

TEACHERS, STAFF ACROSS HALTON PROTEST PROPOSED CUTS TO EDUCATION FUNDING

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Members of the four Halton bargaining units of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation were rallying outside local high schools Feb. 7, informing the public about what the provincial government's proposed funding cuts could mean for students.

Representatives from the Teacher, Occasional Teacher, Office Clerical and Technical and Professional Student Services Personnel units stood outside of schools throughout Halton Hills, Milton, Oakville and Burlington as part of a provincewide initiative to inform the public about Premier Doug Ford's planned education cuts in this year's budget.

"Ford says 'we are open for business.' Call or email your MPP and let them know that Ontario needs to be open for learning," a leaflet being passed out reads.

In December, the PC government announced cuts to education programs and resources across the province, slashing \$25 million from the Education Programs-Other fund that pays for a number of in-



Veronica Appia/Metroland

Members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation bargaining units rally outside Georgetown District High School on Feb. 7.

school initiatives and specialized programs.

Cindy Gage, president of the Halton Teachers' Bargaining Unit, says her greatest concern is the impact cuts will have on student learning in the classrooms, as well as other educational services provided to students.

She says Ford's initial promise to cut four per cent from the budget this year would result in a \$1-billion chop to the education portfolio as a whole.

"If they increase class sizes or if they pull other education support staff from the building, then students are going to have less individualized attention within their classes," she said. "There is going to be less support for mental health, there's going to be less technology available in the school and the facilities and staff to repair that. There's going to be less access to the library."

Gage says she hopes the information rallies provoke parents and local residents to take action and contact their respective Members of Provincial Parliament while budget consultations are underway.

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