

# GEORGETOWN STUDENTS JOIN PROVINCEWIDE WALK OUT

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Hundreds of students at Georgetown District High School joined thousands of Ontario students across the province in a protest showing solidarity.

The student-organized protest is in response to proposed cuts to education made by the Ford government - including potential cuts to staffing, increases in class sizes, and several funding cuts.

Gray Whipp, a Grade 11 student at GDHS, found out about the provincewide planned protest online and started spreading the word.

"Our education is important and we shouldn't have to sacrifice that for budget cuts," Whipp said.

According to documentation available from studentssayno.ca - where participating students are organized - government cuts

**THE ISSUE:**  
CUTS TO  
PROVINCIAL  
EDUCATION

**LOCAL IMPACT:** STUDENTS  
ACROSS HALTON HILLS  
RALLIED AGAINST CUTS  
DURING A PROVINCEWIDE  
WALK-OUT



Bryan Myers/Metroland

Neja Rajapakse (left), Lexi Cormier Bell, Aaron Mattear and Kaleight Hawes, all students at Georgetown District High School, attended the student-run protest.

In December, the Progressive Conservative government slashed \$25 million from the budget earmarked for specialized school programming.

"Teachers are being cut," Bateman said, "it's already cramped enough in a lot of classrooms."

Students in grades four to eight will see class sizes grow from 22 students per class to 28, but studentssayno.ca claims that class sizes

could grow as high as 45 students per class. For Bateman, the cuts will affect tech and arts courses.

"The art department is currently half of my semester this term," Bateman said. "If I don't have what I need, and develop my skills, I really don't know what I'm going to do."

Bateman said that he wanted to go into a programming or design field, and cuts to technology pro-

grams would impact his career goals.

"I don't want my future to be hindered because of a politician who has never set foot in a classroom in his adult life," Nadia Nikolov, a student at GDHS, said.

Tasmiah Khan, deputy prime minister of the school's student union, helped to organize the walk out with Whipp.

"I really believe in fighting for our rights," Khan said.

The group started planning the walkout two weeks ago and hoped to see about 100 students attend; instead, hundreds of GDHS students attended.

Khan said that she took issue with mandatory online courses as well as cuts to autism funding.

"They have a right to education," Khan said.

"We can't vote," Khan said. "This is how we can use our voices."

While teachers observed the event, they declined to comment on the walk out.

Four schools in Halton Hills were registered to take part in the protest - including GDHS, Christ the King Catholic Secondary School, Silver Creek Public School, and McKenzie-Smith Bennet Public School in Acton.

Studentssayno.ca provides a guide for student organizers, complete with a list of potential roles necessary for a protest, and strategies for getting the word out.

The website also advises students that protesting is a legal right and students cannot be legally punished for holding a peaceful rally.

Information about the provincial walk out is available at studentssayno.ca.

## STORY BEHIND THE STORY

While the walk-out was widely publicized, reporter Bryan Myers was contacted by local student organizers.



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