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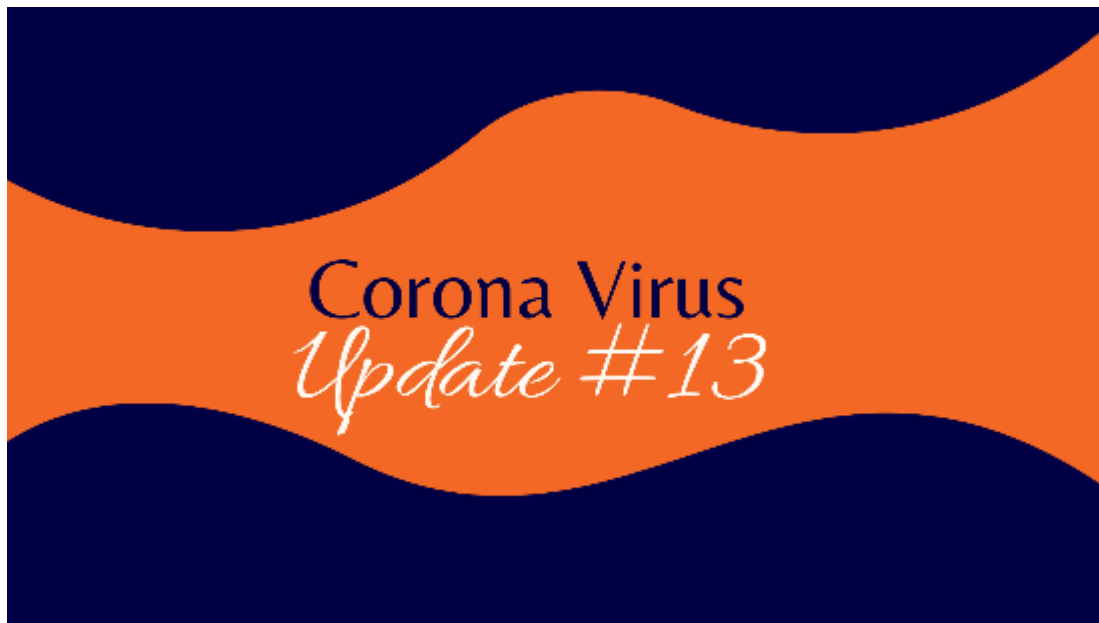
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Weekly Newsletter

NEWS & EVENTS | Wednesday, April 1, 2020 | 2:00 pm



**OPEN LETTER TO
PRESIDENT GERTLER**

Open Letter to President Gertler re: Supporting our staff in an era of Covid-19
[Please sign the letter of support by Noon on Friday, April 3, 2020.](#)

Dear President Gertler,

We write with regard to the COVID-19 crisis and the crucial steps that the University of Toronto must take in order to protect its most essential workers: the staff that keep the institution running.

We applaud the University for so far stepping up and exceeding its own contractual obligations to staff. This is admirable and the right thing to do. Demonstrating ongoing leadership in this moment must entail the protection of lives and livelihoods and the enhancement of a collective sense of responsibility and care. We are in this together and U of T's labour practices must affirm this fact.

We understand that currently, the University of Toronto has only committed to paying most staff appointed and casual employees until April 30th, 2020. This is unacceptable. An institution that claims to be a model employer, dedicated to advancing the public good, must do better for all members of our community at a time of crisis.

We ask you to reassure all workers at the University of Toronto that their employment will be protected. This includes renewing contracts for casual workers, and implementing a "right of first refusal" when operations start up again. It also includes providing an Employment Insurance 'top-up' and continuing all benefits. Staff at the University of Toronto should not be evicted from their jobs just as no one should be evicted from their homes as a result of the current pandemic. In particular, staff who are supporting elderly family members and/or those with child care responsibilities should be able to direct their focus and energy primarily if necessary towards fulfilling those essential duties. Staff should not be required to undertake this vitally essential care work under the shadow of income uncertainty and professional precarity as a result of the University of Toronto's response to this crisis. The University should consider redefining a full-time work week to 25 hours for staff working from home who are also juggling child and elder care responsibilities, following the example of the Australian National University, and other institutions of higher education.

Indeed, we are seeing many Universities worldwide step up to enhance job security

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In this fraught moment, we implore you to consider our collective responsibility to more than just the bottom line. Crises like the one we face today are a dimension of the vast, human-led global ecological transformations that promise to multiply. Novel viruses have been tied to increasing interaction between wildlife and human settlements in the context of habitat destruction fueled by global urbanization and massive agribusiness operations. The unprecedented speed and scale of the coronavirus' spread is a feature of globalized supply chains and human movement. There is clearly no separation of human and natural disasters in this era, but we can shape outcomes by actively planning for a just transition.

Now is the time for the senior administration at U of T to show how BOUNDLESS our institution can be in supporting everyone who makes this institution so strong. We urgently call on the University of Toronto to commit to a just transition through this crisis by firstly committing to salary continuance for all staff well beyond April 30th, 2020.

Yours sincerely,

Divestment and Beyond: Building Climate Justice at U of T Coalition

c.c.: Cheryl Regehr, Vice-President and Provost
Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-Provost Human Resources

[Please sign the letter of support by Noon on Friday, April 3, 2020.](#)



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