

My name is Corrina Kroeker and I am a substitute teacher.

I am here to show my support for Bill 45, the amendments to our pension plan.

Having been teaching for 10 years and having paid into my pension plan for some of those years, I hope to retire one day. That is why I am here.

I have made an effort in recent months to read the various positions that have come out from both RTAM and MTS. I understand the desire of retired teachers for a cost of living adjustment that ensures at least a high degree of inflation protection. I also, however, understand the cost of such a benefit.

It is clear that any sort of COLA guarantee is financially beyond reach. There may have been a time, over the past twenty years, when changes could have been made to soften the impact of our current demographics, but important decisions were never made. Ignoring the warnings that were provided over and over again means we must now face the situation we have today.

There is one aspect of this issue that I find particularly disturbing however, and it is the one I would like to address today. It is the belief of RTAM that money should be taken out of the account that pays the basic benefit, Account A, and transferred to the Pension Adjustment Account to pay enhanced COLAs. This is absolutely unacceptable. It is both shortsighted and financially risky – and that risk falls disproportionately on active teachers.

The problem with our pension plan stems from the simple fact that we did not put enough money into the plan to pay the current benefit levels - and we certainly did not put enough in to pay a full COLA. Now we don't have the money for a COLA and the RTAM solution is take the money from the account that pays the basic benefit – even though our plan had a shortfall at the last valuation and will quite likely have a deficit at the next valuation.

So what happens if we raid the basic benefit account and in a few years what we can't afford is not a COLA, but the basic benefit itself? Will retired teachers agree to cut their benefits? I hardly think so! What will happen is either massive contribution increases for active teachers, cuts in benefits for future retirees, an increase in retirement age or some combination of these factors.

We don't have enough money in the account that pays out the COLA for retired teachers. Now their suggestion is to put my future pension at risk to supplement their COLA. I don't think so! While sympathetic to retired teachers, I am already paying more to get the same benefit they got. I expect to pay even more for that benefit in the future. Anything that puts my future benefit at risk in spite of those increased contributions is simply not acceptable.

I hope that as you consider Bill 45 you will think not only about retired teachers, but also

about the thousands of teachers who are counting on our pension plan in the future. Some of them will not retire for decades. I hope that you will not repeat the mistakes of the past and create a situation where it is the basic benefit we cannot afford.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views on this issue. I believe Bill 45 represents a fair and reasonable approach on this issue and I hope for it's speedy implementation.