



We Will Win: Guide to Campaign Messaging in Support of Trans Youth

 **MOMENTUM**

The Canadian
Centre for Gender
+ Sexual Diversity



Le Centre Canadien
de la Diversité des Genres
+ de la Sexualité

**LeBlanc (& co.)
Communications**


Egale

How to build momentum while campaigning in support of trans youth

This guide was created to grow the capacity of Canadian advocates to **effectively** and **persuasively** communicate about trans youth.

The guide was written in the Canadian context in order to support organizing against the legislative trend of provincial governments rolling back the rights of trans youth, particularly through so-called ‘disclosure and notification policies’ around gender and pronouns. This guide is also applicable for broader campaigns on trans youth and trans rights.


We have created this to disseminate key messaging and showcase an evidence-based framework informed by [ASO Communications](#) and [We Make The Future](#)’s work in message development, including their work on messaging on trans youth. It is grounded in communications research (through tools like focus groups) that has tested how to best engage and persuade key audiences.

A photograph of a person from behind, holding up a large trans flag against a clear blue sky. The flag is vibrant with horizontal stripes of light blue, pink, and white. The person's arms are raised, and the flag is fully extended.

While we will maintain as much consistency as possible, this guide may be updated in order to respond to evolving developments and feedback.

Overall Key Messaging

- Youth deserve the freedom to be their authentic selves, and to learn and grow in a safe environment. And all youth deserve to be respected at school, including queer and trans students.
- But some Conservative politicians have been rolling back protections for queer and trans youth instead of working to address the many important issues affecting our youth.
- It can be tough to feel like you're different while you're growing up; whether you are gay, trans, an immigrant, someone struggling financially, or anyone who's faced challenges for being who they are.
- Now, we need to come together across our diverse communities and advocate for youth. We must call on our governments to give youth the freedom to be their true and authentic selves.



This messaging framework comes from the [Race Class Gender Narrative](#), which has been extensively tested with focus groups in order to determine what persuades moveable audiences. While far-right groups seek to engage racialized and faith-based parents, **it's crucial to use language that helps bring us all together, no matter what our background is, to advocate for marginalized communities.**

Formula for Creating Persuasive Arguments

- 1 | Open with tapping into shared values in order to build an emotional connection and make people feel something.
- 2 | Introduce the problem.
- 3 | Introduce the solution.
- 4 | End with a call to action.

Do not fall into the common mistake of skipping the first step.

When you skip the emotional appeal grounded in shared values and start by talking about the problem, your messaging will still resonate with the activist base, but will be less effective at persuading people outside of your base to support your cause.

Example of a problem-centric framing which is less effective at engaging a moveable audience:

✘ “The government’s policy is unacceptable and transphobic.”

Example of a framing grounded in shared values, which is more effective at persuading moveable audiences:

✔ “All youth deserve respect and the freedom to be who they are — and that’s why the government rolling back inclusive education guidelines is unacceptable.”

Opening with an emotional appeal grounded in shared values is a format that works for everyone we need to persuade and engage: our base, the public, stakeholders, and the governments.

Formula of a Pivot

As advocates, we need to be repeating our own messaging and controlling the narrative. That means not playing into our opposition's hands by repeating their messaging. When we are asked questions rooted in the opposition's frame, we need to pivot back to our own messaging.

When you are doing media and they ask you questions that buy into the opposition's frame, this is the formula to respond to the question and pivot back to your key messages.

This pivot formula also works in day-to-day conversation with people who are asking you questions about the issue.

Emotion: Engage the audience by starting with your key messaging rooted in emotion and shared values.

Fly by: Make a brief, max one sentence point of reference to the conversation.

Share your key messaging: Pivot back to your key messaging.

Anticipated Question and Pivot Example

“But parents deserve to know what’s going on in their child’s lives—especially for issues as important as changing who you are, and changing your gender. Why do you oppose parental rights?”

- We all agree that parents should have access to the resources and assistance they need to stay involved and active in their children’s education. To create a safe and nurturing learning environment, parents and school teams must collaborate.
- Unfortunately, instead of focusing on building a strong public education system and ensuring families thrive, politicians have shifted attention elsewhere.
- It’s time to shift the spotlight back on the politicians and ensure that they do what is best for youth and our education system.
- Now, we need to come together across our diverse communities and advocate for our youth. We must call on our governments to give youth the freedom to be their true and authentic selves.
- Let’s not allow these distractions to take away from the work that needs to be done.

When the opposition has set things up to be polarized, and they say something that is unacceptable if we come out and condemn it, unfortunately we are giving more attention to their hatred.

This is not a game of whack-a-mole, where they do something bad and we condemn it, because unfortunately, **bringing more attention to their hatred helps convert more people over to the opposition side.**

This is an opportunity to build our own persuasive message, and repeat it over and over again.

It is building your own highway and driving down that highway. Any fact-checking of the opposition needs to be sandwiched in key messages.

Avoid Getting too “in the Weeds”

One common mistake made is getting too in the weeds when campaigning on a policy issue, and using overly specific language that lacks an emotive connection.

In this case, we encourage you to emphasize the message that:

- ✓ *“The government is rolling back the rights of queer and trans students.”*

Instead of:

- ✗ *“The government changed Policy 713.”*
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Provincial Campaign Tip

In provincial campaigns, highlighting the name of your province in the messaging is a way to evoke a shared sense of community and responsibility.

An example of this would be saying:

- ✓ *“As New Brunswickers, we believe that all youth deserve respect.”*

Do's



- 1 | Repeat our own clear, simple, and consistent key messages over and over.**

Message repetition is one of the most important ingredients to making a campaign 'stick' and building momentum for a cause.

- 2 | Start your message with a commonly held intrinsic value, like respect, in order to build an emotional connection between your audience and your cause.**

Making people feel something is a major priority, because emotion helps with both persuasion and message retention.

- 3 | After making an emotional appeal grounded and shared values, clearly name the problem.**



Dont's



1 | Do not repeat the opposition's messaging or their frame, even in order to refute it.

Instead of repeating the opposition's messaging to refute it, you should centre your own messaging. We should say "all people, including queer and trans people, deserve our respect" rather than "trans people are not groomers."

For Canada's campaigns on trans youth, we should avoid repeating the term "parental rights" (and hateful frames like "grooming"). You can talk about parents, but avoid opposition terms.

2 | Whenever something bad happens, lead with your own key messaging instead of focusing on condemning the bad thing.

Making people feel something is a major priority, because emotion helps with both persuasion and message retention.

You are building your own messaging highway, and driving down it — instead driving down your opponent's highway.

3 | Do not get bogged down in the background policy context.

For example, explaining the details of revisions to a policy or all of the context around what teachers can and can't do. Keep everything at a birds eye view focussed on key messages and building an emotional connection to the issue.

Referring to the "rollback of inclusive education guidelines" is much easier for your audience to understand than "the revision to policy 713".



Jurisdiction-Based Messaging

Messaging in a Federal context

- All youth deserve the freedom to be their true selves, and to learn and grow in a safe environment. And all youth deserve to be respected in our schools, including 2SLGBTQI+ students.
- Some Conservative provincial governments have started rolling back inclusive education guidelines that protect queer and trans students in order to play politics with vulnerable youth.
- And federally, we've seen Pierre Polievre amplify the same talking points on these issues.
- But Canadians want our schools to be safe and respectful.
- It can be tough to feel like you're different while you're growing up; whether you are gay, trans, an immigrant, someone struggling financially, or anyone who's faced challenges for being who they are.
- Our message to government is clear: give youth the respect they deserve, and the freedom to be themselves.

Messaging for New Brunswick

- All youth in New Brunswick deserve the freedom to be themselves, and to learn and grow in a safe environment. And all youth deserve to be respected in our schools, including 2SLGBTQI+ students.
- But Premier Higgs' rollback of inclusive education guidelines in Policy 713 threatens the safety and wellbeing of students. Instead of working to address the many important issues affecting residents in New Brunswick, Premier Higgs is playing politics with the lives of vulnerable children and youth.
- Tell Premier Higgs that he should focus on resolving issues facing New Brunswick, rather than making decisions on a whim to roll back evidence-based policy that was designed to protect vulnerable children and youth.

Messaging for Ontario

- All youth in Ontario deserve the freedom to be themselves, and to learn and grow in a safe environment. And all youth deserve to be respected in our schools, including 2SLGBTQI+ students.
- But Doug Ford and Stephen Lecce are planning to roll back Ontario's protections for 2SLGBTQI+ students, in order to distract from their track record in government and play politics with vulnerable youth.
- Ontarians want our schools to be safe and respectful, so we won't let this slide — just like when we stopped Doug Ford from rolling Ontario's sexed curriculum back by decades. *[Optional additional sentence if it relates to your work: We forced Ford to drop his shady plans for the Greenbelt, and we will win again here.]*
- It can be tough to feel like you're different while you're growing up; whether you are gay, trans, an immigrant, someone struggling financially, or anyone who's faced challenges for being who they are.
- Now, we need to come together across our diverse communities and advocate for youth. We must call on our governments to give youth the freedom to be their true and authentic selves.

Messaging for Saskatchewan

- All youth in Saskatchewan deserve the freedom to be themselves, and to learn and grow in a safe environment. And all youth deserve to be respected in our schools, including 2SLGBTQI+ students.
- But Saskatchewan's Conservative government is rolling back protections for vulnerable students and playing politics instead of supporting youth in our province.
- In Saskatchewan, we know our schools must be safe and respectful.
- It can be tough to feel like you're different while you're growing up; whether you are gay, trans, an immigrant, someone struggling financially, or anyone who's faced challenges for being who they are.
- Now, we need to come together across our diverse communities and advocate for youth. We must call on our governments to give youth the freedom to be their true and authentic selves.

Template Messaging Relevant for any Level of Government (ie. Municipal, Provincial, or Territorial)

- Youth deserve the freedom to be their authentic selves, and to learn and grow in a safe environment. And all youth deserve to be respected at school, including queer and trans students
- It can be tough to feel like you're different while you're growing up; whether you are gay, trans, an immigrant, someone struggling financially, or anyone who's faced challenges for being who they are. But some politicians have been rolling back protections for queer and trans youth instead of working to address the many important issues affecting our youth.
- That's why our message to [name the type of government] is clear: we must give youth the respect they deserve, and allow them the freedom to be themselves.

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