integrating the Teaching Stream into our collective agreement, on which it embarked in the last round—unglamorous, but a real milestone.

Aside from these achievements, we also sought improvements on research leave and study days for librarians. We have also gained welcome clarification around the leadership of the Kelly Library.

We were not successful in making any changes to the prevailing merit process, not even a temporary moratorium related to the pressures from the pandemic.

We have started planning for upcoming work by establishing three working groups: on the future options for the St. Mike's pension plan; on gender salary equity; and on evaluating teaching effectiveness (following on from the Ryerson arbitration). Not only will these working groups support our member's identified priorities, but we also encourage new members to join these working groups and support UTFA's broader goals.

I would like to thank the bargaining team: Silvia Vong (Kelly Library), Michael Attridge (Theology), Harriet Sonne de Torrens (UTFA Executive Committee), and myself, supported by Reni Chang (UTFA lawyer). We have benefitted throughout from the support of OCUFA and CAUT and, as always, the warm solidarity of UTFA members.

Michael O'Connor

Chief Negotiator and Chair, St. Michael's College Bargaining Unit

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