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Response to the MTCU's Postsecondary Education: Sustainability and Renewal-Discussion Paper

April 16, 2019

(This letter was originally sent on February 21, 2019. [See the original letter here](#))

Nancy Mudrinic
Assistant Deputy Minister
Postsecondary Education Division
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)

Dear Ms. Mudrinic:

We welcome the Ministry's consultation with faculty associations on the issue of faculty renewal. We believe that meaningful engagement is critical to addressing the challenges the postsecondary sector is facing, and this consultation effort is a step in the right direction. We also welcome the MTCU's interest in the matter of renewal.

At the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA), we believe that maintaining secure academic appointments that ensure academic freedom is the best means of advancing the University's mission.

We are disappointed, however, in the extremely narrow focus in the Ministry's discussion paper, which provides no data to substantiate its claims. We at UTFA are not aware of any issues related to senior faculty at the University of Toronto that require government intervention. Our senior colleagues richly contribute to teaching, learning, and research at U of T, and we have not been presented with any data to suggest otherwise. At no time has the U of T Administration suggested that senior colleagues present any problems in terms of renewal.

UTFA would strongly object to any attempt to re-engage mandatory retirement in the postsecondary sector in any way, shape, or form. Efforts to pressure faculty to leave the University on the basis of their age would constitute a violation of human rights.

The U of T offers a very good phased retirement program, for those who wish to take it up. UTFA is always willing to negotiate improvements to this program.

Here we will comment more broadly on the MTCU discussion paper. It completely dismisses the key structural issues facing postsecondary institutions in Ontario.

The questions posed in the Ministry's discussion paper do not address the structural barriers to faculty renewal. We strongly encourage the Ministry to expand its focus to examine the impact of chronic underfunding on the postsecondary system in Ontario and the alarming trend of increasingly hiring precarious, contract faculty at many universities. These structural issues must be considered in developing government policy regarding faculty renewal.

Our faculty association fully endorses the recommendations presented in OCUFA's submission, which we've attached for your reference.

Most importantly, we echo the need for the MTCU to:

- I. Work with COU to ensure timely data on hiring trends in the postsecondary sector is available and widely shared with stakeholders in the sector.
- II. Commit to adopting policy and providing adequate funding levels to encourage universities to invest in hiring more full-time tenure-track and continuing faculty and librarians and replace retiring faculty and librarians with the same.
- III. Conduct meaningful consultations with sector stakeholders on the key challenges facing the postsecondary sector in Ontario, which include: the chronic lack of funding and an alarming shift towards precarious, contract academic positions.
- IV. Ensure that any policy implementation respects existing collective agreements and ongoing collective bargaining between faculty associations and university employers.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Messenger
UTFA President

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