

# Report:

## No Cuts to Education Town Hall

On Wednesday, April 24th, MPP Bhutila Karpoche held a No Cuts to Education Town Hall, where representatives from various teacher, parent, and student organizations spoke on the panel about the Ontario government's cuts to education, the impact of those cuts on students here in Parkdale–High Park, and how we can organize on the issue.

### Guest Speakers

The panel speakers each exhibit a passion for the protection of publicly-funded education and are champions in fighting cuts to education.

Kim Fry – Elementary Teachers of Toronto/ GTA Parent Action Network

- Cutting education is not just about deficit-cutting in Ontario, it is also about giving tax breaks to the wealthiest in the province.
- The government's policies are indicative of the Premier's desire to privatize education
- Parents are seen by the current Ontario government as “shoppers” for their children's education

Rachel Huot – West End Parents

- Parents did not vote for education cuts, but they can turn their frustration into organizing power
- School advisory council letters taking position against the education cuts have been sent to the Ministry of Education by over 200 schools in just one month.
- Solidarity as a tool of unity and action for education by parents, teachers and students thwarts the government's strategy to divide and conquer

Robin Pilkey – TDSB Trustee for Parkdale – High Park and TDSB Chair

- Much of the government's cuts mean the loss of the extracurricular programs that enrich student learning outside of the classroom setting
- Over 11,000 students participated in such programs last year and 6000 of them became employed due to their participation in these programs
- The rise of average classroom sizes in high schools from 22 to 28 students will directly impact student learning

Leslie Wolfe – Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

- The current Ontario government is headed toward defunding of public services in favor of privatization
- The Ontario government is providing “user choice” through direct funding, which is simply a step closer towards the privatization of social services, healthcare and education
- Organizing the rallies, taking action and canvassing in ridings where the MPP is a part of the government's caucus is key

Tola Ajao – English Teacher at Parkdale Collegiate Institute

- The Ontario government's cuts will mean job loss for 3475 teachers over the next 4 years
- As a teacher, job insecurity is at an all-time high
- Education is not built out of fighting for survival and a cutthroat atmosphere, it is built in communities

Aidan Jonah – Students Against Public Education Cuts (SAPEC)

- SAPEC is 24 chapters strong across the province and believes in the long-term political mobilization of Ontario's student body
- The new changes to the education system by this government that require students to take up to 480 hours of online courses disproportionately and negatively affects students from lower socio-economic backgrounds as well as those with personal learning deficits
- SAPEC is mobilizing students to be more aware of their political surroundings and looking towards a better future, united as students.

**What you said:**

“Do education cutbacks today mean cutting/closing down schools?”

“How are we monitoring our students with regards to cheating in their mandatory online courses?”

“Will there be any consultation with students and their parents regarding new changes coming to our education system, in terms of what works and what doesn't?”

“It's ultimately the teachers who are suffering.”

“What can we do? What can be done to push back against the cuts to our education system and all these new changes?”

## **Key Issues**

The Ontario government is imposing cuts to public education. This will mean:

- larger class sizes, from an average of 22 to 28 students
- fewer resources
- less individual attention
- mandatory online courses
- cancellation of arts, trades and technology classes
- 3,475 teachers being fired