



# OTF Presentation to the Governing Council of the Ontario College of Teachers re Proposed Fee Increase

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Good morning. I wish to thank the Chair and Council members for hearing our presentation today. My name is Chris Cowley, President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation, the umbrella organization representing Ontario's 160,000 teachers in publicly funded schools. I would also like to take this opportunity to introduce the President of each of our Affiliates who are in attendance.

I think you know why the teachers of Ontario have decided to make this deputation here today. It deals with the fee implications that have come from OCT's Finance Committee. Clearly, you know that we oppose it. I am speaking from the heart on behalf of the teachers in this province. In the past, it seems we have faced conflict with various issues and policies and I am one in a line of presidents who have spoken to you on behalf of OTF members. I want to ensure you that this will be a dialogue of respect and discussion among professionals.

My presentation consists of three main points, the first of which is the most straightforward: an increase in fees by 20% is not acceptable to Ontario's teachers. In fact, a twitter poll that I conducted received over 700 votes and showed 99% opposed to this fee proposal. OTF conducted an email poll with 11,736 responses from teachers, 98.6% opposed a fee increase. This is a clear indication of where teachers stand on this issue.

Second, this increase is motivated by a desire to pay off the mortgage of this building at an accelerated pace; evidently, to avoid potential increases in interest rates. It is a well-known fact that this building is located on some of Canada's most expensive real estate. At face value, we can understand the basic concept of paying off a mortgage early. Who among us would not want to be mortgage free? I am certain that 100% of teachers would prefer to be mortgage free. However, none of us can charge the neighbours on our street a premium to help pay our mortgage, nor would we want to. We made a commitment and chose to pay out a mortgage for our house over the long term.

Just as you or I took out a mortgage for our home, when the College chose to undertake the purchase of this property, they entered into a contract. In the case of OCT, the lender is ultimately the teachers of Ontario. The Governing Council that entered into this agreement made a deal not only with this generation of teachers, but also future generations. Asking today's teachers to shoulder this entire burden is not only unfair but it also violates the understanding that was made when the building was purchased. In the pension world, we call this intergenerational equity; we do not regard this approach as equitable.

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My third and final argument stems from the College's Strategic Priorities statement, particularly, the goal of "engaging members of the College." The proposal to increase members' fees by 20% does nothing to accomplish this goal. In fact, it does the opposite. This coming year, 2018, is an OCT election year when the College undoubtedly wants member engagement. A proposal such as this would only serve to alienate its membership.

I understand the College's efforts to reduce expenditures. In fact, the College has significant reserves (\$8 million) to cushion operating expenses. Paying off \$16 million in two years and asking this generation of teachers to shoulder the burden is unfair. Quite simply, it is not palatable to Ontario's teachers and is counter-productive to OCT's own strategic priorities.

**On behalf of Ontario's 160,000 teachers, I ask you to reconsider this recommendation and hold fees steady.**



Chris Cowley  
OTF President