



ASSOCIATION OF  
ADMINISTRATIVE +  
PROFESSIONAL  
STAFF AT UBC

*Submission by the*

Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of  
The University of British Columbia

*to the*

Legislative Assembly of British Columbia  
Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government  
Services

June 12, 2019

The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia is the professional association for nearly 5,000 professional staff at UBC. Our members play vital roles in every function of the University. Our members provide leadership and professional expertise within the University's academic faculties, on research initiatives, and as central service departments. They are located at UBC's two main campuses at Point Grey in Vancouver and the Okanagan Campus. They also work at hospitals and on research sites around the province.

Over the past year, we have had the opportunity to consult extensively with our members on how to make working life better. Much of the feedback will be shaping our proposals for our upcoming round of collective bargaining with the University. However, there are a number of issues that our members expressed as being important that could be better addressed at the provincial level.

Since the Provincial Government is interested in better understanding how to make British Columbia work for everyone who lives here, we are bringing the perspective of the nearly 5,000 members of AAPS who work as professionals and managers at the University of British Columbia. We continue to see our members struggle to make their lives work while continuing their jobs at UBC. Many choose to leave and subsequently leave the province.

Our members provided very clear suggestions on how the working life in British Columbia can be improved, and we present these suggestions for consideration in the 2020 Budget.

The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia (AAPS) recommends that the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services:

- **Remove research universities from the Public Sector Employer's Council Mandate to ensure highly-skilled professionals stay working in B.C.**
- **Improve support for family care and ensure it applies to more working people**
- **Improve accessibility and safety of public transportation**

#### THE PSEC MANDATE INHIBITS UBC'S ABILITY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN SKILLED PROFESSIONALS

We believe research universities should be removed from the Public Sector Employer's Council Mandate for collective bargaining. Our members and their colleagues at other research universities around the province are highly skilled and specialized professionals, many of whom hold advanced degrees. A number of our members are recruited from around the world to fulfill roles at UBC as directors, specialized researchers, technology professionals, educators, as well as highly skilled finance and fundraising professionals. These are professions that are in high demand in the marketplace, and bargaining under PSEC limits each university's ability to attract and retain top talent.

When PSEC was formed in 1997<sup>1</sup>, the needs and financial position of UBC were different. The University and its budget have adapted and grown to fulfill provincial mandates and the needs of the people of British Columbia. The University has become a top-tier institution for research, community engagement, industry spinoffs, as well as a sustainable community to live and work in. UBC attracts 93% of B.C.'s industry-led research<sup>2</sup>. UBC competes globally for highly qualified staff and should be permitted to engage in this competition unfettered by the restrictions of the PSEC mandate.

For many staff at UBC, the high cost of living versus the wage cut they are forced to take when transitioning into a parallel role in this province is often times untenable. This was a common comment during our collective bargaining consultations. Why is the Provincial Government supporting measures that artificially suppress the wages of the people while touting the economic strength of the province? This approach will not make B.C. competitive in the long term

While the University receives operational funding from the Province, money for the University comes from a number of different sources including student tuition fees, sales and services, research funding, investments, and fundraising. Many of our members' roles are funded directly through grants or self-generating revenues. Government does not pay their salaries. As such, our members should not be subject to the restriction of other public service employees who are funded solely and strictly by government. This is an unfair practice.

UBC makes a significant social and economic impact on B.C.—well over 10 billion dollars<sup>3</sup>. The University is one of our province's largest employers. In order to continue this trajectory of success as well as build on the mandates of innovation, UBC needs the flexibility to bargain outside the PSEC mandate.

Finally, arbitrators have ruled and upheld the ruling that the PSEC mandate should not influence collective bargaining<sup>4</sup>. The UBC Faculty Association has challenged the University to bargain outside of PSEC on numerous occasions and won each time.

The 2013 ruling by arbitrator Colin Taylor Q.C. addresses the arbitrator's response to the imposition of PSEC in sections 53–57. These sections note that “There has been no suggestion that the funding will be withdrawn if an interest arbitration award is made that is not within those bargaining directives...”<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> The Province of British Columbia. [About PSEC](#). Web accessed (2018-09-11)

<sup>2</sup> The University of British Columbia. [Shaping UBC's Next Century](#). Page 14. Web accessed (2018-08-31).

<sup>3</sup> KPMG LLP. [The UBC-Broadway Corridor —Unlocking the Economic Potential](#). February 28, 2013. Web accessed (2018-09-10).

<sup>4</sup> UBC Faculty Association. [Interpreting the Recent Interest Arbitration Award](#). April 6, 2016. Web accessed (2018-09-07).

<sup>5</sup> Taylor, Colin. [In The Matter of An Arbitration Between University of British Columbia and Faculty Association of The University of British Columbia Interest Arbitration 2013](#). Page 31. Web accessed (2018-08-15)

arbitrator goes on to say that there was no argument that the University would not use its best efforts to obtain the funds needed to meet its obligations to pay and that UBC's ability to pay is not "Co-extensive" with the province-wide bargaining mandate or government funding allocations.

Most telling is section 54 when the arbitrator states that "The PSEC mandate does not have legislative force, and therefore does not override the parties' Agreement legislatively."<sup>6</sup>

Forcing UBC to bargain under PSEC limits not only staff roles but also faculty and research. Thus, it has implications for B.C.'s ability to innovate and grow industry as well.

### IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARE

Caring for loved ones can be both challenging and rewarding, be it raising a family, eldercare, or supporting a family member with a health issue or disability. Providing care is a way for all of us to make a contribution to our communities and province. While the government has made substantial proposals with regards to childcare, there is still more to be done, and it is also important to support the care that the people of British Columbia provide at all stages of life.

Based on the feedback from our members, we are advocating that B.C.'s provincial government consider a variety of different ways that it could ease the burden on hard-working B.C. families. For instance, government could consider modernizing workplace accommodations to reflect the realities of the average worker or legislating days for family care.

While there are certain federal supports that exist, they can only be accessed in specific circumstances. Often the challenge for working British Columbians is not the major events like childbirth, but the smaller day-to-day care obligations such as taking a family member to a medical appointment or caring for someone when they have a short-term illness. Having a flexible work arrangement or specific days that people can engage in this kind of care would allow them to take the time from work without financial hardship. Most importantly, it would allow working people to be there when their families need them most.

We have heard from our members that there are still many challenges for childcare in the province. There are still not enough licensed spaces reasonably located for where people live or work. Many of our members miss government salary caps, and so many of the benefits touted in the plan do not apply to them. The Province needs to consider the costs to raise a family in the cities like Vancouver and Kelowna particularly and expand who can participate in these programs. Couple childcare costs with

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<sup>6</sup>Taylor, Colin. [In The Matter of An Arbitration Between University of British Columbia and Faculty Association of The University of British Columbia Interest Arbitration 2013](#). Page 31. Web accessed (2018-08-15)

commuting costs and a considerable number of families reconsider the cost-benefit of continuing to work with young children and subsequently leave the workforce.

Many of the same members are also struggling with eldercare. Additional support and spaces need to be created for caring for our elderly population as well. Given the size of dwellings, particularly in Vancouver, how could an individual care for an aging parent in a studio condominium or apartment?

Finally, our members report that there are few reasonably priced housing options near UBC. We mention this at the provincial level because UBC is not part of a municipality but on land administered by the Province. We would encourage government to ensure that UBC is not using its land strictly as a profit centre but also to create a community regardless of income level.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION THAT SERVICES THE PROVINCE AND IS SAFE

AAPS supports the expansion of rapid transit to the University of British Columbia. This is an important project for our members at the Point Grey Campus in Vancouver as it could mean a reduction in traffic congestion and commute times.

We also have 400 members in Kelowna who need to commute to UBC Okanagan on a daily basis. What we hear from them about the lack of adequate, frequent service, particularly if members live north of Kelowna. This means that it is not practical to use public transportation to commute to work. As this campus and student populations grow, this issue needs to be addressed in order to make commuting times reasonable.

Finally, we have a number of members who work around the province on research projects, medical programs, and research sites. For nearly all of them a car is a requirement to live and work. We would encourage government to ensure that all parts of the province are accessible by publicly available transportation.

Our members also consider cycling to be a valuable way to commute to work at Vancouver and Okanagan Campuses. While strides have been made, particularly in Kelowna, more work needs to be done regarding cyclists' safety. UBC's Point Grey Campus saw a number of major cycling accidents in the past year. More needs to be done to ensure safety on the road to encourage more people to use this green, healthy method of transportation.

### CONCLUSION

If the Province of British Columbia truly wants to work for all its workers, then it needs to broaden its perspective of who are the British Columbians facing challenges today. Government should be a leader on how the people of B.C. can attend to those important matters in work and family life, and those need

to be legislated for everyone. Government can look at how it is supporting economic growth and innovation and model areas of innovation through public transportation and clean tech. Finally, government can ensure necessary changes are made when policies and systems no longer serve a purpose as with PSEC and the post-secondary sector.

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

**The Association of Administrative and Professional Staff of The University of British Columbia (AAPS)** is the professional association for the Management and Professional Staff group at UBC.

Professional staff play critical roles in every function of the University. Their leadership and professional expertise are essential to a world-class institution of learning, research, innovation, and community engagement.

AAPS members are highly qualified professionals overseeing information technology; conducting and facilitating research; directing academic and community programs; managing facilities and infrastructure; guiding and supporting students as academic advisors, counsellors, coaches, program administrators, career and co-op advisors, and travel abroad program coordinators. AAPS members lead industry initiatives and seek partnerships with the broader community for economic development, education, and communication.

AAPS is the legal bargaining agent for the professional staff group and represents its nearly 5,000 members in collective bargaining and dispute resolution with the University.

AAPS supports members in resolving workplace issues and strives to improve their work experience at UBC. The Association also creates a connected community of members through networking and professional development opportunities.

AAPS is registered under the B.C. Societies Act.



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