

Ontario Election 2018

Fix Our Schools

CAMPAIGN GUIDE

**This guide is for
campaign organizers.**

**When lobbying Ontario
election candidates, please
use the document titled
*Campaign Information
for MPP Candidates.***

INTRODUCTION

- This Campaign Guide has been prepared to support and guide the work of campaign organizers across Ontario.
- The campaign has also prepared a lobby kit titled Campaign Information for MPP Candidates which organizers will present to candidates during lobby meetings.



Across Ontario, publicly funded schools are in a state of serious disrepair. In fact, gross and chronic underfunding by the provincial government has allowed \$15.9 billion of disrepair to accumulate in Ontario's schools.

The **Fix Our Schools** campaign, in partnership with **Campaign for Public Education**, is organizing now to put the disrepair in Ontario's schools front and center in the June 2018 provincial election. In the coming months, the campaign will visit provincial candidates to urge them to sign the **Fix Our Schools Pledge**. YOU can join this important campaign and help to make it a success.

In the 20 years since our provincial government took over education funding in Ontario, the important public assets we call schools have been allowed to deteriorate:

- Roofs and ceilings routinely leak.
- Mold issues, vermin, asbestos concerns and poor water quality are not uncommon.
- Classrooms can be over 35 degrees in spring and fall.
- Classrooms can be as cold as 12 degrees in winter months.
- Bathrooms can often be missing stall doors or are so old they are impossible to keep clean...and the list goes on.

The 2 million students who attend publicly funded schools in Ontario need better school conditions—as do those who attend childcare/early learning and adult programs in these same schools. Not to mention the many adults who work every day in these buildings.

Ontario schools ought to be safe, healthy and well maintained!

YOU can help to make the campaign a success! Here's what YOU can do:

- 1 Read this **Fix Our Schools** Campaign Guide. Visit the campaign website fixourschools.ca to find out more about the issue and to stay up to date with the campaign.
- 2 Join with others in your community to raise awareness of the disrepair problem and its causes—by speaking out and by circulating campaign materials.
- 3 Invite others to connect with the campaign by joining our email distribution list via fixourschools.ca, and by following us on Facebook and Twitter.
- 4 Document disrepair in your local schools. Send photos and stories to info@fixourschools.ca
- 5 Pressure all MPP candidates in the 2018 election to sign the **Fix Our Schools Pledge!**

**Join the campaign
to Fix Our Schools!**

PART 1 CAMPAIGN BACKGROUNDER

1 The campaign is already up and running!

The members of the **Fix Our Schools** campaign are parents, students, grandparents, teachers, principals, caretakers and voters who believe that every publicly funded school in Ontario ought to be a safe, healthy, well-maintained building that provides an environment conducive to learning and working. We believe schools must be funded as a key component of our public infrastructure.

Since the **Fix Our Schools** campaign was launched in October 2014, it has built a large and growing network of people across the province. We believe that there is strength in numbers and power in our grassroots, non-partisan activism. We know that we need more than strong arguments about the importance of fixing our schools. To be successful, our campaign must create organized, on-the-ground pressure on candidates in the 2018 provincial election.



We are off to a great start. Politicians of all political stripes and from all levels of government are already following the Fix Our Schools campaign with interest.

2 The problem: School disrepair

Publicly funded schools are in a state of serious disrepair. Our provincial government has acknowledged and documented the extent of this disrepair, confirming that there is a \$15.9 billion repair backlog in Ontario's schools as of Fall 2017!



Disrepair takes many forms, including: cold classrooms; hot classrooms; leaky roofs and ceilings; mold; vermin; broken washroom fixtures and stall doors; walls that are so overdue for fresh paint they can no longer be cleaned; broken railings, windows and doors—and the list goes on.

Studies show that school conditions matter. They impact student learning and achievement, attendance and health. Poor school conditions can be dangerous and send a strong message about the value society places on each student's education. Studies also show that repairs are only going to get more expensive and school conditions are only going to worsen unless our provincial government starts to truly prioritize and fund schools as critical public infrastructure.

3 The cause of the problem: Underfunding

Twenty years ago, the provincial government took over responsibility for funding education. By 2003, \$5.6 billion of disrepair had accumulated in Ontario's schools and in the 15 years since, disrepair in Ontario's schools has been allowed to triple to \$15.9 billion.

In 2015, Ontario's Auditor-General confirmed that provincial funding for school repairs was grossly inadequate—in some years, only **one-tenth** or less of what it ought to have been, according to industry standards.

Where does the money come from to fix Ontario's schools?

Ontario's provincial government took responsibility for providing all funding for public education in 1998. The streams of provincial funding that go towards ensuring Ontario's schools are safe, healthy, well-maintained buildings that provide environments conducive to learning and working are different than those that go towards ensuring quality education happens inside our schools and include:

- School Condition Improvement (SCI) funding for addressing identified repair backlog items
- School Renewal Allocation (SRA) funding for repairing and renovating schools
- Operations and maintenance funding for day-to-day repairs, maintenance and operations
- Capital funding for building new schools and additions

4 Campaign goals

Economist Hugh Mackenzie has examined the current provincial education approach to funding and outlined precisely what our provincial government must do to truly fix Ontario's schools and address the \$15.9 billion repair backlog:

- Increase annual funding for school renewal, capital projects and operational maintenance by \$1.6 billion per year while at the same time maintaining the special \$1 billion per year SCI funding until the \$15.9 billion repair backlog is eliminated.
- Establish measurable **standards for good school conditions**, including not only Facilities Condition Index (FCI) data but also issues such as: water quality, air quality, vermin, mold, asbestos, fire and electrical code, natural light requirements and temperatures of classrooms.



5 Campaign history: We have already made important progress!

APRIL 2014 Frustrated with \$3.3 billion of outstanding repairs in Toronto District School Board (TDSB) schools, a group of parents organized the first meeting of what would become the “Fix Our Schools” working group.

OCTOBER 2014 The **Fix Our Schools** campaign officially launched.

APRIL 2015 **Fix Our Schools** expanded to become a provincial campaign after realizing that disrepair impacted schools in all 72 Ontario school boards.

JUNE 2016 A big win for the **Fix Our Schools** campaign! The Province announced \$1.1 billion of new funding over two years, which brought annual renewal funding to \$1.4 billion per year. Although **Fix Our Schools** was thrilled that this new provincial funding brought annual renewal funding to the level at which it always **ought** to have been, there was no funding solution offered to address the \$15.9 billion of disrepair that was allowed to accumulate in the many years when provincial funding was grossly inadequate.

AUGUST 2016 The provincial government released detailed information about school disrepair in all 72 Ontario school boards. For the first time, every citizen in Ontario could readily see the level of documented disrepair in Ontario's schools.

APRIL 2017 After continued pressure by **Fix Our Schools**, the provincial government maintained annual funding for school renewal at \$1.4 billion—the amount industry standards suggest is needed to “keep schools in a state of good repair”. However, no new funding was announced in the budget to address the \$15.9 billion repair backlog.

OUR NEXT CHALLENGE is the 2018 provincial election: The election will be held on or before June 7, 2018. Together we can win a commitment to the **standards and funding** levels required to address the \$15.9 billion repair backlog in Ontario's schools.

PART 2 CAMPAIGN ACTION

The following are suggestions for making your local campaign as successful as possible. You may not be able to do everything suggested. Consider holding a planning meeting with a few key campaigners—to create an action plan that suits your situation.

1 Outreach



Raise awareness of the disrepair problem and its causes

- ➔ Create awareness about the disrepair problem before visiting candidates in the election.
- ➔ Speak out in School Council meetings and other community gatherings.
- ➔ Circulate campaign materials.
- ➔ Encourage people to use social media to spread the word.

Invite others to join the campaign

- ➔ Conduct outreach by networking with individuals and organizations.
- ➔ Involve parents, students, teachers and other school staff.
- ➔ Ask for active support.
- ➔ Assemble a local campaign team if possible.
- ➔ Create an email list and/or phone tree.
- ➔ Convene a local campaign planning meeting.

2 Research



Research the impact of the disrepair problem in your community

Document disrepair in local schools.

- ➔ A picture is worth a thousand words! Photographs of disrepair in local schools are the most effective tool for raising public awareness.
- ➔ Your photographs will also be the best tool for motivating candidates in the 2018 election to sign the **Fix Our Schools Pledge!**
- ➔ Visit the campaign website fixourschools.ca for links to information about schools disrepair. These links include:
 - an explanation of the Facility Condition Index (FCI) which is used to assess the condition of a school.
 - the Ministry of Education Facility Condition Index (FCI) for every Ontario school.
 - Detailed information from local school boards (if available). The TDSB has led the way with lists of specific repairs needed for each school.

- ➔ Make your own list of disrepair: What disrepair can you see? Ask teachers and other school staff about disrepair that may not be visible.

Create a report on “School Disrepair in Our Town”

Combine your photographs with your list of disrepair and information from the links on the campaign website.

3 Media



Organize a media conference

After you have assembled a campaign team and after you have done your research, consider holding a media conference to announce your plan to lobby candidates in the 2018 provincial election. The media conference should be scheduled before you begin your lobbying of candidates

- ➔ Consider recruiting a volunteer to head up local campaign communications.
- ➔ Have copies of your report available for the media.
- ➔ Make blow-ups of a couple of your best photographs.
- ➔ Prepare spokesperson/spokespeople with the main message of the campaign. (Stay on message!)
- ➔ Recruit students, teachers, other school staff to speak briefly about their first-hand experience with disrepair in local schools.

4 The campaign website



www.fixourschools.ca

The campaign website will help to connect people across the province who are active in the campaign.

- ➔ Visit the campaign website for updates on campaign issues and for news about campaign events.
- ➔ Send your campaign news to info@fixourschools.ca. Include information about lobbying, local media coverage and photos of local school disrepair.

5 Social media

- ➔ Consider a local Facebook page or other social media platforms.
- ➔ Encourage people who are active in the campaign to post campaign announcements and photos on the social media they use.
- ➔ Engage with the **Fix Our Schools** campaign via Facebook [FixOurSchools](https://www.facebook.com/FixOurSchools) and Twitter [@Fix_Our_Schools](https://twitter.com/Fix_Our_Schools). The more you like and share posts, the more you help amplify our message.



6 Lobby candidates in the 2018 provincial election



Identify the candidates who will be running in the 2018 provincial election.

- ➔ Riding associations of the political parties will be able to give you the information you need. There may also be independent candidates.
- ➔ In what order should you meet the candidates? You may want to visit the most sympathetic candidate first.

Assemble a delegation

- ➔ Make sure it represents the composition of your campaign and your community. Never go in alone. The delegation should have at least three members.

Prepare Lobby Kits

The lobby kit should include the following materials provided by the campaign:

- ➔ Campaign Information for MPP candidates
- ➔ Campaign leaflet
- ➔ Fix Our Schools Pledge
- ➔ The kit will be most effective if you add information and photos about local school disrepair.

The Meeting: Preparation

- ➔ It is usually best to have one main spokesperson. Others can speak briefly on specific points. One person should keep notes.

- ➔ Politicians often wander off topic. If your delegation is committed to staying on topic, it is much easier to keep the politician on topic!
- ➔ The meeting should last 30 to 45 minutes.
- ➔ Below is a typical meeting format.

The Meeting: Getting started

- ➔ Introductions of the people present. (When introducing members of the campaign delegation, emphasize their connection to local schools.)
- ➔ Some warm-up chatting with the candidate is fine but do not allow this to go on for more than a few minutes. Be assertive in a friendly way—if necessary—to start your presentation.

The Meeting: Your presentation

Presentation by the campaign spokesperson(s)

- ➔ Plan to speak for no more than 10 to 15 minutes.
- ➔ Use the contents of the Lobby Kit to prepare your presentation.
- ➔ Give the candidate a copy of the Lobby Kit.
- ➔ Deliver your message. Read aloud the Message to MPP candidates contained in the Lobby Kit.
- ➔ Draw attention to information and photos of disrepair in local schools.
- ➔ Make sure that you are clear about what you want. Ask the candidate directly: We are here to ask you to sign the Fix Our Schools Pledge.
- ➔ Ask the candidate if they have any questions.

The Meeting: Candidate's response and discussion

- ➔ Listen carefully to the candidate.
- ➔ Speak to the points they make (see box on next page for a guide on how to challenge arguments that candidates may raise).
- ➔ Keep bringing the conversation back to the key points in the Message to MPP candidates.
- ➔ Push for a signature on the Pledge!

How to respond to arguments that candidates might raise

Your provincial candidate may blame Ontario's school boards for the \$15.9 billion repair backlog. Don't let them pass the buck. Let them know:

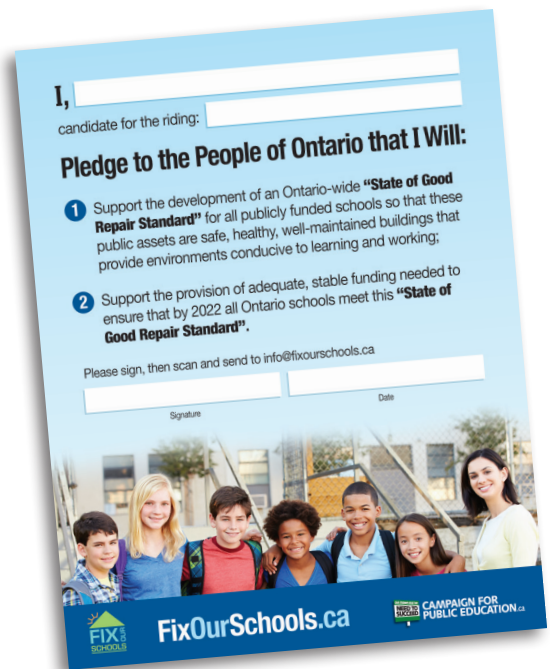
- ➔ The provincial government has the responsibility to provide adequate, stable funding needed to ensure Ontario's schools are safe, well-maintained, healthy buildings and yet, they have failed to do so.
- ➔ According to industry standards, a minimum of \$1.4 billion per year ought to have been going to school boards for school renewal every year however in 2014, when **Fix Our Schools** began, annual provincial funding for school renewal was only \$150 million—**one-tenth** of the amount needed to properly take care of Ontario's schools. School boards cannot take care of school buildings without adequate, stable provincial funding.

Your candidate may point to overall increases in education funding. Let them know:

- ➔ While overall funding for education may have increased, the fact remains that for two decades, provincial funding for school repairs and maintenance was a mere fraction of what it ought to have been.
- ➔ See above for additional facts to respond.

Your candidate may say there is not enough money to allocate the required additional \$1.6 billion per year to truly fix Ontario's schools. Acknowledge this is a lot of new funding but that the time to act to truly fix Ontario's schools is NOW because:

- ➔ Schools are a critical element of our public infrastructure.
- ➔ 2 million Ontario children spend their days in school buildings and need safe, healthy, well-maintained places to learn.
- ➔ Teachers, education workers, adult learners, and preschoolers who attend childcare facilities in local public schools also need safe, healthy, well-maintained environments in which to work and learn.
- ➔ Repairs in Ontario's schools are only going to get more expensive if we do not fully address the \$15.9 billion repair backlog as soon as possible; reactive, emergency repairs cost significantly more than proactive, routine maintenance.
- ➔ School boards can only be effective and efficient in carrying out their school repair plans if the Province provides adequate and stable funding.



The Meeting: Wrap-up

- ➔ If the candidate does sign the pledge, thank them!
- ➔ If the candidate does not agree to sign the pledge, tell them that you hope they will do so at another time.
- ➔ Tell the candidate that the campaign will be very active during the election and that you will be back to meet with them again.
- ➔ Thank the candidate.

After the meeting, sit down with your delegation to discuss what happened at the meeting. Note possible improvements for future meetings. Send an email report on the meeting to the campaign.

Raise the school disrepair issue during the election

- ➔ Attend all-candidates meetings.
- ➔ Hand out campaign leaflets.
- ➔ Speak out on campaign issues. (If the meeting is in a school, get disrepair information about that school and share the information at the meeting.)
- ➔ Publicize which candidates signed the pledge and which did not.
- ➔ Stay in touch with the campaign. Read campaign news on the website. Send the campaign updates on local actions.