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UTFA Bargaining Update and Move to Mediation

June 9, 2021

We are writing to update you on our efforts to negotiate salary, benefits, pensions, and workload (SBPW) improvements on your behalf.

As we [previously reported](#), UTFA entered into the current round of SBPW negotiations with the U of T Administration in the Fall of 2019. Our proposals arose from a series of surveys and constituency-based consultations with faculty and librarians. UTFA members identified the following priorities for this round of SBPW negotiations:

- Fair and equitable workloads;
- Fair compensation, including the payment of PTR and ATB;
- Mental health supports and benefits improvements;
- Streamlined accommodation procedures;
- Health and safety protections;
- Job security for precarious members;
- Fair use of student course evaluations; and,
- Protecting retirees' access to the health benefits plan available to active members.

Our last agreement expired on June 30, 2020. Regrettably, we find ourselves still negotiating an agreement that could conceivably end on June 30, 2021.

[Bill 124](#) (which sets a 1% limit on salary and benefits increases for workers in the broader public sector) has constrained our ability to pursue salary and benefits improvements. Initial discussions at the bargaining table produced few results and our progress slowed further when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March of 2020. It soon became clear that we needed to shift our attention to pressing concerns related to health and safety, workload and PTR in the context of emergency remote instruction, accommodation, etc. Consequently, UTFA's bargaining team invited the Administration to engage in focused talks in the form of a Letter of Understanding (LOU) on COVID issues prior to returning to our previously identified proposals. UTFA's offer was initially rejected by the Administration.

Instead, throughout 2020, UTFA found itself challenging [the Administration's unprecedented denial of PTR](#) and its ongoing resistance to investing the time and effort required to negotiate a settlement that would mitigate the impact of COVID and address the priorities voiced by our members.

Following our members' successful petition and [key win on PTR](#) in mid-January 2020 UTFA renewed its request to negotiate a focused LOU on time-sensitive COVID issues. This time the Administration agreed. However, we continued to make little progress.

Accordingly, UTFA proposed that the parties engage a mediator-arbitrator to assist the parties in reaching an agreement via mediation and, failing a successful mediation, to proceed to a binding arbitration process. The Administration is only willing to agree to joint *mediation* at this time with Kevin Burkett, a highly respected senior mediator-arbitrator, who will facilitate discussions between UTFA and the Administration regarding the LOU on COVID issues. **Mediation commences this afternoon and continues on June 16.** Although we believe that this mediation would be more productive if it were conducted as a combined mediation-arbitration, we remain hopeful the parties can make progress and reach agreement. We will keep you posted.

UTFA will schedule an all-membership meeting in the coming weeks to update you on the status of SBPW negotiations. We look forward to seeing you there!

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