

CAMPAIGN BRIEF – STOP THE TAKEOVERS, FUND EDUCATION NOW

The Conservative Government's takeover of Ontario's education system is no longer a theoretical threat. Its impacts are beginning to materialize in Ontario schools and communities, and the Minister is already threatening to go further. This is on top of the devastating effects of years of funding cuts on our kids and the caring adults who support them every day. In light of this, our campaign for public education is shifting from warning to accountability: raising awareness of how the Minister of Education's new powers are being used, who is being hurt, and why it is bad for our schools, students, parents, and workers.

Ontario's Education System Today

We have seen a fundamental shift of power away from communities through local trustees who are democratically elected and accountable, and into the hands of Cabinet and the Premier's Office. Ontario has nearly 2 million K–12 students across 72 publicly funded school boards, serving communities with vastly different needs, geographies, and challenges. Yet provincial policy continues to treat our children and their education needs primarily as a line item to manage, rather than as citizens representing the future of our province, who deserve a strong, high-quality publicly-funded education system.

Across the province, school boards are being squeezed between rising costs and funding increases that year after year have not kept pace with inflation or enrolment pressures. While total education funding has risen modestly in recent years, per-student funding in real terms is less now than it was in 2018 when Doug Ford was elected, contributing to growing gaps in resources and supports.

Key trends include:

- **Cuts to education funding** that have taken **\$6.3 billion** out of the system and leaves boards unable to meet student needs, particularly in special education, mental health supports, and student transportation.
- **A growing violence problem** as large class sizes and unmet needs result in frustrated students, and fewer caring adults means less opportunity to intervene before a situation becomes critical.
- **A massive school repair backlog**, estimated at **over \$16 billion**, that continues to grow while capital funding remains insufficient.
- **Reduced local flexibility**, as boards face tighter restrictions on how funding can be used regardless of local needs and increased provincial oversight without corresponding resources.
- **Growing disparities between regions**, as northern, rural, and remote boards face higher costs related to staffing, transportation, and distance, while urban boards struggle with overcrowding and large class sizes.

Local Voices and Democratic Accountability

Ontario's education system has long relied on democratically elected school board trustees to connect parents and communities to decision-making. Trustees play a critical role in:

- Advocating for students who need additional supports
- Ensuring culturally and linguistically appropriate education
- Helping parents navigate challenges within the system
- Reflecting local priorities and realities in budgeting and planning

Regional Realities Matter

Ontario's education system is not one-size-fits-all:

- **Northern and remote boards** face long bus routes, higher transportation costs, chronic teacher shortages, and lack of access to specialists in mental health and special education.
- **Urban boards** grapple with overcrowded classrooms, aging infrastructure, and higher concentrations of students requiring additional supports.

- **Francophone boards** continue to face shortages in school spaces, with only **59% coverage province-wide** for eligible students, and far lower rates in parts of southern Ontario, along with a severe shortage of francophone teachers and lack of access to French language resources.

The State of Ontario's Education System

- Status of school board interventions:
 - The Minister of Education has already taken control of seven school boards and has threatened more takeovers.
 - As a result, parents and communities have lost their voice in more than 1,500 schools.
 - The government is now going one step further and installing unelected Conservative CEOs to run school boards and overrule democratically elected trustees, while capping the amount of trustees boards can elect.
- Now we are seeing unelected Conservative insiders making decisions behind closed doors, without consultation, that are harming children and workers:
 - At the TDSB, the supervisor moved to increase class sizes for students with disabilities and plans to remove class-size caps for Grades 4–8 next year.
 - At the TVDSB, assessment wait times have doubled, leaving some children at home without the supports they need to attend school.
 - At the OCDSB, the supervisor announced closures of alternative schools without consulting affected families.
 - Supervisors have told workers they intend to roll back union-negotiated benefits.
 - Now boards with large and diverse groups of students will have to operate with a capped number of elected representatives, regardless of their unique regional needs.
- According to the Ontario Autism Coalition, in the last school year alone, families of children with disabilities made more than 100,000 calls to school board trustees seeking help to secure supports and accommodations at school. 29.4% of respondents to the OAC's 2025 survey said they had called their trustee for help at least once.
 - Now, board will have to make do with less and students will feel the impact.
- Since 2018–19, the Ontario government has **cut \$6.3 billion from school funding** on a cumulative basis, after adjusting for inflation and enrolment growth.
 - Average real funding loss:
 - **~\$1500 less per student per year** compared to 2018–19
- Local democracy in education is being hollowed out. Parents and communities lose meaningful input when decisions are made by an unaccountable CEO.
 - Democratically-elected school board trustees give parents a transparent and accountable representative through which they can participate in decision-making and receive support in addressing concerns.
 - Importing America-style government takeover of education does not put parents and communities in charge of education. It puts Ford's hand-picked insiders in charge and moves key decisions behind closed doors.
- Chronic underfunding remains the real crisis. Ontario continues to rank last in per-student funding while Bill 33 adds bureaucracy and political control instead of resources.
 - Ontario's school boards continue to face a \$ 16.8 billion repair backlog and the Ford Government continues to leave these gaps unaddressed.

Volunteer Talking Points

- Start with a local connection: "In our schools..." or "In this community..."
- Explain that funding is the real problem, not school boards: "Doug Ford keeps board funding below inflation, and students feel the impacts..."
- Emphasize who is hurt: "Parents lose their say, students lose services, and communities lose accountability."
- Direct people to take action: "Join the campaign, contact your MPP, and spread the word."

Building & Re-igniting Our Audience

In order to build a campaign, we first must build capacity. This means reaching out beyond your usual networks to find allies who share your goals and are open to working together. Typically, you will look to groups that are directly affected, activists with an interest in the issue, any politicians who have to care about what these folks think, other progressive orgs, and any other likely prospects you can think of. Do not neglect to reach out to NDP members in your riding, as well as the executive committees of nearby ridings.

One key lesson from the previous phase of this campaign is that capacity does not appear automatically — it has to be actively coordinated. Where we set clear timelines, concrete asks, and defined geographic priorities, allies were willing to show up and do real work.

In the last phase of this campaign we raised awareness of the impacts of Bill 33. Now, Bill 33 is here and Doug Ford is continuing to attack our publicly-funded education system with new legislation. We need to activate the same parents' groups, student networks, teachers' unions, and special education advocates, that listened in to the last campaign and get them participating in outreach and movement building activities that make noise.

Tactics for Awareness-Raising

For Bill 33 advocacy we recommend focusing especially on directly contacting government MPPs to let them know their constituents are frustrated and upset by this:

- **Petitions to the Legislature**
 - The Legislature will be back in session in late March, and we should aim to bring as many signatures to the chamber as we can to show how Ontarians feel about this. You can bring petitions with you to events, hold in-person meetings and ask folks to sign, and give them to allied orgs to collect signatures independently. Remember that the pages need to come back to you in order to count.
- **Digital AYNs**
 - AYNs cannot be directly submitted to the Legislature, but they are effective organizing tools nevertheless, and a huge number on an AYN can serve as a powerful talking point when it comes time to make the case to the government that they're on the wrong track. Post links to these on your social media, bring QR codes to tablings, and ask folks to reshare after they sign.
- **Physical Letters to PC MPPs**
 - Government members need to feel that their constituents are angry about this if we are going to stop it. This is the optimal task for folks who are not normally super political or partisan, as hearing from those folks will matter more to government MPPs. If there are local groups who are helping, you can facilitate by providing lists of office addresses, refreshers on how to send letters (you do not need a stamp to send mail to an MPP), and some guidance on what the important points to hit are. If desired, you can use the template on our campaign site.
- **Emails to PC MPPs**
 - A list of office emails for government members, the Premier, and the Minister of Education are provided on our campaign site. In order to maximize the likelihood of a human being reading your email, it is best to not use identical subject lines.
- **Phone Zaps**
 - A phone zap is much like an email blitz, except the object is to fill up the entire voicemail boxes of the politicians you're addressing. You will want to get as many folks as possible onto a zoom call, and share a list of phone numbers to call through. Each person calls the numbers, one by one, and leaves a voicemail at each number until the voicemail boxes are all filled.
- **Flyering**
 - This is fairly straightforward, but can be used to build capacity for everything else. You will want to print a few hundred to a few thousand flyers, and recruit volunteers to get them delivered in strategically-targeted areas. This can be neighbourhoods near schools, where lots of parents and students live, or just near local MPP's offices. This will get people's attention and hopefully drive signups via QR codes that we can use to recruit for the letter-writing and (especially) email-writing campaigns.

- **Canvassing**
 - This is by far the most labour-intensive tactic, but also by far the most effective in demonstrating to people that we are serious about this issue. There is no real substitute for actually talking to people in person. You can use Populus to make maps and track where you've been, go knock doors with the petitions. It will be slow going (especially when compared with tabling at a big festival or event), but equally, the process of recruiting folks, training them, and going out canvassing is a great dry run for the kind of organizing we will need to do in the next campaign.
- **Media Push**
 - Hearing directly from other parents, teachers, and students matters. That's why we'll support families, educators, student leaders, and non-profit advocates in sharing their experiences through op-eds, letters to the editor, and conversations with local and community journalists. When people affected by Ford's education cuts speak for themselves, it helps build public understanding, solidarity, and momentum for change.
- **Municipal Resolutions**
 - We have some details in the backgrounder that was drafted last time for the resolution that could be inserted here. It could also be included as a separate How To page.

To access more outreach links, AYN pages, or campaign materials (including a printable version of our flyer), please access our website at this link or via the QR code below: <https://www.ontariondp.ca/fundeducationnow>



If you want to organize a canvass, phone zap, or townhall in your local community, please contact us at organize@ontariondp.ca.