

## No Space for Community in Ontario Neighbourhoods?

### New Report Addresses Loss of Community Infrastructure Due to Permanent Closure of Faith Buildings in Ontario

The National Trust for Canada indicates that a third of Canada's 27,000 faith buildings - more than 9,000 buildings - could close permanently within the next ten years. A [new report released today, "No Space for Community,"](#) measures faith building usage and how closures could impact the wide range of not-for-profit services, organizations, and community groups that rely on those buildings.

Daycares, women and seniors programs, arts and culture organizations, community groups, twelve step groups, foodbanks, blood donor clinics, community meetings, and others, would have nowhere to go in the absence of those buildings and the free or affordable space they provide.

The two-year study, conducted by Faith & the Common Good in partnership with Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Nonprofit Network, the City of Toronto, Cardus, and the National Trust for Canada, gathered new data through surveys of existing non-profit and community groups that make use of faith building space.

The surveys asked groups to report on their usage patterns and activities within these spaces. Questions were designed to determine what types of groups were utilizing these spaces, who they served, how much they paid, and what alternate locations would be available to them in the event of closure of the building supporting them. The report is based on 948 valid survey respondents across Ontario.

"The current crisis has reminded us of the importance of not-for-profit landowners," says Kendra Fry, project lead, "The survey results have made it clear that faith buildings are host to a myriad of groups including a large number of daycares and arts groups who have their offices and performing spaces in faith buildings. 38% of survey respondents indicated that they were paying nothing for their spaces in faith buildings, and a large group report paying minimal amounts. These important not-for-profit and community groups cannot afford commercial spaces. If the faith buildings close, what will happen to these groups and the people they bring together?"

A large percentage of the groups working out of local faith buildings are serving women, children, seniors, and low-income individuals. The top five of 14 not-for-profit sectors working out of faith buildings are: culture and the arts; recreation and sports; social clubs; education and research; and social services. The organizations surveyed indicated that they utilized faith buildings to provide their services because of the convenient location within the community and the affordability of the space.

The not-for-profit ownership of the buildings and spaces means that these groups are paying well below market rent or nothing at all. For some organizations and services, their entire model relies on free space to continue operating. 50% of respondents report that they have no other option if the faith building they reside in closes. Another 20% report that another faith building would be their next best option.

The risk to groups inherent in faith building closures, and the loss of that community infrastructure, is evident.

The complete report, "No Space for Community," is available at: [www.communityspacefaithplace.org](http://www.communityspacefaithplace.org)

The study and report were created by Faith & the Common Good, National Trust for Canada, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Ontario Nonprofit Network, City of Toronto, and Cardus, and supported by ArtsBuild Ontario, Rural Ontario Institute, ArtsPond, and the Society for Performing arts in Rural Canada.

---

*Kendra Fry, project lead, is available for interviews.*

Media contact: Heather Kelly, 416.879.0283, [heather@hkcmktg.com](mailto:heather@hkcmktg.com)