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Welcome to another issue of *The Communicator*! AUFA has a lot going on right now, and we aim to keep you informed.

## COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATES

### Salary Reopener

On Sunday (Nov 17<sup>th</sup>), AUFA's negotiating team met with the Board of Governor's (BoG) team and William Kaplan to **finalize the salary amounts for the final year of the 16<sup>th</sup> Collective Agreement (CA)**. Recall that Kaplan was the Arbitrator whose ruling led to the creation of the 16<sup>th</sup> CA, but the salary amount for the 4<sup>th</sup> (and final) year of the 16<sup>th</sup> CA was left open for negotiations between AUFA and the BoG. After failing to reach a negotiated agreement in September, the matter was returned to Kaplan for a ruling.

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, Kaplan submitted his ruling to AUFA and the BoG of Acadia. The result of the arbitration is a **3.75% salary increase for full-time faculty** (Appendix C and H of the Collective Agreement), and a **6% increase to the per-course stipend for part-time faculty** (Appendix I). These increases are effective as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, which means we are all owed retroactive compensation for the months since July, and the Arbitrator has also ruled that this retroactive pay must be paid within sixty days of the ruling.

With the closing of the salary reopener, the 16<sup>th</sup> Collective Agreement has now been finalized. This was a long and protracted process, and **AUFA would like to thank the members of the Negotiating Team (Anthony Pash--Chief Negotiator, Paul Abela, Stephen Ahern, Mariah Cooper, Richard Karsten, and Burc Kayahan)** for all the time and effort that went into these negotiations.

## Continuing Preparations for Negotiations for the 17<sup>th</sup> CA

While the details of the 16<sup>th</sup> CA are finally complete, AUFA has already begun preparations for negotiating the 17<sup>th</sup> CA. During the summer, **members were invited to complete a survey** as the first step toward identifying priorities for the 17<sup>th</sup> CA. On October 7<sup>th</sup>, the Survey Committee presented the results of this survey to the general membership. Even more recently (between November 19<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>), **the Proposals Committee conducted a series of roundtable discussions** to hear directly from the members about their priorities for the next agreement. The **next step** is for the Proposals Committee to compile the information gathered in these roundtable discussions with information obtained from the survey to **develop a list of priorities** that AUFA members have indicated they want to see in the 17<sup>th</sup> CA.

**Figure 1: Timeline of Pre-Negotiation Processes**

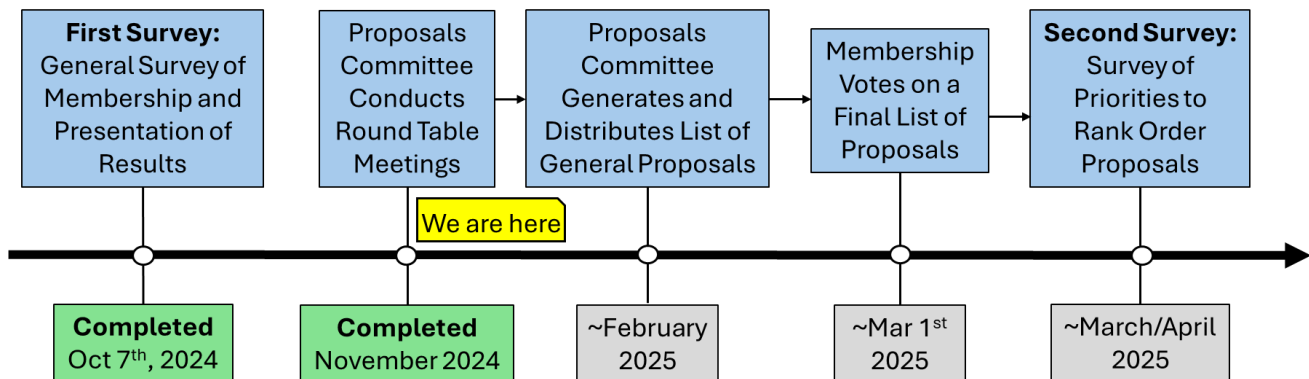


Figure 1 (above) depicts the completed and ongoing processes before we are ready to begin negotiations for the 17<sup>th</sup>. As shown, the Proposals Committee is currently working toward developing a set of principles/proposals that will be brought to the membership for approval (normally by March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025).

When a final list of proposals has been approved by the membership, **a second survey will go out to the membership asking them to rank-order which of the accepted proposals is most important to them.** This survey should normally be distributed to the membership no later than April 30<sup>th</sup> of the year in which the CA expires (in this case, April 30, 2025). The results of this second survey will only be known by the AUFA President and the Chief Negotiator, as it is important to keep this information strictly confidential **to ensure that the BoG's negotiating team does not use it to their advantage** in negotiations.

As a reminder, **the current CA (the 16<sup>th</sup>) is set to expire on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**, and AUFA aims to be ready to begin negotiations for the 17<sup>th</sup> CA before the current CA expires. When all the above-mentioned processes are completed, the negotiating team will have what they need from the membership to begin negotiations and fight for the priorities of the AUFA membership.

## NEGOTIATING TEAM FOR THE 17<sup>TH</sup> COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT

Anthony Path (Chief Negotiator)

Paul Abela

Burc Kayahan

Maggie Neilson

Mariah Cooper

Jeffrey Sacks

Stephanie Jones

Eva Curry (*pro tem*, Records Officer)

AUFA would like to thank the above-mentioned members for agreeing to serve on the Negotiating Team for the 17<sup>th</sup> CA. All members except the Records Officer were recently approved by the general membership meeting on November 26<sup>th</sup>.

## CHANGES TO THE BENEFITS PLAN

AUFA members recently **voted to approve** a set of changes to the health benefits plan (84% of voters in favour). These **changes will take effect on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**. In case you missed it, we recap the process that led to the changes below and summarize the main differences between the new plan and the old plan.

### Recap of the Processes that Led to the Proposed Changes

Recall, the Group Benefits Committee is composed of voting representatives of Acadia's three employee groups (AUFA, SEIU, and AUPAT), the Director of Human Resources, and a member of the senior administration. The committee is responsible for making recommendations to senior administration with respect to the employee benefits programs. There has been no major update to the health benefits plan at Acadia for at least thirty years. Consequently, the **plan had arguably fallen behind the needs and priorities of Acadia employees**. For AUFA, improvements to mental health coverage was a major priority during the negotiations for the 16<sup>th</sup> CA and is reflected in a [Memorandum of Agreement \(MOA\)](#) that was part of the arbitrator's ruling. As part of the benefits plan review, **a survey was distributed to Acadia employees in**

**February 2024** so that the plan's strengths and weaknesses could be better understood. Three hundred and twenty-one (321) employees responded to the survey. **Respondents identified mental health, drug coverage, and vision care as important benefits.** There was support for designing a benefits package that had inclusive and equitable offerings, and most respondents indicated that they were **willing to accept higher premiums for improved benefits.** An update on the survey results was shared with AUFA members at AUFA's Annual General Meeting in April 2024.

**The Group Benefits Committee was guided by these survey results in designing a package aimed at enhancing the benefits plan to meet employees' needs.** The proposed package was unanimously passed by the committee on September 24, 2024. The next step in the process is to share these proposed changes with AUFA members.

### Summary of the Approved Changes to the Group Benefits Plan

Table 1 summarizes some of the major changes to the benefits plan. For more detailed information, visit Acadia's [Human Resources website](#).

**Table 1: Summary of Approved Changes to the Group Benefits Plan**

Type of Coverage	Summary of Changes
<i>Mental Health Coverage</i>	The current plan covers \$25 per visit to a psychologist. Under the approved changes, the per-visit maximum will increase to Blue Cross's usual and customary per-visit fee maximum, up to a maximum of \$2,000 per year. The list of practitioners covered will be expanded to include psychologists, social workers, clinical counselors, psychoeducational specialists, and psychotherapists.
<i>Drug Coverage</i>	The current plan follows a generic substitution policy. Under the approved changes, drug coverage will follow a mandatory generic policy. This means that your default prescription will be the generic drug (if it is available). With this approach, the benefits plan will pay up to the cost of the lowest-cost alternative, typically the generic drug, even if a brand name medication is dispensed. There are no other changes to the current plan's drug coverage. This includes no change to the dispensing fee.

<i>Speech therapist, occupational therapist, osteopath, chiropractor, chiropodist/podiatrist (combined), massage therapist, naturopath</i>	Under the current plan, the services listed above are covered for \$25 per visit up to a maximum of twenty visits. Under the approved changes, coverage for these services will increase to a maximum of \$500 per practitioner per year with a combined annual maximum of \$1,500. Physiotherapy coverage will remain unchanged (Blue Cross's usual and customary maximum).
<i>Continuous Glucose Monitoring</i>	Coverage for continuous glucose monitoring is not included in the current plan. Under the approved changes, costs for continuous glucose monitoring will be covered up to \$4,000 per year.
<i>Fertility Coverage</i>	Fertility coverage is not included in the current plan. Under the approved changes, fertility treatment will be covered up to a lifetime maximum of \$25,000.
<i>Gender Affirmation</i>	Gender affirmation coverage is not included in the current plan. Under the approved changes, gender affirming care will be covered up to \$5,000 per year with a \$40,000 lifetime maximum.
<i>Hearing Aids</i>	The current plan covers hearing aids for up to \$600 every three years. Under the approved changes, hearing aids will be covered for up to \$3,000 every three years.

### **Cost of the Approved Changes to the Benefits Plan**

The approved changes to the benefits plan constitute an increase in benefits, with mental health coverage being the single largest increase in terms of cost to the plan. When implemented, the changes will result in **an estimated 22.1% increase to the cost of the benefits plan**. This increase is **born equally between the employer and participating employees**, with each covering 50% of the cost. The current monthly rate for an employee's **single-person coverage** is \$33.25. With the approved change, this monthly rate will increase to \$40.59 (i.e., an increase of +\$7.34 over the current single person coverage). The current monthly rate for **family coverage** is \$83.64. With the approved change, this monthly rate will increase to \$102.49 (i.e., an increase of +\$18.85 over the current family coverage).

# HEALTH BENEFITS COVERAGE FOR PART-TIME AND OTHER MEMBER GROUPS

Many current and former AUFA members do not have access to the Acadia health/dental/travel plans. AUFA will be hosting a webinar on Monday, Dec. 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:30pm about the Entente insurance plan through the Retired Teachers of Ontario (RTOERO) organization. RTOERO expanded the availability of their insurance coverage to any current or former employee of an education institution in Canada a few years ago.

The Entente insurance plan is of particular interest to the following groups of AUFA members:

- Part-time who have no insurance coverage through Acadia.
- CLTs who have no insurance coverage between contracts.
- Retirees who have no drug coverage after age 65 or dental coverage after they retire.
- Full-time faculty over 65 who are looking for drug coverage instead of NS Pharmacare.
- Full-time faculty who are looking for insurance alternatives for when they retire.
- All faculty who have immediate family who do not have access to group insurance coverage.

Invitations with a Zoom link will be sent out via email. The presentation will be recorded if you are not available on Dec. 9<sup>th</sup>.

## JOIN US FOR A TRAINING OPPORTUNITY FROM CAUT

**Organizing School 101 (January 2025):** This January, join your fellow AUFA members and take part in a virtual training course that will help us strategize ways to better organize and strengthen our membership, increase engagement, and advocate for various causes! Over the month, AUFA participants will gather to learn tools and strategies to strengthen the power of our association. These four virtual webinars are being presented by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) and will take place as follows:

Date	Time	Event Type
Monday, January 13	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm AST	Webinar 1
Monday, January 20	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm AST	Webinar 2
Monday, January 27	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm AST	Webinar 3
Friday, January 31	2:00 pm – 5:00 pm AST	Webinar 4

AUFA will reserve the space for our group to engage in these trainings as a group and will provide lunch for up to 20 interested members - participants will be enrolled on a first come, first served basis! If you are interested, please contact Chelsea Gardner to sign up: ([chelsea.gardner@acadiau.ca](mailto:chelsea.gardner@acadiau.ca)).

For more information, visit: <https://www.caut.ca/content/organizing-school-101>

## CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

### **Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) Defence Fund Annual General Meeting (October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024), highlights:**

- The fund is in very good financial shape, in the 37-Million-dollar range. We are likely to see a decrease in dues soon.
- A motion was passed to allow directors to attend the meeting virtually, when needed. The intention is still to have an in-person meeting, but directors may now use their discretion to attend virtually when circumstances do not allow them to attend in-person. This was not allowed previously except in very specific circumstances, allowed for under human rights legislation.
- A motion was passed for a major restructuring of the defence fund. This motion had two parts, one was collapsing the number of types of voters and the other was to allow all future similar votes on restructuring to require only 2/3 of member institutions to vote yes rather than the current unanimous vote required.
- A motion was passed to increase the percentage of fund money invested in the market to increase from "up to 20%" to "up to 30%." This will still maintain the stability and liquidity necessary for the fund while allowing for better opportunities for growth.
- A motion was passed to allow the MSVUFA access to the Bargaining Rights Defence benefit to cover legal funds in their fight to get the administration at MSVU to finalize the collective agreement as agreed when they ended their strike.

### **Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers (ANSUT; November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024), highlights:**

- ANSUT produced an op-ed on higher education and housing in the lead-up to the provincial election. This was not picked up by media, but in a 'news release' form it will

be coming out in The Coast. <https://www.ansut.ca/2024/11/post-secondary-education-make-your-voice-heard-this-election/>

- An equity conference was held at Mount St. Vincent on October 26<sup>th</sup>.
- November 8: President Stewart attended ACCFA (Atlantic Canada Conference of Faculty Associations conference 'Negotiating with a lawyer' (growing trend for employers to use lawyers as main negotiators)).
- Switched from X (Twitter) to Bluesky social media platform.
- Planning a 'Review Engagement', rather than a full audit, this year (cost: \$2500 vs. \$5000).
- Current and potential research projects: Study of Nova Scotia University Senates (needs assessment; current practices); Micro-credential scoping review (committee: Workman, ANSUT President Stewart; Shannan Grant); assisted by two research assistants; sexual violence prevention on campus (potential).
- Planning a Collective Bargaining workshop, likely for spring 2025.
- Waiting for NS Auditor General's report on Universities.
- ANSUT has a planned deficit this year (close to \$30,000).
- Nova Scotia Department of Education has posted the 1-year bilateral higher education agreement along with more detailed agreements. Characterized, in the ANSUT discussion, as 'heavily performance based.' Plan for 'differentiated agreements' for 2025-8: <https://novascotia.ca/lae/HigherEducation/documents.asp>

## COMING SOON

### CHANGES TO THE AUFA TRAVEL POLICY:

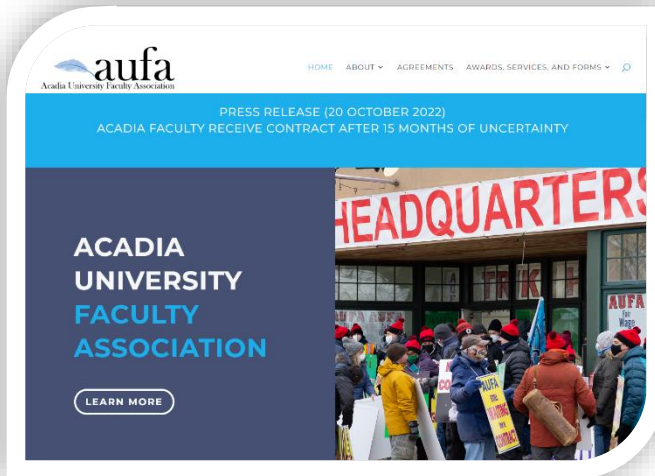
AUFA is currently revising our travel policy to consider separate funding pools for part time and full-time members and re-evaluate the timeline for applying for funding.

### APPROVAL OF THE RECORDS OFFICER:

Eva Curry has agreed to serve as Records Officer for the Negotiating Team for the 17<sup>th</sup> CA. A motion to approve Eva as Records office will be coming to the membership in time for the next membership meeting.

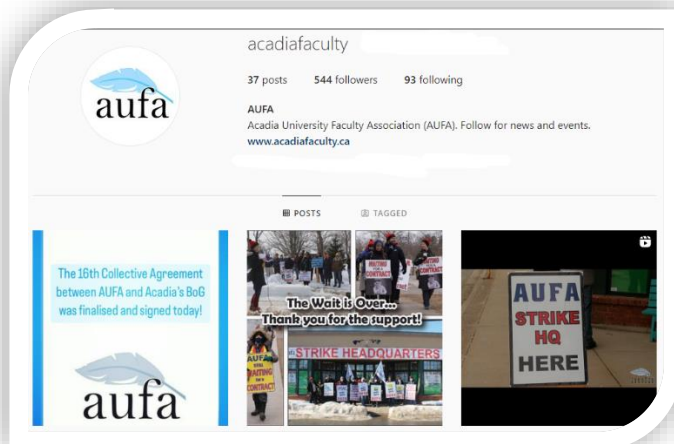


## FOR MORE INFORMATION:



Check out the  
AUFA website!

Visit our Twitter  
account!



Follow our  
Instagram page!

## CONTACT US:

Do you have questions for the association? Don't hesitate to reach out!

- [Stephanie Jones](#) (AUFA President) or [Jane Longley](#) (AUFA's Union Officer) can answer general questions or concerns. You can also email the [AUFA-supported email address for the President](#).
- [Acacia Puddester](#) (Part-Time Outreach Coordinator) can answer questions about issues related to part-timers.
- [Joe Hayes](#) (Chair of the Communications Committee) can answer questions about the contents of this newsletter.

## IN SOLIDARITY,

### The AUFA Communications Committee

Joe Hayes (Chair), Nicoletta Faraone, Christine Moreau, Jon Saklofske, Mo Snyder



[aufa@acadiau.ca](mailto:aufa@acadiau.ca)

(902) 585-1422

Acadia University Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6