

## **ONTARIO NDP EDUCATION OUTREACH TOOLKIT – STOP THE TAKEOVERS, FUND EDUCATION NOW**

This is a guide for **power mapping, organizing a phone zap, writing an op-ed and speaking with your municipal councillor**. We're out in the community to:

- Raise awareness about the lack of support and funding for education.
- Collect petition signatures to present at Queen's Park.
- Identify people to attend parent meetings, present resolutions to municipal councillors, call and email Conservative MPPs, write op-eds, and get media attention.

Every conversation had, every influencer engaged, every door knocked, every call made, and every signature collected helps us show the government that families and communities are standing up for schools.

### **Power Mapping Local Influence**

#### **What is Power Mapping**

- Finding spheres of influence that already exist
- Mapping who knows who, how can one conversation help spread our message?
- Relational organizing, person to person conversations over coffee, the phone, email
- Result will be the spread of the key message to a larger network
- Success looks like social media posts, local media coverage and a change in policy

#### **Where to start**

- Identify “central individuals”, people who are sources of information and advice, that are connected to community groups, labour organization, relevant issue spaces or online networks.
- Consider what resources people have access to, such as meeting spaces, newsletters, social media pages, or organizational affiliations
- Map relationships between these individuals and your organizing team
- Identify who in your organization is best positioned to reach out to each person; create tangible plans for outreach, follow-up, and asks.

#### **Taking action**

- Once central individuals are identified along with the best person on your organizing team to reach out to them, initiate contact with them.
  - Send an email asking them to consider signing our petition and then follow-up with a request for a phone call or coffee.
- Ask if they would be willing to share the campaign, host a conversation, or provide a testimonial

## **POWERMAPPING FOR EDUCATION**

Power mapping for education can feel very large since so many folks are have children in education or family members or friends. Many of the people most affected are already connected through both formal and informal networks. Formal

networks through parent groups, parent councils, advocacy groups (like Fund Our Schools) or unions. Informal networks can be personal networks of parent friends, social media community groups and organized sports. The goal of power mapping in this campaign is to identify those existing networks, understand who is trusted within them, and build pathways for our education message to travel organically through the education and community spaces that already talk about support and funding for students every day.

When applying power mapping to education, organizers should start by thinking about where people talk about education. Rather than starting with large institutions, begin with lived-experience through parents, teachers and education workers. Identify who organizes meetings, moderates online groups, runs newsletters, or is regularly asked for advice. Those individuals often have far more influence than formal leadership titles suggest. A single conversation with a trusted educator or community advocate can open doors to dozens or hundreds of people who already understand the urgency of education.

Types of groups and communities to prioritize for outreach and relationship-building include:

- Local Labour Councils <https://ofl.ca/about/labourcouncils/>
- Parent Groups
- Union locals for teachers, education workers, support staff
- City Councillors and School Board Trustees
- Francophone Groups

Online spaces are especially important for this issue. Organizers should look for:

- Local and regional Facebook groups for parents and communities.
- Reddit communities focused on education or local community.
- WhatsApp or Signal groups used by parents, schools, teachers, union locals, or community organizers.
- Email lists and newsletters run by advocacy organizations.

Once these groups are identified, the focus should be on relationship-building rather than mass messaging. Start by listening: ask what barriers their students are facing, what stories resonate, and what they wish decision-makers understood. Then connect those experiences back to the core campaign message: that the Ford Government is choosing not to fund and support education, allowing the system to crumble and removing local voices from decision making. Over time, ask for deeper engagement, such as sharing the petition, posting in their networks, attending a town hall, or offering a testimonial. This approach ensures the campaign grows through trusted relationships and lived experience, rather than feeling imposed from the outside.

## TURNING ALLIES INTO ACTIVISTS

Power mapping and community outreach are the first steps in building momentum for this campaign. As relationships are developed with education workers, patient advocates, community groups, and lived-experience networks, organizers should be inviting those allies into a shared public moment: an Education Townhall. ADD URL

This townhall will be an opportunity to gather our allies, galvanize our message, educate our volunteers, and direct our supporters and allies towards resources and outreach opportunities in their local communities. When you are talking to allies, supporters, or anyone you run into who may share an interest in defending Ontario's education system, tell them about our Townhall!

## **TACTIC 1 – PHONE ZAP**

A phone zap is a community activity to call MPP offices to let them know how you feel about the takeover of local decision making in schools and the lack of funding for students. In a phone zap you'll gather people together, in person or virtual, to make calls together. This can be 2 people or 200 people, the focus is on calling conservative MPPs to provide your opinion and demand more for our schools.

*Getting Started:*

1. Ask people in your network to join you to make calls
2. Meet in person at a coffee shop, someone's dinner table, library or virtually on zoom
3. Practice what you'll say with each other
4. Start making calls! If no one picks-up leave a voicemail
5. Debrief, hear if anyone spoke with anyone and celebrate together having done something to support education
6. Bonus: Take a picture of your action and post online encouraging folks to join the next phone zap! Make it a regular thing!

You can find the phone number of Conservative MPP offices online by filtering by party,

<https://www.ola.org/en/members/current>

*Script:*

Hi MPP \_\_\_\_\_,

I'm calling to express my deep concern with your government's decisions to move ahead with school board takeovers and ask that you stop this action and instead properly fund education!

This kind of power grab takes away parents' voices in decisions that affect their children's schools. This is a direct attack on accountability, transparency, and local democracy.

Ontario families deserve better. Parents deserve a say in their children's education, students deserve the worldclass education we've promised them, and teachers need in classroom support. Our kids, families, and communities deserve nothing less.

Thank you,

Your Name

*General Tips:*

- If you're nervous to speak to someone, calling after hours often means no-one will pick up and you can leave a voicemail

- It's ok to be emotional in these calls, education is so important, just be respectful
- You don't need to leave your name or contact info unless you want a response back
- You can call your local MPP, the Minister of Education Paul Calandra and MPPs across the province

## TACTIC 2 – WRITE AN OP-ED

A well-crafted op-ed published in a local paper or online platform can go a long way in reaching your target audience. An op-ed should be an opinion piece with a sharp focus and credibly-sourced information to represent a specific viewpoint (for facts on education visit [https://www.chandrapasma.ca/education\\_facts](https://www.chandrapasma.ca/education_facts)). A great op-ed will be honest, focus on personal stories and impact, name the problem (the Ford Government) clearly and propose a solution (local support and funding for students). It should have less to do with winning an argument and more to do with telling the story.

*How to get started:*

1. Headline, what's the core message in your letter
2. Byline, your name, titles and short bio highlighting why someone should listen to you on this topic, for example you're a parent, teacher, community leader (20 words)
3. Thesis statement, your opinion on education
4. Reason, why you have this opinion
5. Facts, one or two sentences in a paragraph to back-up what you're saying or to demonstrate urgency
6. Conclusion, final paragraph reinforcing the opinion and reason with a call to action (write or call your MPP)

*General Tips:*

- Must be an original piece
- Use plain language, avoid jargon and acronyms
- Consider your audience (parents and teachers)
- Have sources for any facts presented
- Be compelling and respectful

If your op-ed is published, please send a link to [organize@ontariondp.ca](mailto:organize@ontariondp.ca) so that we can promote it. Share your op-ed and others in community groups on Facebook and WhatsApp.

More resources on writing op-eds publicly available here <https://www.theopedproject.org/resources>

## TACTIC 3 - MUNICIPAL MOTIONS

One of the ways you can take action is by reaching out to progressive city council members and asking them to present a motion calling on the Minister of Education in Ontario to adequately fund our schools and stop school board takeovers.

In order to stop the takeovers, we need to put lots of pressure on the Premier and Minister of Education. Having municipalities join the call to demand more funding and respect local voices will help local communities to understand the impact on our schools and will let the government know that people are paying attention to their dangerous power grab.

Here's how you can go about getting a resolution passed at your local municipal council:

- Identify councillors with a track record of supporting progressive causes or who are strong voices in defense of your local community.
- Reach out to them to share this information about our public education and the text of the draft motion.
- Ask if they would consider tabling the motion at the next council meeting.
- Ask if they need any assistance in preparing speaking points or gathering information on the motion to support them.
- Identify parents or community members who are willing to reach out to other councillors to educate them on what's happening in our schools and the impact of underfunding and school board takeovers and encourage them to support the motion.
- Consider having a group of supporters attend the meeting as a sign of community support for the motion.

*Draft Motion:*

WHEREAS schools are essential community institutions, educating our children, serving as community hubs, and providing good quality, local jobs;

WHEREAS Ontario's publicly funded schools have experienced chronic underfunding over the years, resulting in larger class sizes, reduced supports, aging and unsafe school infrastructure, and increasing pressure on students, educators, workers, and families;

WHEREAS the decisions regarding school budgets, including hiring, allocation of resources, availability of supports for students, the location of schools and the disposition of school board properties all have significant repercussions for a local community;

WHEREAS the loss of community schools or the closure of important programming has an impact on quality of life in a community, including the desirability of relocating to or from a community;

WHEREAS Franco-Ontarian and Indigenous Peoples have constitutional rights to represent and advocate for their communities, and school board takeovers threaten their sovereignty and Charter-protected rights;

WHEREAS parents and communities should have a say in decisions regarding local schools and decision makers should know their community and be accountable to it through democratic elections;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the [Municipality of XX] will send a letter to the Premier and Minister of Education asking them to adequately fund our schools and stop school board takeovers and that a copy of this letter will be sent to other municipal councils encouraging them to do the same.