



Open Letter to President Meric Gertler on Fossil Fuel Divestment

February 9, 2017

Dear Meric Gertler,

We, trade unionists and students of USW 1998, CUPE 1230, CUPE 3902, and APUS (CFS 97) write to you to strongly condemn your decision to ignore the recommendations of your own ad-hoc advisory committee to partially divest from fossil fuels. The University of Toronto should not be materially benefitting from projects that threaten the very inhabitability of our planet. While a university endowment fund, even one as large as the University of Toronto's, is a drop in the bucket in terms of financial markets, the other side of the equation must be considered: the effect of divestment not on coal and oil companies, but on the University itself. The fact that the University of Toronto has a material interest in the profitability of coal and oil companies is a direct threat to academic freedom, particularly in such fields as climatology, earth sciences, atmospheric physics, environmental chemistry and beyond.

The University has established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission Steering Committee in response to the TRC's Calls to Action. You must recognize that in continuing to be financially invested in the fossil fuel industry, you are implicating not just the University, but our pension funds and tuition fees in the continued destruction of the environment that first and foremost negatively impacts indigenous communities. In refusing to divest, you are forcing us to continue to support the expansion of pipeline projects opposed by most First Nations and environmental groups. Your refusal to divest our money from fossil fuels demonstrates a lack of respect for First Nations treaty rights

and Canada's COP21 commitment to limit rising temperature averages to within 1.5 C of pre-industrial levels. Not to mention a lack of respect to future generations' rights to clean air and water.

We forcefully object to our pensions and tuition fees being used to support an industry with a track record of ignoring First Nations treaty rights, contributing to global warming, and destroying our natural environment. We implore you to reverse your decision regarding divestment. Our University should be investing in clean and sustainable technologies of the future that will benefit society, not destructive industries of the past that seriously jeopardize future life on this planet.

Sincerely,



Colleen Burke
President, USW1998



Ryan Culpepper
Chair, CUPE 3902



Wasyl Sydorenko
President, CUPE 1230



Mala Kashyap
President, APUS