

# FACULTY NEWS LINK



## President's Report Jesmen Mendoza TFA President

The province referenced an additional \$6.4 billion in funding for the next four years for Ontario's colleges and universities. That investment is significant and shouldn't be overlooked. We need to also be truthful, however, about what it does and doesn't resolve. The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations has noted that our province is still the lowest-funded university system in the country on a per-student basis.

Simultaneously, the model for student aid has changed drastically, and OSAP has moved away from grants and toward a more student-loan-driven system. The impact of this is unmistakable as it places the burden on students when it comes to funding higher education and creates differential access to post-secondary education and equity over time.

A different message from the University Administration, though, is also being heard locally. At the recent budget town hall held early in the year by the University Administration, they had announced that

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## President's Report Continued

there would be no budget cuts. That is welcome news. However, it prompts a further question: if the institution is financially able to avoid cuts, how and where will this funding be allocated? When I speak to the membership, they explain to me that they are seeking investments, like additional full-time faculty and staff to serve the core academic mission of the University, and accelerating the deferred maintenance projects across our campus buildings. I've raised this at all the town halls that I've attended, and I hope the University prioritizes what you've all told me in how these funds ought to be used.

Against this backdrop, we are embarking on a new round of bargaining. I want to recognize that the mandate that our members provided earlier this year was sound and unambiguous, and we passed it unanimously. Our negotiating team carries that mandate forward with conviction and support. This latest round of bargaining talks also runs in the shadow of the Kaplan decision where labour relations is what we need to rely on with respect to bargaining and not have a tunnel vision approach towards interest arbitration. We have taken Kaplan's comments very seriously as the Executive and Negotiating Committee recognizes that labour relations could be an arena for creative solutions that are durable and create solutions that address our needs while maintaining fairness and respect.

There is good faith, however, involved in labour relations. It critically depends on representatives for the TFA to vigorously do the work of advocating for our members, to ask tough questions and hold the line where it matters. Good labour relations are not about avoiding discomfort or being congenial. They are about engaging with it productively. Speaking truth to power can be hard to hear, but it is necessary if we are to reach solutions that are credible, equitable, and long term.

If we try to mute that voice it does not strengthen the process, it undermines it. This is where we currently face obstacles. Recent developments in our labour relationship with the University Administration have been undermined by them where they have interfered in the Association's ability to conduct its business. We are currently seeking redress through grievance arbitration, and at the Labour Board. Our hope is that we will reach a resolution on this matter and that we'll be able to tell you more about this within the next few months to come. Members can read more about these concerns in the grievance report that is included in this bulletin.

I also wanted to acknowledge in this bulletin Ian Sakinofsky, a longstanding member of the TFA Executive and active member of the Association. Early this year, we had a huge turnout to his Celebration of Life and it reflected a lot of the influence he had in this community. It was a stirring reminder of the relationships, commitments and care that sit at the center of our Association, and the incredible contribution that he has provided to the life of the Association and the improvements in our workplace. As such, the Executive has renamed the *Distinguished Service Award* in his honour. It is an appropriate tribute to one of those who exemplified the work of service and collective accountability that we want to preserve.

In closing, we are coming to bargaining with a mandate, a dedicated team and a membership that is in solidarity. We are doing so amid a larger climate of provincial underfunding that persists in keeping institutions from being viable or fair. And we are doing so in a way that requires the labour relations process to operate as it should: with integrity, independence and respect. There is work ahead. But there is also a good foundation to stand on.

## Grievance Report

This has been a very busy semester, but the good news is that with the addition of two new members, we have a full, and very engaged, grievance committee. Continuing members of the committee are me (Corinne Hart) as grievance chair, Jesmen Mendoza, ex-officio member, Tammy Landau and Kym McLaren. Joining the committee are AJ Cordeiro, and Jenn MacArthur, who were acclaimed in the recent election, and appointed pro tem (before their term formally begins) in late February. I want to say thank you to Shai Yeshayahu, our outgoing member whose term has ended. As always Andre Foucault, the TFA Executive Director, and Shiraz Vally and Mina Rajabi Paak, our Labour Relations officers continue to provide us (and all Association members) with exemplary support around everything directly and indirectly grievance related.

### Grievances, awards and other news

At present, we have 22 open grievances, eight of which were filed since my last grievance report. Five of the new grievances are at the individual level, meaning that they are directly related to something experienced by a specific member. The others, while they include individual components, focus on policy issues with broader implications for all TFA members. Of the open grievances, 16 are in various stages of arbitration, and one that was completed in late April. The number of grievances going to arbitration is frustrating and disappointing, as it is a direct outcome of the Administration's refusal to engage in creative (or often any) problem solving around grievance related issues. Because the employer's common practice has become an immediate denial of our grievances, even when there is, or could be a simple and mutually beneficial solution, we are generally left with no option but to refer our grievances to arbitration in order to obtain any resolution at all. It is unfortunate that denial has become the employer's go-to answer, as



**Corinne Hart**  
**Chair of Grievance**  
**Committee**

arbitration processes move at slower-than-a-snail's pace, with timelines for some of our grievance arbitrations currently extending into 2028. This is because there are limited arbitrators with experience in the University context and its particular nuances, including academic freedom, as what we often feel is stonewalling on the part of the employer to agree to an arbitrator and find, and settle on mutually available arbitration dates. Although we are exploring strategies to both expand our pool of arbitrators, and shorten the timelines around arbitration, the reality is that the long wait for arbitration to be scheduled and hearings to unfold continues to leave affected members in a liminal state of waiting, creates unnecessary personal and professional stress, and, equally important, permits important and often time sensitive issues to remain unresolved.

The Administration's actions have in recent months, created a situation that has overshadowed much of our grievance related work; a situation generated solely by an Administration that does not (or perhaps more accurately refuses to) understand its own role in a labour relations context. As background, it is important to know that the Association's staff, including our Executive Director and Labour Relations Officers are employees of the TFA, not the University, and are

## Grievance Report Continued

therefore bound by the policies and practices of the Association and the Labour Relations Act. In order to protect and support a union, the Ontario Labour Relations Act allows for vigorous advocacy which is fully acceptable in a labour relations context. The TFA not only accepts but fully expects our labour relations officers to push the administration hard for information, clarity, and transparency, and to be sharp and insistent, when necessary, especially in (but not limited to) situations where a member's rights are, or may be violated, and/or when there is a potential for discipline to be applied.

In December, one of our Labour Relations Officers (LRO) attended separate meetings with two members who had each been called to meet with the Dean to discuss anonymous complaints against them. While the substantive factors underlying the meetings were different, the Dean's obfuscation and refusal to provide transparent information about both the source and substance of the complaints was common across both meetings. As was his job, our Labour Relations officer was assertive in his efforts to obtain information needed to best support and advise these members and pushed the Dean appropriately for clarity. The Dean took umbrage at his approach and went to the Vice Provost Faculty Affairs (VPFA) claiming that they felt unsafe and harassed by our Labour Relations Officer's behaviour. In response, the VPFA advised the Association that unless we ensured that our employee modified his behaviour, members of the Administration would no longer meet alone with this particular LRO. The Association told the VPFA in no uncertain terms that our employee was doing the job he was hired for, that assertive, vigorous and occasionally sharp representation was expected, and that the problem was not our employee, but this particular Dean, who clearly did not understand the legal parameters of

both member representation and labour relations. Despite the Association's attempts to reinforce that our employee was working appropriately within the expectations of his role, and that he could not be sanctioned by the University as his employment fell outside the jurisdiction of the University, the Office of the Vice Provost Faculty Affairs (OVPPFA) attempted to implement measures that constrained the ability of our employee to do his job; measures that had a consequent ripple impact on the work of our other staff. In doing so, OVPPFA interfered with the Association's legal right and obligation to manage its own affairs.

The Association responded swiftly and definitively to the Employer's interference in our work and immediately filed both an Unfair Labour Practice (ULP) claim with the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and a grievance at the level of the OVPPFA. In both of these we have been clear that a) the University has absolutely no business telling the Association how to manage its work; b) our employee's behaviour was well within the expectations and obligations of both his job and the law; c) by constraining the work of the Association, the employer is interfering with our ability to meet our obligation to fully represent our members as required by law; and d) the employer's actions have created health and reputational damage to our Labour Relations Officer that cannot go unaddressed. We have also noted that although this LRO's interactions with the Administration are no different from those of other staff, or even some members of the TFA executive, as a racialized person, he is the only one whose behaviour has been deemed unacceptable to administration. We therefore contend that there is racial bias at play as well.

As anticipated, the grievance was denied by the VPFA, and we immediately referred it to arbitration. We will be using an expedited process under section 49 of the Labour Relations Act which will, we hope, facilitate an arbitrated (and thus binding) decision within a few months, rather than the year or longer that these processes usually take. Notwithstanding our initial efforts at resolving this issue with the employer however, and in a totally inappropriate action that

## Grievance Report Continued

again shows a lack of understanding about labour relations, the legal obligations of the Association, and the independence of the Association's employees from the University, a further attempt was made in March, to sanction our Labour Relations Officer, this time through HRS and HR policies, which, as an employee of the Association, rather than the University, do not apply.

We are currently addressing all issues related to employer interference through both grievance and Labour Board processes, and in mid-April spent a day in mediation at the Labour Relations Board to address our Unfair Labour Practice claim. The Association is hopeful that there will be formal resolution to what has been a very unfortunate and problematic period in our labour relations in the very foreseeable future. If this does not occur, we are committed to using the legal processes available to us to ensure that the Association can do its work without employer interference. While all this is deeply troubling, I cannot emphasize strongly enough that we unequivocally support our Labour Relations Officer (and all of our employees!) without whom we could not do our work. Please know that as we navigate this challenging time, we continue to provide the same level of support and representation as we have always done.

Before ending this report, I want to talk briefly about why we grieve and the types of issues that are grieved. While someone may be legitimately aggrieved by something that has occurred, it does not necessarily mean that a grievance can be filed. It is important to know that a grievance must always be underpinned by a violation of the Collective Agreement; indeed, unless we can tie something to the Collective Agreement, and through this to policies and practices of the University, we cannot file a grievance. It is also important to

know that grievance arguments centre on issues of procedural fairness and natural justice. Unless there are very compelling reasons not to do so, the Association will therefore always consider a grievance when there is an abuse, misuse or misrepresentation of policy and/or the associated practices and procedures by the Administration. To do otherwise would open a potential floodgate of policy diffusion and a weakening of the protections we have under the Collective Agreement. This is why the Association will, when necessary, file, or move a grievance to arbitration even when the underlying issue may be seen by some members as uncomfortable, controversial or, on the surface, questionable. In these grievances, it is not necessarily the substantive issue on its own that has led to a grievance, but rather, how that issue was addressed (or not) by the Administration. Neither the Grievance Committee nor the TFA Executive adjudicates our members' behaviour or takes a stance on whether something 'deserves' to be grieved. Rather, we are, as I have said in previous newsletters, bound by the Duty of Fair Representation, which includes our legal obligation to provide representation when a member's rights to procedural fairness and/or natural justice, underpinned by the Collective Agreement, have been violated. It is relevant to note that the TFA's commitment to fair process and our willingness to take on challenging grievances has made us a leader in the sector. Whenever I go to grievance officer meetings at OCUFA and CAUT, I am heartened to see how often our grievances and subsequent arbitration decisions are highlighted as significant for informing the work of other faculty associations.

While I have not written extensively in the grievance blog section on the TFA website, plans are underway for more regular entries in the fall. I intend to use that space to both write about emerging or current grievance-related matters that affect us all, and to provide updates around arbitration awards that have relevance for TFA members and the sector at large. Please let me know if you have any grievance-related topics you would like me to include.

## Grievance Report Continued

As always, please reach out to our Labour Relations Officers if you need representation or are not sure if an issue that you are experiencing may be cause for a grievance. I am also always happy to talk to members by email, phone or Zoom if you have a question.

Wishing everyone a happy end to the academic year, and, once you actually get there, a restful and restorative summer.

# TFA

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# 2026 Summer Party

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**May 4th,  
2:00pm–6:00pm  
Oakham House**

## In Memoriam



**Ian Sakinofsky**  
HR Management &  
Organizational Behaviour

Ian Sakinofsky passed away unexpectedly but peacefully at his home on December 22nd, 2025. Ian’s loss has been felt deeply by the TFA. Ian was a tireless and passionate champion of faculty and worker rights and effective collective bargaining for his entire career. He joined Ryerson in September of 1991 and was involved in the TFA since 1994 when he first joined the Negotiating Committee and later the executive. His work for the Association impacted the entire sector and he will be sorely missed by many in the TMU community and beyond.

## Equity Issues Report

I am honoured to assume the role of Chair, Equity Issues, following the important work and contributions of Lila Pine and Shiri Pasternak. Since my pro tem appointment this winter, the equity committee has co-sponsored the event, “Remembering Soleiman: A Family’s Fight for Justice” organized by committee member, Rai Reece, with fellow committee member, Fahad Ahmad giving opening remarks on the necessity of anticolonial and anti-imperial praxis to inform and advance social justice equity work. We have also participated in the External Review led by Justice Mary Lou Benotto in which we provided a detailed written submission. This submission included data and results on perceptions of campus safety as surveyed by the equity committee in 2023, previous correspondence from the committee framing the campus environment and context in which the events under review unfolded, as well as resources on policing and security cultures and training for the Justice’s consideration in her analysis and ensuing recommendations.

With TFA Labour Relations Officer, Mina Rajabi Paak, and members of the administration, we have re-established the Standing Committee on Employment Equity, which is charged with providing equity-based recommendations to the President of the University and the President of the TFA on the Collective Agreement, as well as on the University’s employment policies and procedures. The Standing Committee, comprised of three members from the administration and three members from the TFA is now constituted, and includes: Vice-Provost Faculty Affairs, Patrizia Albanese, Dean of the Creative School, Natalie Alvarez, and Interim Dean of Law Graham Hudson, Layal Schuman (Equity Committee member), Anne-Marie Singh (TFA Member-at-Large), and myself. You can learn more about the terms and scope of the committee, which is set out in [MOU.1](#). We have had our first meeting, with our



**Kelly Struthers**  
**Montford**  
**Interim Chair of**  
**Equity Issues**

next meetings approaching. If you would like to share suggestions for the Standing Committee’s consideration, please feel free to email me. We have also heard from TFA members who are concerned with our administration’s hosting of equity events using a discursive frame of “[belonging](#).” Looking forward, we remain vigilant to such shifts as this language is one symptom of “[EDI rollback](#)” and has replaced stated commitments to, and measurable EDI objectives in much of the [Alberta post-secondary sector](#), for example.

Last but not least, we extend a warm welcome to our newest member, Magdalen Sinson (TMU Libraries) and thank Lila Pine, Alireza Khatami (Image Arts) and Alison Skyrme (TMU Libraries) for their work on the committee and wish them all the best in their next endeavours.

## Health & Safety Report

Greeting fellow TFA members. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to Fiona Kovacaj for her dedicated service on the Laboratories and Workshops Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). Her contributions have been essential to maintaining safety in these specialized spaces. Furthermore, I would like to welcome and thank Melissa Helwig, who has agreed to serve on the Brampton campus JHSC.

As your Health and Safety Officer, I am concerned by a widening disconnect between the University's public-facing commitments to campus well-being and the operational reality on the ground. For years, TMU senior administration has signalled an intent to address our deferred maintenance backlog. TMU does not release deferred maintenance estimates. However, an estimate of \$80M to \$130M would be consistent with other universities of a similar size (the estimated deferred maintenance at TMU can be calculated using a standard Current Replacement Value (CRV) approach. Based on an estimated 1.6–1.8 million square feet and replacement costs of \$600–\$900 CAD per square foot, CRV is approximately \$1.0–\$1.6 billion; applying a typical 5–10% backlog ratio yields an estimated deferred maintenance range of \$80 million to \$130 million CAD, consistent with sector norms).

A reference is made to addressing TMU's deferred maintenance backlog in a 2023–24 budget presentation to TMU's Board of Governors within a section entitled, "2023-24 Strategy to Balance". However, this strategy was likely undermined by a simultaneous demand for "base budget reductions," across the board mentioned in the same section. We find ourselves in a situation where a high-level commitment to "catch up" on infrastructure exists alongside a refusal to provide the necessary permanent funding to achieve it.



**Alex Ferworn**  
**Health & Safety**  
**Officer**

This funding gap has led to a troubling "download" of safety costs that threatens the integrity of our Internal Responsibility System (the Internal Responsibility System (IRS) is the foundational philosophy of Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act, mandating that all workplace parties share responsibility for safety according to their authority. It requires a collaborative culture where employers and workers—via the Joint Health and Safety Committee—internally identify and resolve hazards).

We have seen instances where academic departments have been asked to foot the bill for testing air quality and for mold testing—in what might be considered a form of "rationing". Facilities Management and Development (FMD) centrally manage these services. However, FMD is under the same budgetary pressure as the departments they serve. If testing is considered discretionary, the requesting party will be asked to pay for it. Of course, neither FMD nor the requesting departments have been allocated the necessary funds to cover these costs.

Air quality is not a departmental luxury or a discretionary expense to be traded off against teaching assistants or office equipment; it is a fundamental employer obligation. When the University forces a

## Health & Safety Officer Continued

choice between academic resources and basic safety assurance, it abdicates its legal responsibility and creates a chilling effect on the reporting of hazards.

This pattern of administrative downloading extends beyond physical infrastructure and into the very labor required to keep our campus safe. The Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) is explicit regarding the rights of workers who serve on a JHSC. Under Section 9(34) of the Act, a member of the committee is entitled to "such time as is necessary" to attend meetings and carry out inspections and other duties. Most crucially, Section 9(35) mandates that this time "shall be deemed to be work time for which the member shall be paid at his or her regular or premium rate as may be proper." The legislation recognizes that safety duties are not "extra-curricular" or optional volunteerism; they are a statutory extension of someone's employment.

While the TFA is working on a method where our librarian and counselor colleagues will receive compensatory time to address this legal requirement, our administration's response to faculty participation in a JHSC remains dismissive. Our administration continues to suggest that the intensive work of JHSC service should simply be folded into the "Service" category of annual reports, effectively treating it as indistinguishable from any other committee work. This stance ignores the fact that the OHSA assigns specific legal powers and responsibilities to JHSC members—such as the power to identify hazards and make formal recommendations to the employer—that do not exist in standard academic committee work.

The implication of the university's current stance is that all service is created equal, regardless of the physical toll or the specialized legal responsibilities involved. A thorough JHSC

inspection of our sprawling and aging campus can be a gruelling task; typically, it involves three or more days navigating cramped mechanical rooms, stairwells, and difficult environments. To suggest that such labor is equivalent to attending committee meetings is a profound devaluation of the effort required to maintain a safe campus. By refusing to formally recognize or compensate for the significant time required for these inspections, the University treats health and safety as a volunteer hobby rather than a statutory requirement.

Ultimately, this lack of recognition creates a crisis of participation. Professors are astute observers of how their labor is valued, and if any service fulfills the annual report requirement, faculty will understandably gravitate toward roles that are less demanding than serving on a JHSC. We risk a future where our committees are understaffed and our buildings are under-inspected, not because faculty lack a commitment to the community, but because the University refuses to value the work required to ensure that community's safety. The TFA maintains that safety infrastructure must be centrally funded and that the labor of those who protect our community must be fairly accommodated.

The University cannot continue to bridge budgetary gaps with the "unseen labor" of its faculty. When the administration treats basic air quality as a departmental luxury and statutory safety duties as mere volunteerism, it undermines the very Internal Responsibility System it claims to uphold. For TMU to truly honor its commitment to well-being, it must move beyond public-facing rhetoric and provide the permanent funding and formal recognition necessary to keep our community safe—before the cost of neglect becomes one we can no longer afford to pay.

## Negotiating Committee Report

This year's round of bargaining began on March 30, 2026 after the team received unanimous approval for the adoption of the mandate at the meeting held on February 23, 2026. At the table on the TFA side sits Dana Osborne (Languages, Literatures and Cultures), Andrew Hunter (Philosophy), Kathleen Wilkie (Mathematics), Cecile Farnum (Library), Immaculate Antony (Counselling), and TFA staff, Mina Rajabi Paak and Andre Foucault, who have been critical in supporting the mandate at the negotiating table. On the Employer's side sits Patrizia Albanese (Vice-Provost, Faculty Affairs), Brad Walters (Executive Director, Faculty Affairs), Sean Kheraj (Vice-Provost, Academic), Amy Peng (Dean, Faculty of Arts), and Davina Chan (Director, Faculty Affairs).

The teams have been meeting in earnest every Monday and Wednesday since the end of March and both sides have brought most non-monetary items to the table at the time of this report. So far, negotiations have been carried out collegially and open dialogue has taken place; this has, at the time of reporting, resulted in largely positive collaborative movement on issues linked to language clarifications, addressing known ambiguities, and with general respect to the smooth functioning of the Collective Agreement. While the Employer has signaled some resistance in deeply engaging with a few of the issues brought to the table, our team remains hopeful that these will be resolved by the end of negotiations through continued dialogue. Fortunately, on most other matters, dialogue has largely been fruitful with a mutual orientation to the end goal of reaching an agreement without having to resort to arbitration. As we move forward with the next steps, we plan on having several guest sessions, including with librarians, counsellors, and those with expertise in



**Dana Osborne  
Chair of Negotiating  
Committee**

intellectual property to help facilitate the discussion on issues that intersect with these constituencies and focus areas.

## TFA Executive 2026/7

- Jesmen Mendoza • President
- Peter Danziger • VP Internal
- Rahul Sapra • VP External
- Dave Mason • Treasurer
- Alex Ferworn • Health & Safety Officer
- Diane Pirner • Secretary
- Corinne Hart • Grievance
- Dana Osborne • Negotiating
- Kelly Struthers Montford • Equity Issues
- Grace-Edward Galabuzi • Member at Large
- Anne-Marie Singh • Member at Large

## 2026 TFA Awards

# TFA PERSON OF THE YEAR AWARD



**Sonya Fatah**  
*Journalism*

This award recognizes outstanding contributions to the Toronto Metropolitan University Community during the previous academic year.

## 2026 TFA Awards

# TFA CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



**Deborah Fels**  
*Information Technology  
Management*

This award is made in recognition of outstanding career contributions to Toronto Metropolitan University.

## 2026 TFA Awards

# TFA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



## Ian Sakinofsky

This special award is in recognition of Ian's exceptional service to the TFA and to the broader academic workplace.

# Retirees

Allen	John	Law, Lincoln Alexander School of Law
Alter	Alex	TheCreativeSchool - Image Arts
Bener	Ayse	FEAS, Mechanical&Industrial Eg
Dowling	Catherine	The Creative School
Duever	Thomas	FEAS, Chemical Engineering
Fitzpatrick	Blake	The Creative School, Image Arts
Gill	Ralph	TRSM, Law and Business
Gorgolewski	Marek	FEAS, Architectural Science
Kassam	Mahmood	FEAS, Electrical, Computer, Biomedical Engineering
Kornegay	Roberta Jo	Arts, Philosophy
Maier	Esther	TFA Academic Admin
Meldrum	Richard	FCS, Occupational & Public Health
Mielnik-Vogel	Barbara	The Creative School; Interior Design
Murray	Robert	Arts, Philosophy
Nickerson	David	TRSM, Real Estate

# Retirees

Panitch	Melanie	CE; School of Disability Studies
Reynolds	William	TheCreativeSchool, Journalism
Teigrob	Robert	Arts, History
Valter Mai	Kristiina	FEAS, Comp. Biomed. Eng.
Viminitz	Mark	TRSM, Global Management Studies
Wellington	Alex	Arts, Philiosphy
Yamada	Janet	FCS, Nursing