



McMaster University Faculty Association

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MEMORANDUM

March 16th, 2022

TO: Members of the McMaster University Faculty Association on the Career Progress/Merit Plan and MUFA Librarians

FROM: Catherine Anderson, Chair, Remuneration Committee

RE: Joint Administration/Faculty Association Committee Remuneration Agreement, July 1, 2022, to June 30, 2025

I am pleased to report that the Joint Committee has negotiated a Remuneration Agreement between MUFA and the University Administration, a copy of which is appended here. MUFA's Remuneration Committee approved this agreement on March 14, 2022, and the MUFA Executive approved it unanimously on March 16, 2022. I'm now inviting you to ratify this agreement by casting your vote.

Negotiation Process

You'll recall that we surveyed MUFA members in October of 2021; that survey had 547 responses for a response rate of 56%. Many thanks to all the members who provided detailed responses to that survey – the priorities that you identified informed the initial proposal that we presented to the Administration on December 15, 2021. Beginning January 10, 2022, the Joint Committee met eleven times to negotiate. Between those meetings, MUFA's bargaining team consulted regularly with the Remunerations Committee and the Executive, and with OCUFA staff and former MUFA Presidents.

You may cast your vote on this agreement between 9:00 am March 21 and noon March 31. You may also ask any questions about this agreement at a Zoom meeting at 1:30 pm on Monday March 21. The agreement becomes binding if a majority of voters approve it.

Thanks

During this intense work I've been very thankful for the wisdom, experience, and expertise of many colleagues. Katherine Cuff and Nicholas Kevlahan represented you along with me at Joint Committee. Our counterparts on the Administration side were Susan Tighe, Saher Fazilat, and Kim Dej, who recognized that the work of MUFA members plays a vital role in the university's continued excellence. Our negotiations were guided by the advice of the other members of the Remunerations Committee: Kirsten Culver, Michel Grignon, Aadil Merali Juma, and André Phillion. Mara Giannotti's wealth of institutional knowledge and Jessica Weyman's skills at extracting member data were both crucial to our strategy. I'm also thankful for the advice of OCUFA staff Kimiko Inouye, Jordyn Perrault-Laird and Ben Lewis and the collective wisdom of our colleagues across Ontario who sit on OCUFA's Collective Bargaining Committee.

Context

Our negotiations were constrained by the province's *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019 SO 2019, c12* (a.k.a. "Bill 124"), which imposed a three-year "moderation period" on public sector labour groups during which compensation could not increase more than 1% per year. Within the context of that moderation period, the multi-year global pandemic, rapidly rising inflation, and undergraduate enrolments higher than predicted, your MUFA representatives sought to reach an agreement that recognizes your work during the pandemic and mitigates some of the uncertainties of the coming years.

Highlights and Rationale

While the full agreement is appended to this memo for your perusal, I'll provide here a summary of the highlights and some explanation of our rationale for agreeing to these terms.

Compensation

In each year of the contract, your salary will increase by 1% from the previous year, the maximum allowable increase under the *Protecting a Sustainable... Act*.

If the *Act* is repealed, then you'll receive an additional **contingent salary increase** of \$1000, \$1050, and \$1330 for Years 1, 2 and 3, respectively. MUFA is the only Faculty Association in Ontario that has negotiated a contingent salary increase.

Furthermore, to recognize your extraordinary contributions during the pandemic, and to offset some of the effects of the moderation period, we achieved an **increase to the number of CP/M points** in the pool from the typical 120 per 100 members to 130 points in Year 1 and 125 points in Years 2 and 3.

Benefits

The *Act* also constrains benefits during the moderation period, such that the cost of any improvements cannot represent more than a 1% increase relative to existing benefits. For this reason, some of the improvements to benefits will be phased in over the length of the contract.

Beginning in Year 1 of the contract, your coverage for eyeglasses and other **vision care will increase to \$500** per two-year period. Members who take **pregnancy leave** will see their EI benefit topped up to 95% of salary for **17 weeks**, an increase of six weeks over the previous 11-week benefit.

Also beginning in Year 1, you can claim **mental health care visits to a greater variety of providers** within the \$3000 limit. We hope this will make it easier for you to access the care you and your family need. If your dependents attend post-secondary institutions outside of Canada, they will be eligible for the **tuition bursary** that was previously only available to those attending Canadian institutions.

Beginning Year 2, instead of the \$500 cap on individual providers, you may **pool your paramedical expenses up to \$2000/year** across any combination of eligible providers. That pool expands to **\$3000/year** in Year 3 of the contract. We are particularly pleased to have achieved this benefit improvement that so many of our members asked for.

Professional Expenses

One factor that enables MUFA members continued excellent performance is the largest Professional Development Account in Ontario. Your PDA will increase by \$100 for each year of the contract.

Working Groups

You'll notice that this agreement also includes commitments to form a number of working groups that will investigate issues of importance to our members. MUFA has committed to bring the outcomes of these working groups to the Joint Committee agenda during the term of this agreement, and we hope that you will be eager to contribute your experience and expertise to this work.

Health Care Spending Account

Survey respondents were tentatively in favour of introducing a Health Care Spending Account (HSA) that could reimburse a wide variety of health care expenses, but also wanted thorough examination of the risks and benefits of such a plan. We committed to form a working group with Administration and other labour groups that would investigate the details of an HSA that potentially could apply to all labour groups and retirees. The intention is that the outcomes of this working group will inform our next round of negotiations.

Salary Data for Equity-Deserving Groups

In 2015 MUFA negotiated a one-time pay correction for women faculty, whose salary lagged behind that of men. Since then, MUFA has monitored salary data for gender inequity but has not been able to do the same for other equity-deserving groups without adequate data. This working group will recommend how to acquire and use the relevant data.

Teaching-Stream Faculty

Since the introduction of the teaching stream in 2007, members have noticed many disparities between teaching-stream and tenure-stream faculty at all levels of the university. While some of these differences are warranted because of the nature of the positions, other seem unnecessarily arbitrary. Furthermore, the recommendations of a 2014 working group on this subject were never addressed. This working group will investigate disparities between the streams and make recommendations that will be taken up by Joint Committee.

What's not in this agreement?

Some items that do not appear in this agreement are also noteworthy. Despite the university's rising costs of providing continued benefits after retirement, we did not agree to freeze those benefits without a thorough investigation by the HSA working group. And we declined to form yet another pension working group since the 2020 recommendations of the prior working group have not yet been addressed. We consider the absence of those two items from this agreement to be in the long-term interests of our members.

Recommendation

Constrained by provincial legislation, your MUFA representatives advocated for the priorities that you identified. I am pleased with the gains we've achieved in this agreement, and I ask you to ratify it by voting YES on the electronic ballot before noon on March 31.