



Recently, a number of events related to how different employee groups are compensated at our University have taken place. I would like to share with you the impact these decisions by the Government of Alberta and the arbitration process have had on the University and its employees.

Firstly, on March 24, 2021, the University was informed by the Government of Alberta that compensation for non-bargaining staff will remain frozen at current levels, without grid movement until March 31, 2022. Restraint regulations from the government for non-bargaining staff have now been in place since April 1, 2016, and directly affect administrative professional officers (APOs), excluded professionals, exempt support staff and senior administration. Over the course of the last five years, these employees have received no increases (merit or cost of living), thereby creating pay inequities between various employee groups and those with collective agreements at the University, as well as other post-secondary institutions and external organizations. We continue to impress upon government officials that these inequities must be addressed.

Also on March 24, 2021, the Government of Alberta updated the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Regulation, effective April 1, 2021. This legislation now extends compensation conditions, that previously pertained only to the president, to executive positions two levels below the president. An initial understanding of these changes suggest numerous employment positions will be significantly negatively affected. We have expressed to government our disappointment these changes were made without consultation and are concerned this action, coupled with the now long-standing compensation freeze, will affect the University's ability to attract, engage and retain talented leaders and employees throughout our institution.

On March 25, 2021, an arbitrator awarded Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE) Local 053 a retroactive one per cent wage increase for the period of July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. This increase is in addition to career progress increments (of up to 3.5 per cent) that nearly half the University's AUPE support staff received that year.

The U of L Board is currently negotiating with AUPE, the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association (ULFA) and University of Lethbridge Graduate Students' Association (GSA) with the goal of arriving at new collective agreements. Collective bargaining between the Board and the University of Lethbridge Postdoctoral Fellows Association (UPLA) is currently on hold.

Over the three fiscal years, 2019-20 to 2021-22, the University's operating grant has been reduced by \$16.2 million (with a further \$5.1 million operating grant cut anticipated in 2022-23). The COVID-19 pandemic negative financial impact is projected to be \$6.9 million for 2020-21. As has been articulated in previous budget messages, and in the context of the historic operating grant reductions and impacts related to COVID-19, it is also well understood that labour costs are the most significant element of the University's total expenditures.

The collective efforts of academic and non-academic staff are why the University of Lethbridge is a leading institution in Canada. The University recognizes all of our employees' collective work serves our students and communities. Our approach to compensation must consider fairness



amongst employee groups, our ability to attract and retain talent, as well as our fiscal realities. It is this balance that will be critical in ensuring the University is able to offer high-quality programming, conduct leading research, and meaningfully engage with communities in a sustainable way.

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