

Opening the Doors to Ontario's Schools: Community Use of Schools Program Year One Impacts and Opportunities

Prepared By
The Community Social Planning
Council of Toronto

Prepared For
The SPACE Coalition

In Partnership with
The Social Planning Council of
Kitchener-Waterloo
Community Development Halton



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SOCIAL PLANNING
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December, 2005

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Survey Report, December 2005

Copies of the report are available from:
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ISBN: # 1-894199-10-3

* Our thanks to the United Way and the City of Toronto, our key funding partners



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Acknowledgement

The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T) wishes to acknowledge and thank several organizations and individuals for making this research possible through their generous financial contribution and research support.

Most importantly, we are indebted to the respondents to the survey, who willingly gave of their time and shared with us valuable information that is now the basis of this report.

Funders

- City of Toronto
- Laidlaw Foundation

Dissemination of the survey

- SPACE Coalition Members
- Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
- Community Development Halton

Map Work

- Ted Hilderbrandt (Community Development Halton) and Richard Lau (SPNO) and Beth Wilson (CSPC-T) for their help with the map used in this report

Volunteers

- Community Social Planning Council Volunteers: Julie Young, Linda Rose, Racquel Sevilla and Natalie Drolet
- People for Education: Gay Stephenson

Graphics

- Cover design by OrangeHabitat: www.orangehabitat.com

Layout and formatting

- CSPC-T

Respondents

- Community organizations that responded to the survey

Executive Summary

Schools have a long tradition of serving as “community centres” or “hubs” in many communities. In Ontario, community groups have historically used school space for free or at a nominal cost to organize activities and events for all age groups ranging from children and youth to seniors. The activities were carried out after-school, in the summer or on weekends.

This role of schools as community hubs has many benefits. One primary benefit is the fostering of strong school-community partnership. This partnership is known to have a very positive and long-lasting impact on local education¹ as well as significant value to the community.

However, in 1998 the Ontario government changed this drastically with the creation of a new education funding formula that did not include affordable access to school facilities. Consequently, Boards of Education began to significantly increase the fees to community groups for use of school space. Boards contended that these fees were necessary to cover costs to keep facilities open after school hours including: custodial costs, permit administration, and utilities.

The impact of the increased permit fees on community groups using schools was devastating. It led to an unprecedented reduction in access by community groups to schools and in many cases the closure of essential community programs and activities. The effect was Ontario-wide. By 2004, the provincial government estimated that Boards of Education across Ontario were collecting \$29 million in permit fees for community use of schools.

In recognition of the increased fees and reduced access by community groups to school space, the SPACE Coalition (Save Public Access to Community Space Everywhere), a non-partisan network of community organizations was formed in 2001. SPACE is an advocate for the restoration of affordable access to public schools.

The Ontario Government responded to community pressure regarding this problem and promised to restore schools as community hubs. On July 9, 2004 the McGuinty government announced a \$20 million in annual funding for a Community Recreation and Use Program, the Community Use of School Program (CUSP).

This program was designed to restore and increase access to schools for not-for-profit community groups by providing an allocation of funds to participating School Boards. This voluntary program is a collaborative venture between the Ministry of Education, the Boards of Education and the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, with the latter having

¹ Rosanski, M (2002). Investing in Public Education: Advancing the Goal of Continuous Improvement in Student Learning and Achievement. Report to the Education Equality Task Force
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/task02/complete.pdf>

responsibility for its implementation (the new Ministry of Health Promotion assumed responsibility for the CUSP in 2005).

By October 2005, the government had secured Community Recreation and Use Agreements with all 72 School Boards. Securing these voluntary Agreements took over twelve months. These Agreements required Boards to reduce permit fees for the school year September 2004 to August 2005, with these reductions retroactive to September 1, 2004.

One year after this program was launched by the Ontario government, the SPACE Coalition partnered with the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T) to conduct a survey of the CUSP, in collaboration with the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and Community Development Halton.

The survey had three main purposes 1) To assess community awareness of the new reduced fees; 2) To determine the impact of the new permit fee policy on community-based groups' actual and intended access to local schools after-school, on weekends and in the summer; 3) To identify gaps and priorities for further action on permit fee reductions.

Key Findings

- Ontario's schools play host to a diverse range of community-based groups who utilize school space and facilities to operate a wide variety of non-curricular activities and programs that involve people of all ages, after-school, on weekends and in the summer months.
- Provincial funding provided under the CUSP resulted in sharply lower fees for community use of schools. Lower fees did result in a measurable increase in the utilization of school space and facilities – use of school space increased 25% among current permit users.
- Nearly three-quarters of current permit users (71%) indicated that the permit fee reductions will increase their organizations' use of school space in the 2005/2006.
- Just over half (52%) of current permit users indicated that lower school permit fees will allow them to reduce participant user fees for programs. A significant percentage plan to relocate to school space, expand registrations, and increase hours of programming.
- Almost three fourths (72%) of the current non-users of school space indicated that the reduced fees will allow them to re-locate to schools.
- Awareness of the provincial government's program to reduce the fees community groups pay to use school space and facilities is low. Of the total respondents only

54% were aware of CUSP. Among current permit users, 68% were aware of the CUSP.

- Only four out of ten current permit users reported receiving some form of fee reductions.
- A significant majority of respondents (80%) reported that further reductions in permit fees would lead to an increase in their use of school space.

Summary of Recommendations

The report recognizes that all stakeholders have a role to play in expanding community use of schools to ensure that the Community Use of Schools program is successful including: the Government of Ontario; Boards of Education; Municipalities, Community Organizations/Non Profit Sectors and Funders. This Report includes a full set of recommendations for action on the part of these stakeholders (see page 29).

Awareness

The survey identified a serious awareness gap among current permit users and current non-permit user groups. Addressing this will require:

- All stakeholders need to take action to increase public awareness of the CUSP and the availability of reduced permit fees in local schools: Ministry of Health Promotion, Boards of Education, Municipalities, Community Organizations/Non Profit Sector and Charitable Foundations and Private Sector funders.
- All stakeholders should utilize existing outreach/communication tools such as newsletters, websites, list-serves, forums and various networks to promote public awareness of the CUSP.

Boards of Education need to ensure that local information regarding the CUSP and the reduced fees is “user friendly” and easily accessible.

Funding /Capacity-Building

The survey found non-profit organizations have a tremendous desire to utilize schools space and facilities to expand programs and activities. This will require:

- Additional provincial resources to expand the effectiveness of the CUSP and more fully achieve the goals established in the Community Use of Schools Policy Statement (see Appendix 1).
- A willingness on the part of community and non-profit organizations to restart old programs, initiate new ones, re-engage volunteers, and secure funding commitments from community funders to support such initiatives.

Collaboration by stakeholders in community-based engagement processes and local planning initiatives aimed at identifying programs and activities that are designed to meet community needs: Boards of Education, Trustees and staff, Municipalities and Community Organizations/Non-profits.

Evaluation

The survey demonstrates the value of evaluation and user group feedback in improving program performance, and recommends a formal and ongoing process, including:

- Provincial government working with stakeholders in the production of an annual evaluation report on the outcomes and achievements of the CUSP and recommendations for improvement.

Introduction

“Schools in Ontario are recognized as hubs for community activity and will be affordable and accessible to communities in order to support the goals of a healthier Ontario, stronger communities and student access.”

Community Recreation and Use Agreement, McGuinty Government, 2004

This vision outlined in Ontario's Community Recreation and Use Agreement 2004 very appropriately sums up the importance of schools to communities. Few would disagree with the view that schools, whether it be the building or their grounds, are central in providing a place for community groups to meet and as a centre for community activities (Rozanski, 2002). This is certainly the case for Ontario, which has a long history of schools serving the community long after the last bell rings at 3:30 p.m. Community groups use schools to organize activities for all age groups: children, youth, adults and seniors. These activities are carried on after school, on weekends and in the summer.

There are many benefits to both the communities and schools from the use of school space by communities (see Appendix 2). Integral to this is the fostering of a school-community partnership (Rozanski, 2002). Equally important, as Rozanski (2002) very aptly puts it, “When community groups, parents and others visit the school to participate in community activities and use the school's facilities, they develop a sense of interest and ownership in local education. More public interest in and ownership of educational issues can only strengthen our education system.”

Background to the Community Recreation and Use Agreement

Use of schools by community groups was typically free of charge or at a nominal fee. However this changed in 1998, when the Ontario government created a new education funding formula which excluded the community use of schools. The resultant effects were significant increases in school permit fees, an unprecedented reduction in community access to schools, and the closure of many vital school-based programs.

The effect was Ontario-wide. By 2004, the provincial government estimated that Boards of Education across Ontario were collecting \$29 million in permit fees for community use of schools.

It was clear that community use of schools was not only under threat, but was being severely eroded. The 1998 funding formula created new barriers particularly for low-income Ontarians because some community programs had to pass on higher permit fees to program participants. There was growing concern among community organizations about the loss of volunteers and the sustainability of clubs/organizations/agencies and their programs as a result of the loss of school access.

Snap Shot of the Problem

Ontario

- 119% increase in the number of elementary schools reporting permit fees for community use between 1998/99 and 2002. By 2002, 81% of schools report community use of their facilities, down by 6% since 1998/99. (People for Education- 2002 Tracking Report)
- 94% of secondary schools across Ontario by 2002-2003 charged user fees for community use of facilities—this increased by 21% since 2000/2001 (People for Education, 2002-2003 Tracking Report of Secondary Schools) www.peopleforeducation.com
- A 2003 survey of 149 sport groups across Ontario² revealed that:
 - 43% of the respondents reported that the higher school permit fees have meant fewer children can participate in programs
 - 55% of basketball clubs; 48% of swim clubs and 33% of ice sports reported a reduction in their number of participants
 - 65% of sport organizations said they have had to cut programs, sponsorships and even tournaments to pay user fees (Provincial Sports Organizations Council/Basketball Ontario 2003 Facility Access/User Fee Survey Report)

Toronto

- 43% fewer organizations were using school space by 2002 in Toronto, compared with 2000. 53% community groups were still accessing space in schools, and the majority of those groups reported their fees had increased. (Community Use of School and City-owned space-Summary Report of Survey Findings, Toronto/United Way of Greater Toronto, May 2002).
- United Way of Greater Toronto Task Force Report on Community Use of Schools: Opening the Doors, made recommendations for improved access to schools and recreation centers - Dec 5, 2002. www.unitedwaytoronto.com
- Community use of schools dropped dramatically since 1997/98. In that benchmark year, 67% of schools reported community use with no fee. By 2000/2001 only 9% of Toronto schools had community access free of charge. Of those schools that were charging a fee, 38% increased fees for the use of the same space by 2000/2001. (People for Education and Toronto Parents Network, 2002, Elementary Tracking Report).

In recognition of the increased fees and reduced access by community groups to school space, the SPACE Coalition³ (Save Public Access to Community Space Everywhere), a

² The survey was conducted with all sports organizations, all recreation associations, and a few other groups. This is because the survey dealt with access to facilities for all sport users.

³ Since 2001, SPACE members have taken on a variety of activities to convince the province of Ontario (both the previous and current governments) to expedite solutions to restore community use of schools.

non-partisan network of community organizations was formed in 2001. Its first priority was to promote provincial reform to restore community use of schools. Members of SPACE included Ontario-wide organizations and local community based non-profit organizations.

During the 2003 provincial election campaign, the Liberal party promised to address the increased fees and reduced access to school space by community groups. In making good on its promise and in response to community pressure for the restoration of affordable access to community use of schools, the Ontario Government on July 9, 2004, announced \$20 million in annual funding for a Community Recreation and Use Program, the Community Use of Schools Program (CUSP). This program was designed to restore and increase access to schools by not-for-profit community groups. This voluntary program is a collaborative venture between the Ministry of Education, the Boards of Education and the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, with the latter having responsibility for its implementation⁴ (in 2005, the new Ministry of Health Promotion assumed responsibility for the CUSP).

Participating Boards of Education are required to sign a Community Recreation and Use Agreement to reduce permit fees and increase access to school space in order to access their allocation of the \$20 million province-wide funding. The Community Recreation and Use Agreement included the Government's Policy Statement on Community Use of Schools and an Appendix with expected outcomes (proposed fee rates/expanded access) – See Appendix 1 for a sample of the Agreement.

Completing negotiations with all 72 Boards of Education across Ontario required more than 12 months. Therefore, it was only in October 2005 that the government was able to secure Community Recreation and Use Agreements with every Board of Education in Ontario. Because the Agreement required the Boards to reduce permit fees for the complete school year, September 2004 to August 2005, reduced permit rates were retroactive to September 1, 2004, as outlined in Schedule E of each Board Agreement. See also sample news releases that describe the new reduced fee rates for various types of facilities (refer to Appendix 1).

The reduced rates from the Boards of Education were provided as either cash rebates or credits (on future use) to all eligible community groups that had permitted school space in September 2004 and beyond. The Agreements required Boards of Education to process the rebates or credits by August 31, 2005. Less than twenty (20) Boards of Education had signed Agreements and reduced their permit fees by the Fall 2004.

Community groups can now find out the fees for permitting school space by visiting the following website and clicking on their respective Boards of Education: <http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/sportandrec/schoolsAnnounce.asp>.

Included in these strategies was a survey to all parties running for provincial election which was answered by the Liberal Party, the NDP and the PC Party.

⁴ The funding is actually allocated from the Ministry of Education's budget.

Many diverse stakeholders across the province, including the SPACE Coalition⁵ and parents groups applauded this new government policy and funding as a positive step to restore affordable community access to schools.

The mandate of SPACE includes a commitment to work with partners across the province to ensure that the government achieves the broad policy objectives and to monitor the implementation of the new policy and funding program. This research partnership with the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T), the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and the Community Development Halton is part of the effort to monitor the CUSP one year after it was launched by the Ontario government.

Purpose of the Study

The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto/SPACE Coalition developed and disseminated the “Community Use of Schools Permit Fee” survey over the period May to July 2005⁶. It had three main purposes:

1. To assess community awareness of the new reduced fees;
2. To determine the impact of the new permit fee policy on community-based groups’ actual and intended access to local schools after-school, on weekends and in the summer;
3. To identify gaps and priorities for further action on permit fee reductions

It was agreed that the results would be widely disseminated to various stakeholders: the Ontario Government, school boards, municipalities, community organizations, participating social planning councils and the public.

Organization of the Study Report

The survey findings are presented in three main sections, which relate to the three main purposes: Awareness, Impact of New Permit Fee Policy on Community-Based Groups; Priorities for Further Action to Support the New Permit Fee Policy. The report ends with a recommendations section. The recommendations are based on the survey findings as well as from the various consultations that the SPACE Coalition has had over the past year with its partners and other interest groups.

⁵ SPACE (Saving Public Access to Community Space Everywhere) was formed in 2002 in response to the skyrocketing permit fees that drastically reduced community access to schools and other community facilities, forcing the closure of many valuable community-based programs and activities. SPACE has been a leader in the campaign to restore affordable community access to public schools.

⁶ For a description of the research methodology, please see Appendix 3.

To provide context for the findings and analysis, the study report begins with a brief presentation of the profile of the survey respondents.

Because of the broad interest in community use of schools and in recognition of the ownership many parties have for improving access and improving programs and activities, the recommendations section is organized in four sub-sections: Government of Ontario; Boards of Education; Community Organizations/Non Profit Sector and Funders: Government and Foundation/Private Sector.

Survey Findings

Section 1 – Profile of Survey Respondents

The findings are based on a sample size of 294 surveys from organizations that currently permit school space, have done so in the past, or intend to do so in the future. Surveys were collected from many areas across the province. The data being presented in this report is an aggregate of the province-wide responses⁷.

The survey was distributed by three social planning councils (CSPC-T, Community Development Halton and social planning council of Kitchener-Waterloo) and the SPACE Coalition and respondents covered four major geographical areas: Municipality of Toronto, Halton Region, Waterloo Region and other regions in Ontario⁸. Based on these four geographic areas, 37% of the respondents came from the Municipality of Toronto, 14% from the Halton area, 9% from the Waterloo area and the remaining 40% from the rest of Ontario.

The 294 respondents identified with 39⁹ Boards of Education. This represents 54% of the 72 school boards across the province. *Of the total 294 respondents, two-thirds are current permit users (i.e., permit school space during the school year September 1, 2004 to August 31, 2005). One-third are current non-users¹⁰ of school space (i.e., are currently not permitting school space).*

It is important to note that the total sample represents many more user groups as respondents were asked to submit a survey for each Board of Education from which they are currently permitting or intend to permit school space in the future. In many cases therefore, one respondent represents several users of school space. For example, the Girl Guides completed one survey for all their community groups in a particular geographic area. In order to ensure confidentiality of individual responses, only aggregate data are presented.

The data reveal that a wide cross-section of community groups makes use of school space to carry out a broad range of activities. There were twenty different organization agency types, not including the “other” category. The largest group of the respondents (25%) self-identified as a Social Service Agency, followed by Sports Clubs, which accounted for 19% of the respondents and then the Multi-service Association, accounting for 18%

⁷ Presentation of the findings and data analysis will be based on the aggregate as the small sample size of Halton and Waterloo does not allow for some comparisons as the small sample sizes may exaggerate differences or not detect true differences

⁸ Separate reports will be compiled for each participating SPC. In the case of the CSPC-T, the report focus will be on the municipality of Toronto.

⁹ When the equivalent public and separate school boards are combined (e.g., Toronto District & Toronto Catholic District School Boards), the number of Boards represented reduces to 23.

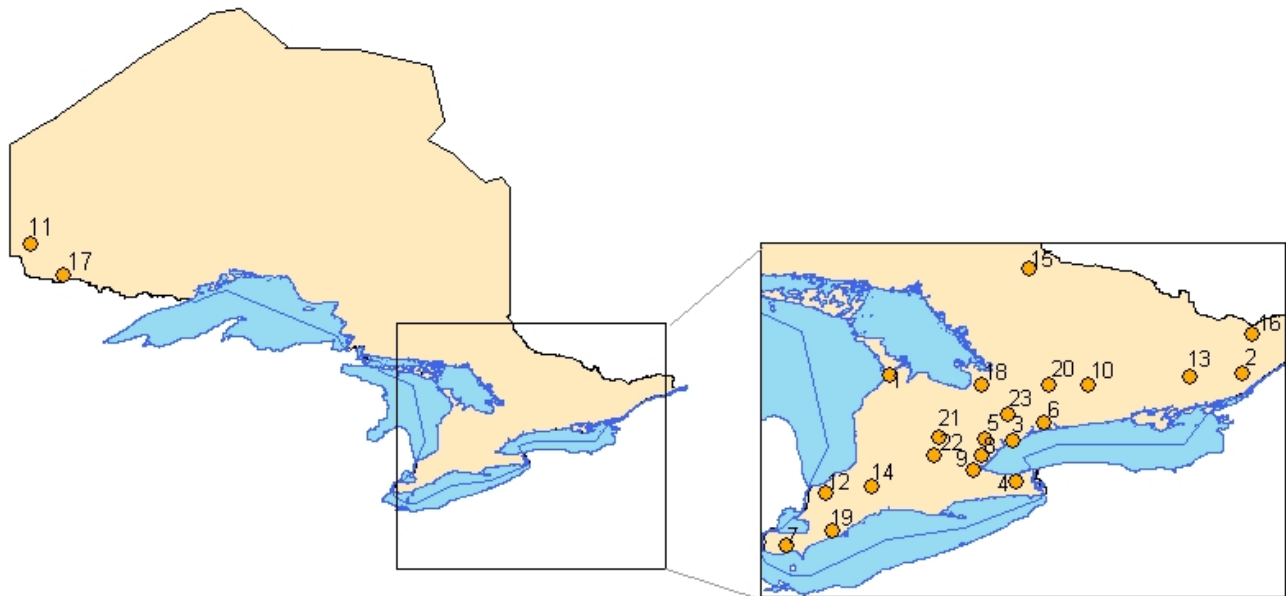
¹⁰ This includes community groups that had previously permitted school space as well as those that had never permitted school space.

of the respondents. The Information/Referral Service agencies and the Social Clubs each accounted for 15% of the respondents (see Appendix 4).

The community groups that responded to this survey provide services to a range of age groups. Most of the respondents (78% and 73% respectively) reported providing services to youth (ages 13-24) and children (ages 6-12) age groups. The adult (ages 25-59) category was the least serviced with only 40% of the respondents providing service to this age group.

The data strongly indicate that the responding agencies are well established and anchored in their respective communities. The average length of existence of the community groups that responded to this survey is 37 years, whereas the median length of existence is 25 years. Twenty-nine (29) community groups/agencies have been in existence for 95 years and fifteen (15) community groups/agencies have been in existence for 100 years and over, of which two (2) community groups/agencies have been in existence for 150 years.

Figure 1. School Boards Identified by Participating Community Agencies



School Boards

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 Bluewater District School Board | 13 Limestone District School Board |
| 2 Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario and Upper Canada School Board | 14 London District Catholic School Board and Thames Valley District School Board |
| 3 Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-Sud and Toronto Catholic District School Board and Toronto District School Board | 15 Near North District School Board and Nipissing-Parry Sound Catholic District School Board |
| 4 District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Catholic District School Board | 16 Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board |
| 5 Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board and Peel District School Board | 17 Rainy River District School Board |
| 6 Durham Catholic District School Board and Durham District School Board | 18 Simcoe County District School Board and Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board |
| 7 Greater Essex County School Board and Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board | 19 St. Clair Catholic District School Board |
| 8 Halton Catholic District School Board and Halton District School Board | 20 Trillium Lakelands District School Board |
| 9 Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board | 21 Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board |
| 10 Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board | 22 Waterloo Region Catholic District School Board and Waterloo Region District School Board |
| 11 Kenora Catholic District School Board | 23 York Catholic District School Board and York Region District School Board |
| 12 Lambton-Kent District School Board | |

Section 2 – Awareness of the Community Use of Schools Program

Of the total 294 respondents, just over (54%) were aware of the new fee reductions for permitting school space under the CUSP prior to completing the survey. The level of awareness increased among those who are currently permitting school space. Of the 194 respondents who reported permitting school space during the period September 1, 2004 and August 31, 2005, 68% indicated they were aware of the CUSP.

It is important to note that more than nine months after the announcement of the CUSP one third of current permit-users were unaware of the CUSP and new reduced fees for permitting school space prior to completing the survey.

73% of the current non-users were unaware of the CUSP prior to completing the survey.

The data showed varying levels of awareness among current permit users based on the school board from which they permitted space. Among the current permit users, those using the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board had the lowest awareness rate (44%) compared to those using the Waterloo School Boards where 90% were aware of the CUSP. Whereas the level of awareness among current permit users of the Upper Grand and Wellington District School Boards was 63%, the level of awareness among those using the York District School Boards was 88%. Current permit users of the Halton School Boards also had a relatively high level of awareness, with 82% reporting being aware of the CUSP.

Among the current permit users, community sports associations¹¹ and sports club¹² had the highest level of awareness of the CUSP, reporting 78% and 77% level of awareness respectively. The social clubs also had a relatively high level of awareness, with 76% reported being aware of the new fee reductions for permitting school space under the CUSP.

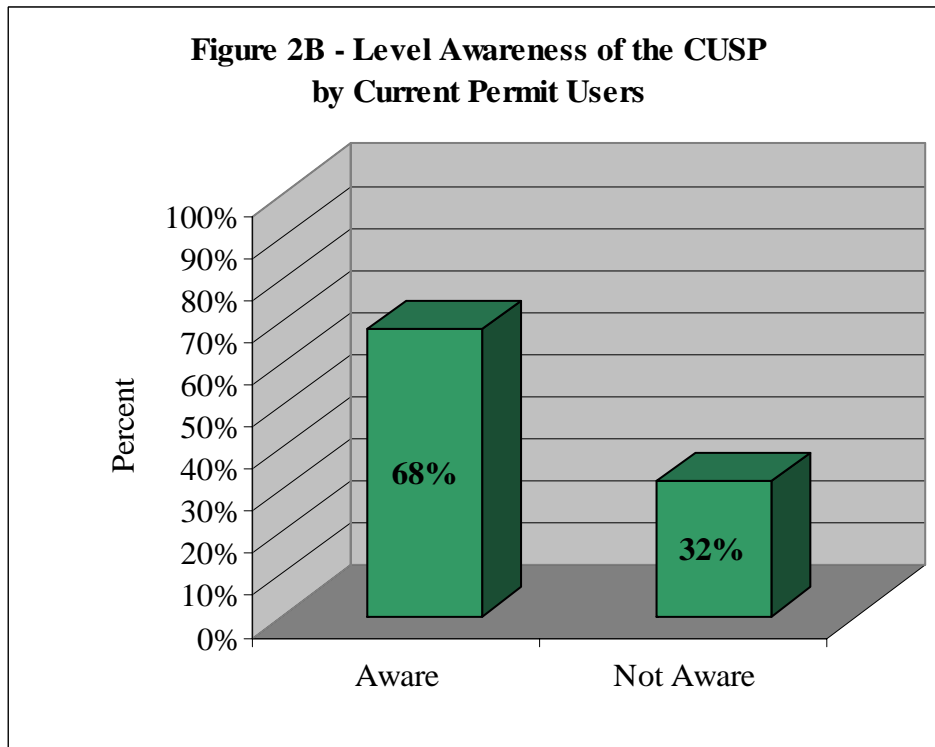
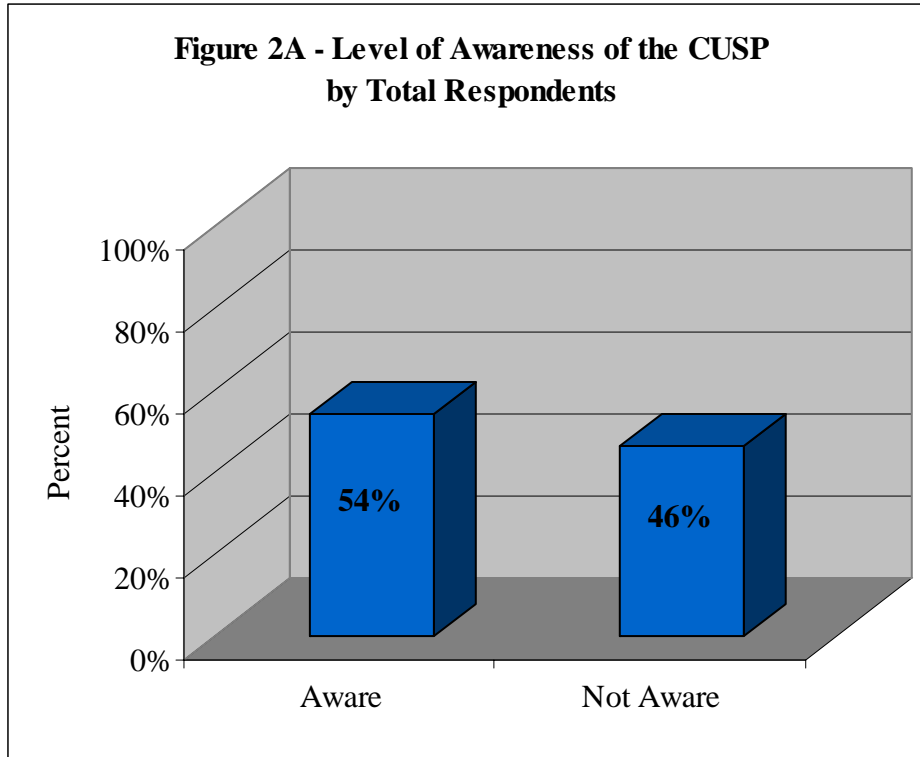
The positive news in terms of awareness relates to the age group serviced.

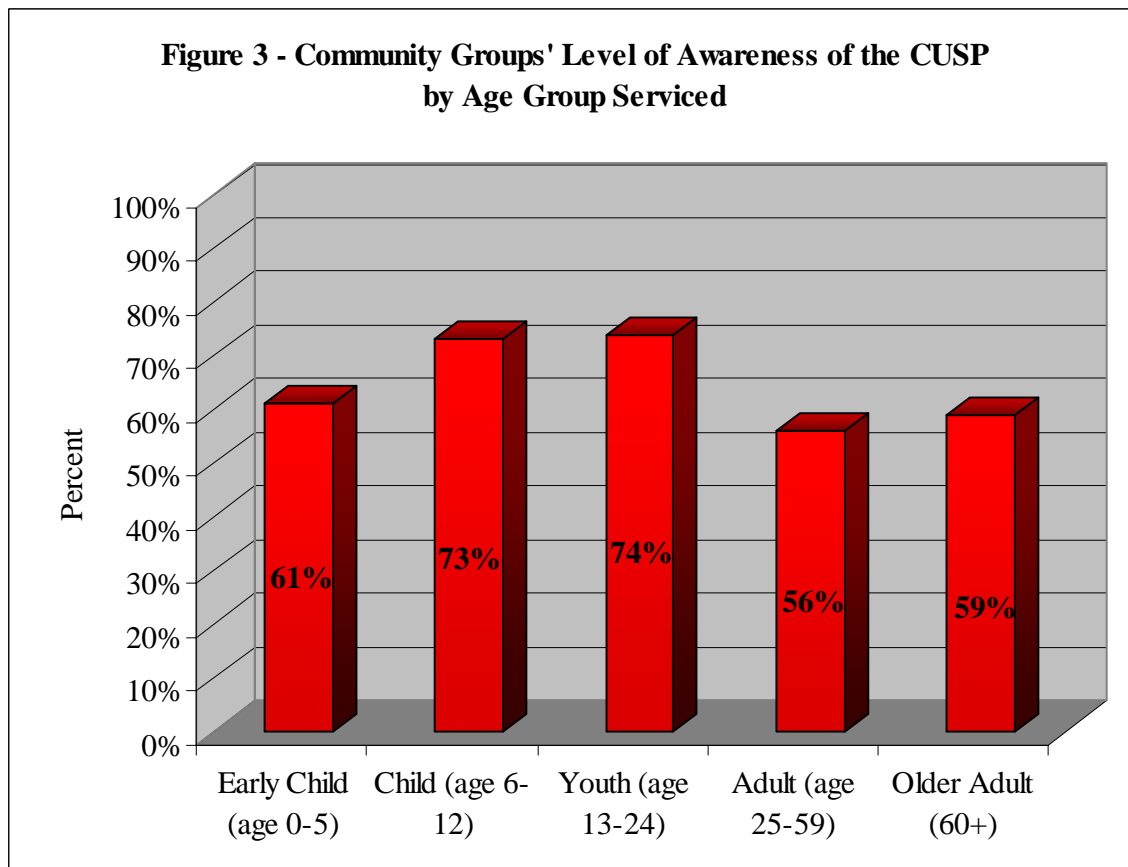
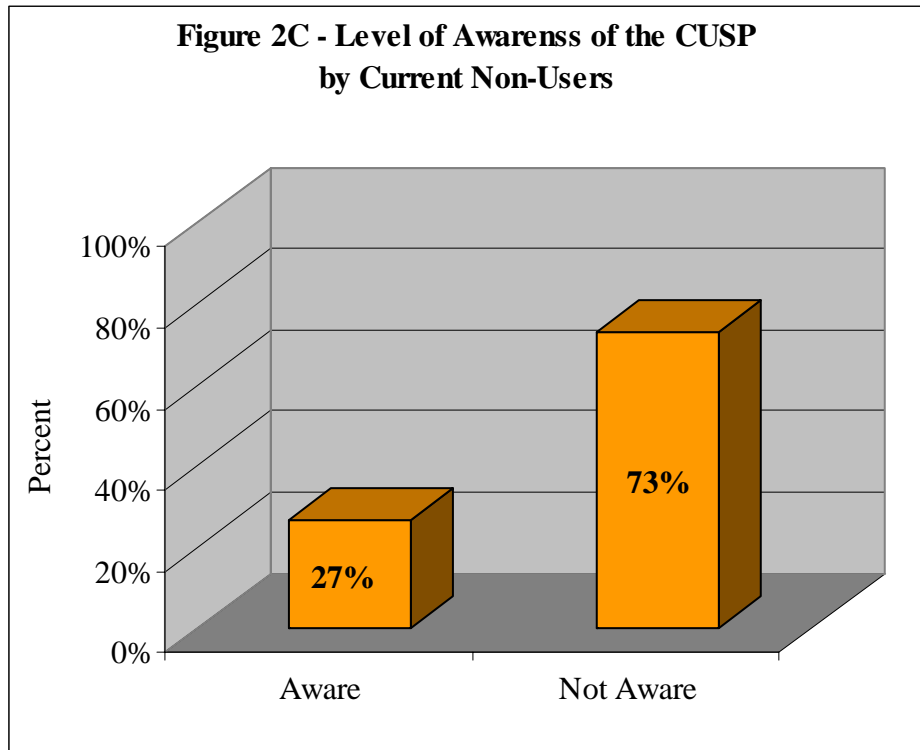
74% and 72% of current permit users that provide service to the youth category (ages 13-24) and children aged 6-12 respectively, indicated awareness of the CUSP

About 60% of current permit users providing service to children aged 0-5 (early child age group) and older adult category (age 60+), and 56% of those providing service to the adult category (ages 25-59) were aware of the CUSP.

¹¹ This refers to the umbrella sporting associations such as Basketball Ontario

¹² These are local sports/individual clubs that may be affiliated to umbrella association, for example, the Basketball Association of Ontario





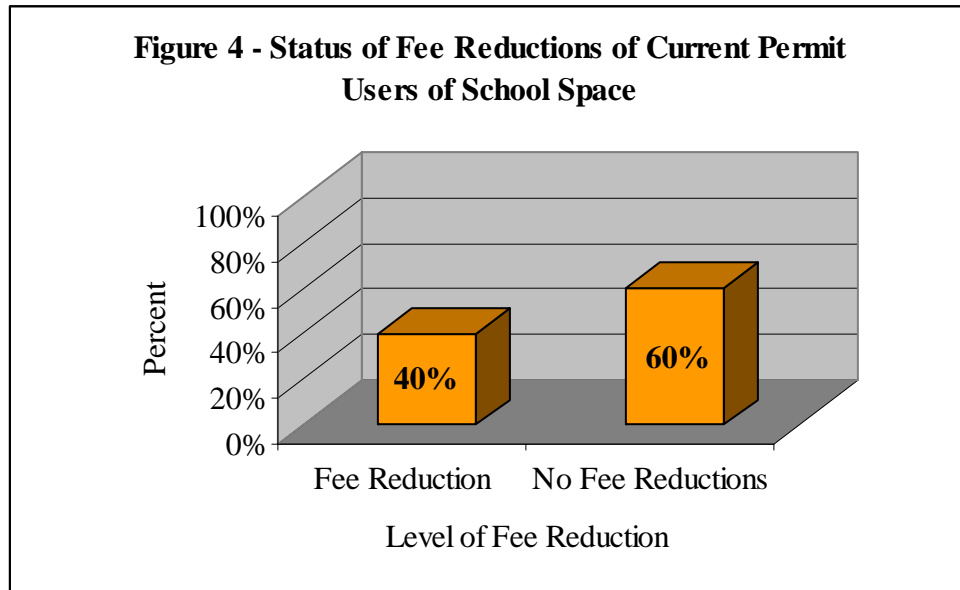
Community Groups' Access to Reduced Fees for Permitting School Space

At the time of the survey, 6 out of ten community groups currently permitting school space had not received any form of fee reductions.

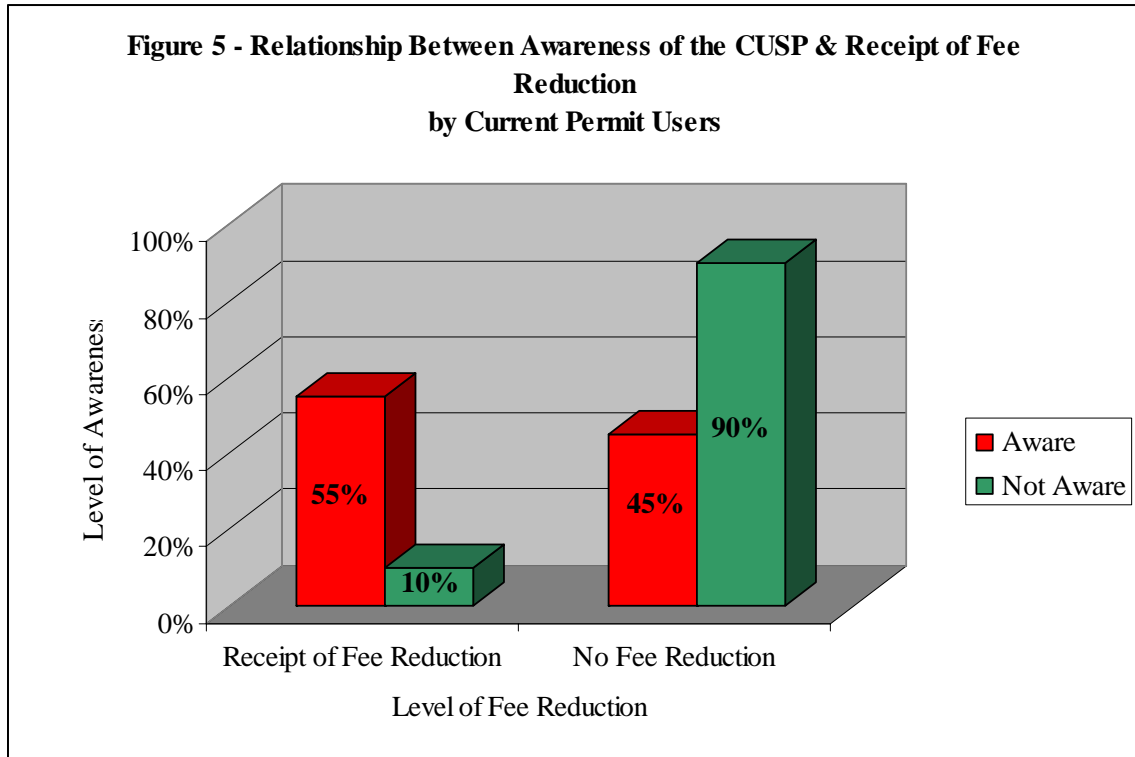
The data for the current permit users reveals a relationship between awareness and receipt fee reductions for permitting school space. For example,

55% of current permit users of school space reported being aware of the CUSP and had received some form of permit fee reduction

In contrast, only 10% of current permit users who were not aware of the CUSP received some form of fee reduction¹³



¹³ Several people reported receiving rebate cheques from their local Boards without an accompanying letter, email or any form of notice and therefore did not associate rebate with the permit fee reductions required under the Provincial-Board Community Use of Schools Agreement (CUSP).



Section 3 – Impact of School Permit Fee Reductions on Community Groups

The impact of the new permit fee reductions under the CUSP was measured in two ways:

- 1) To examine the immediate impact - did the community-based groups increase their use of school space in the first year of implementation (September 1, 2004 – August 31, 2005 school year)?
- 2) To examine future projected impact – would community-based groups increase their use of school space in the second year of implementation (September 1, 2005 – August 31, 2006 school year and beyond)

The Immediate Impact

The data showed that one-quarter of the current permit users of school space reported increasing their use of school space in the school year 2004/2005 due to the new fee reductions under the CUSP. This is consistent with the finding that at the time of the survey most of the respondents had not received any form of the new fee reductions.

While 67% of current permit users of school space were aware of the CUSP and permit fee reductions prior to completing the survey, only 40% of the current permit users had actually received some form of fee reductions at the time of the survey. Many of these community groups would have permitted school space before the Community Recreation and Use Agreements were signed by their respective school boards.

Future Project Impact

The impact of the new permit fee reductions was also measured by examining whether fee reductions would impact access and use of school space in the upcoming school year, September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2006.

Among the current permit users of school space, 71% reported that they would increase their use of school space in the 2005/2006 school year (the second year of the new CUSP program).

Furthermore, of the current non-users of school space, 58% indicated they would increase their use of school space in the 2005/2006 school year because of the new permit fee reductions under the CUSP.

Among those who actually received some form of fee reduction, 74% indicated that the permit fee reductions would allow them to increase their use of school space.

Figure 6 - Expanded Use of School Space by Current Permit Users Due to the New Permit Fee Reductions in School Year 2004/2005

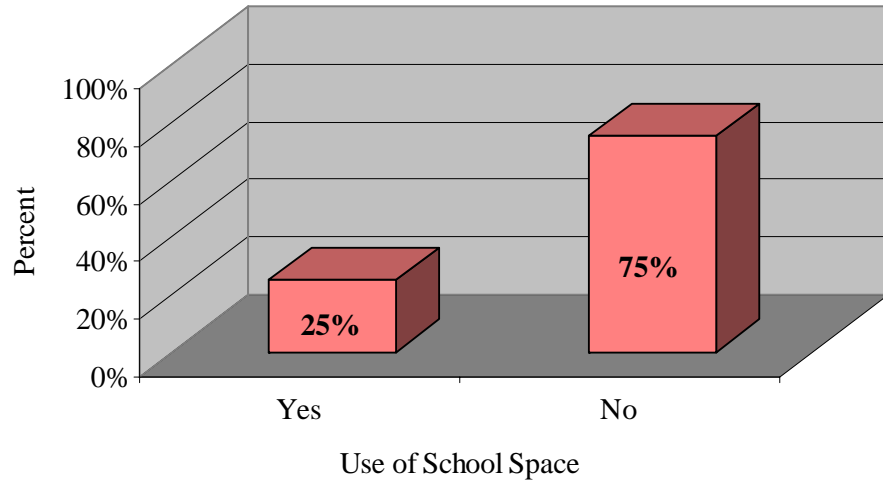


Figure 7 - Projected Increase in the Use of School Space by Current Permit Users in School Year 2005/2006

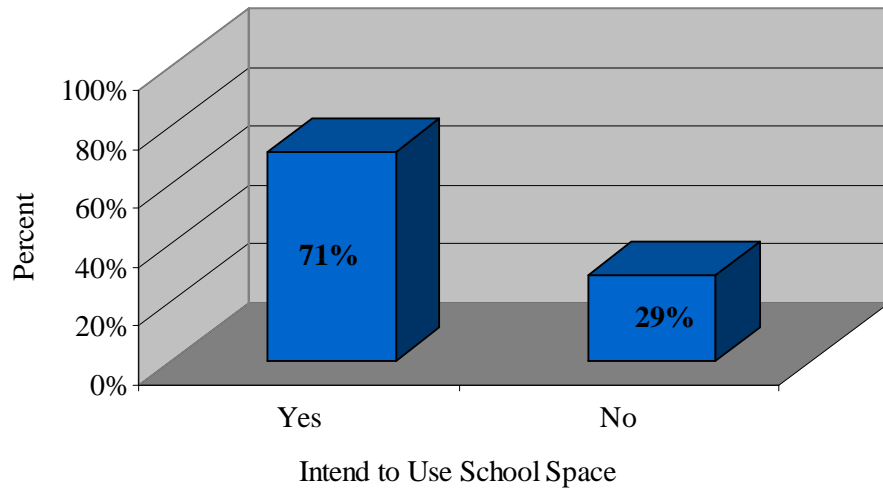
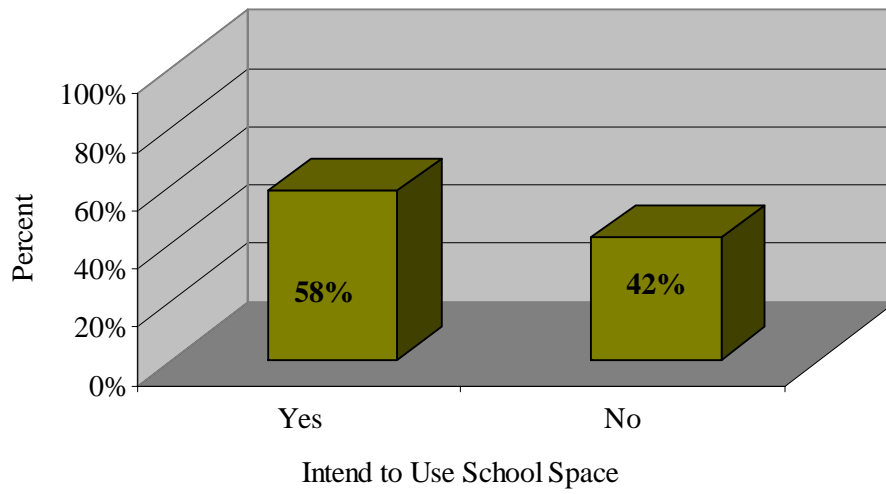


Figure 8 - Projected Use of School Space by Current Non-Users in School Year 2005/2006



How Will Permit Fee Reductions Impact Community Groups' Program Plans to Access Schools?

Respondents indicated that the new reduced fees would be beneficial to their programs in a variety of ways, and that this would also be of benefit to their program participants. Some concrete examples of how the reduced fees may positively impact community groups' use of school space included:

- relocation to school space
- reduced user fees
- increase registration, and
- increased programming, such as offering or expanding summer, after-school or weekend programs.

Two-thirds of all the respondents indicated that the reduced permit fees will allow them to increase their use of school space. This would take various forms such as re-locating to schools, lower participant fees, increased registrations, and increased hours of programming.

For those community groups **that are currently permitting school space** (196 respondents):

- 52% reported that the new fee reductions would go toward reducing user fees
- 50% would increase number of registrations to allow access to more participants¹⁴
- 41% indicated they would use the reduced fees to increase (program time) hours
- 34% proposed to use the new fee reductions to relocate to school space¹⁵
- 44% proposed to develop more after-school programs. Community groups also reported that the impact of the new reduces fees would go toward increasing their summer and weekend programs. These increases range from expanding existing programs to offering new programs as well as a combination of offering both new and existing programs.

Of the **current non-users** for whom the reduced fees will impact their use of school space:

- 72% reported that they would consider relocating to school space because of the new reduced fees under the CUSP
- 24% proposed to reduce their user fees, while 21% would each increase hours and registration.

Among those current non-users of school space who reported that they would consider increasing their programming because of the new reduced fees, 21% proposed increasing their after-school and weekend programs. This increase could take the form of new

¹⁴ Make more spaces in programs available so as to increase the number of users.

¹⁵ Relocation here means increasing use of school space instead of other public or private space for existing or new programs.

programs, the expansion of existing programs or a combination of both new and existing programs. Community groups also proposed to pursue summer programs either singly or in combination with the other program types.

Close to 80% of all respondents indicated that further decreases in permit fees would positively impact their use of school space for non-profit community programs.

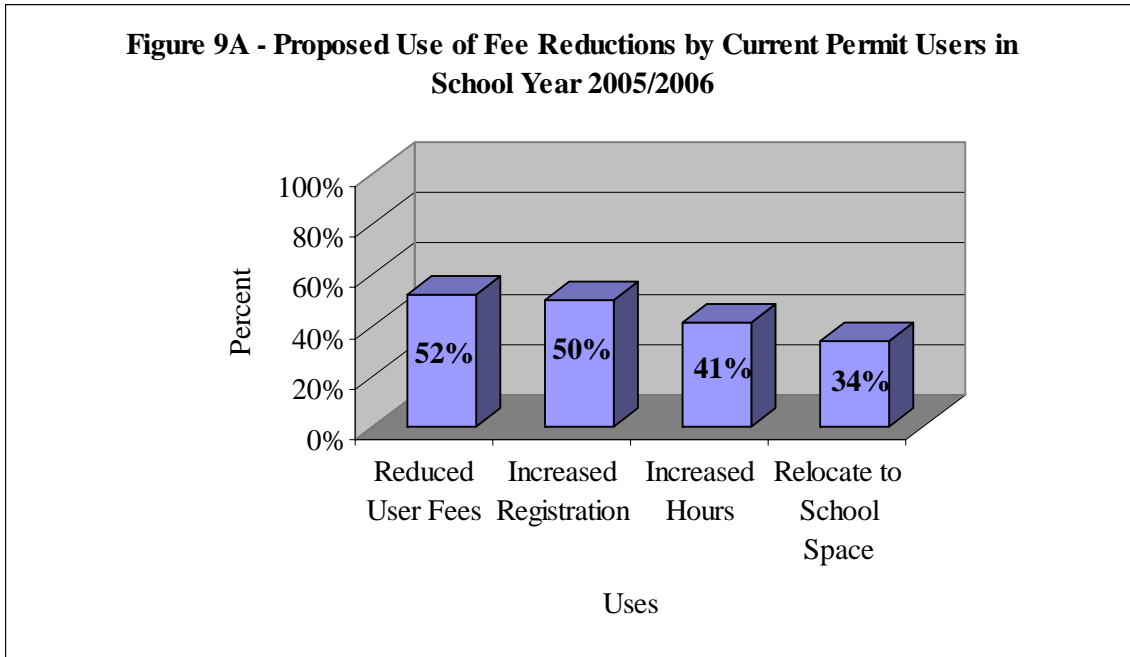


Figure 9B - Proposed Use of Fee Reductions by Current Permit Users to Fund Increased Programming in School Year 2005/2006

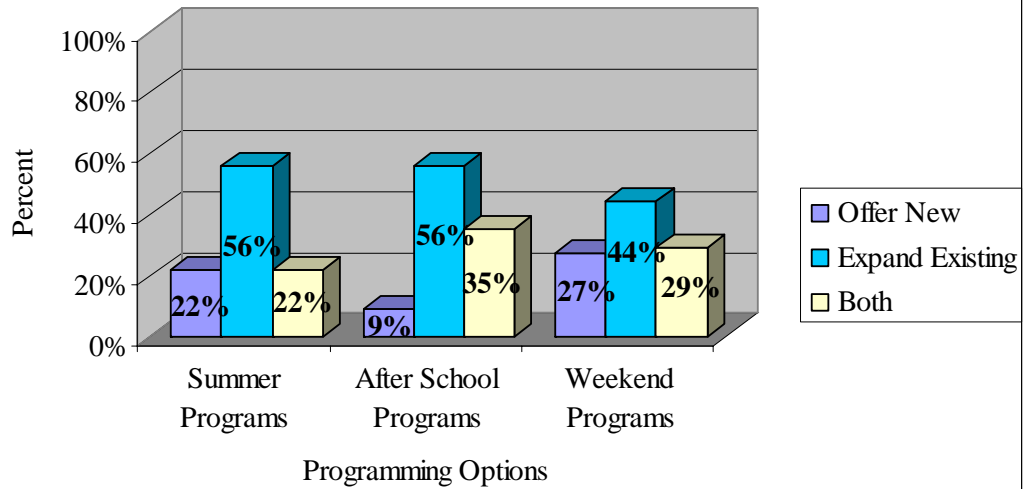


Figure 10A - Proposed Use of Fee Reductions by Current Non-Users on School Year 2005/2006

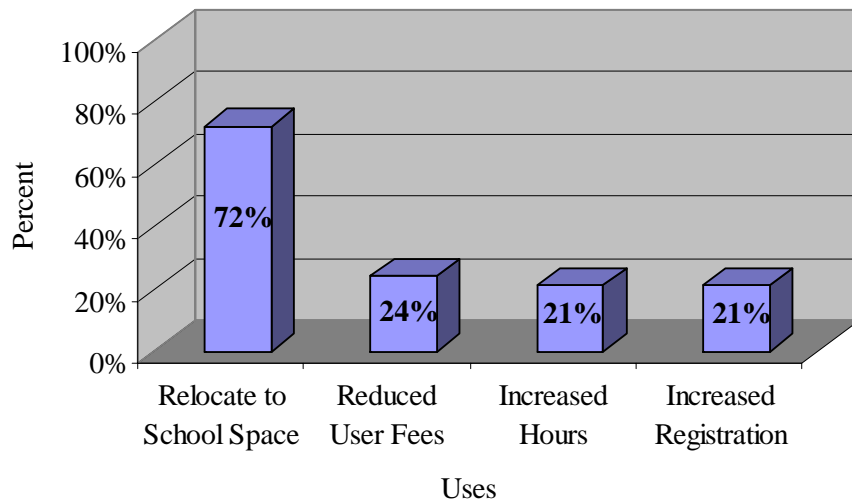


Figure 10B - Proposed Use of Fee Reductions By Current Non-Users to Fund Increased Programming in School Year 2005/2006

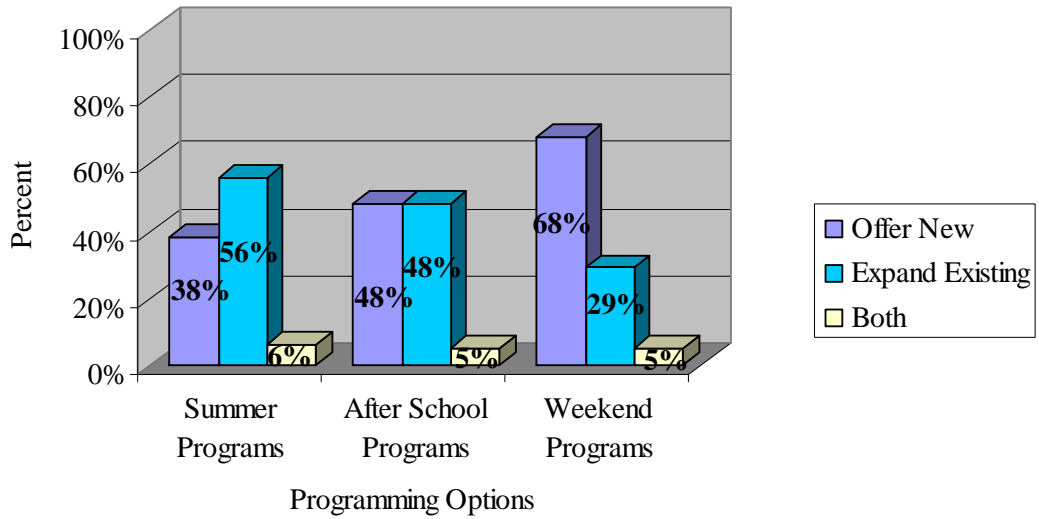
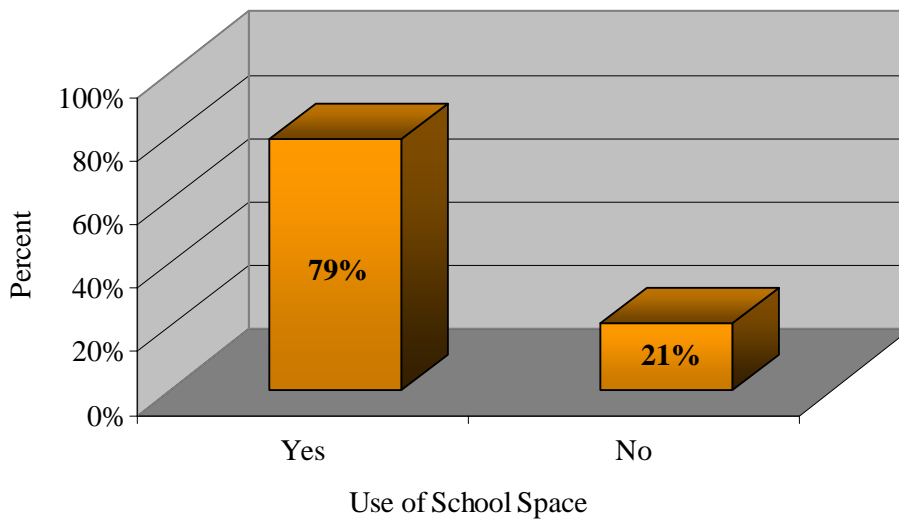


Figure 11 - Increased Use of School Space by Total Respondents Pending Further Permit Fee Reductions



Section 4 – Conclusion and Priorities for Further Action to Support the New Permit Fee Policy

One very important conclusion that can be drawn from the survey findings is that the permit fee reductions under the CUSP have been welcomed by many community organizations. This survey snapshot provides some preliminary evidence that this provincial policy and funding has begun to show positive impacts by reducing school permit fees and helping to restore some community access to our schools in Ontario.

It is significant that community groups indicated that the new and further reduced permit fees would allow them to relocate to school space, reduce participant user fees, increase hours of community activities and increase registration. The lower permit fees would also lead to increased programming that would be carried out after school, on weekends or in the summer. Some of these programs would be new; others would be an expansion of existing programs or a combination of both new and existing programs.

It is also clear from the findings that there needs to be significant work to increase community and public awareness of the Community Recreation and Use Agreement and the local Boards new fee rates. In order for this program to succeed, outreach and promotion of the program must extend beyond just existing permit users. The communication strategies to promote the CUSP must also work to reach many organizations that are current non-users of school space. These groups would include those organizations that had stopped using school space because of the increased permit fees as well as those that may have never permitted school space because they could not have afforded it or did not know they could permit school space.

Following on the above conclusions, there are several priorities that were highlighted as needed to support the new permit fee policy. These are discussed below.

The community groups indicated that there are financial costs other than permit fees that affect the affordability and access to school space by community groups. Most notably are the insurance¹⁶ costs and program development costs. These costs can be quite prohibitive.

Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness by community groups about issues relating to custodian fees specifically and the content of the Agreements generally. For example, the Agreements between the government and the Boards of Education explicitly states that “Custodian costs will be not be charged when custodians are regularly scheduled to work. And if more than one Group is using enhanced custodial services when custodian is present in unscheduled hours, the custodial costs, which may be overtime costs, shall be distributed evenly among user groups¹⁷.” Yet, several respondents raised the point that they did know how custodian fees are distributed among the various community groups

¹⁶ Some Board Agreements with the Ontario government on CUSP include umbrella liability insurance for non-profit groups using schools. This is a ‘best practice’ that could be adopted by all Boards to reduce this barrier facing many groups who cannot afford liability insurance to run programs in schools.

¹⁷ Refer to Schedule E of the Community Recreation and Use Agreements

that use school space. This situation suggests that community groups need better access to the Agreements; the Agreements need to be made public.

Another priority that has been highlighted as important in supporting the new permit fee policy is the recognition that returning to and restarting programs in school space requires time, energy and money before these programs can be stabilized. A consequence of this is that reductions in permit fees will not necessarily result in an automatic reduction in user fees, at least in the initial first or second years.

Many of the respondents also identified non-financial barriers that need to be addressed simultaneously with the reduction in permit fees in order to fully realize increased access to school space by community groups and their beneficiaries. The top priority that was identified by many respondents is the need for greater awareness and public education around the Community Use of Schools Program and the resulting fee reductions. This is critical as it has taken some community groups 4 months after the fact to find out that they had received credit towards their future use of school space. It is not often that community groups receive confirmation of their eligibility for the reduced fees.

Some of the other non-financial barriers that have been identified by respondents as necessary to enable more affordable and increased access to school space by community groups include:

- Better communication between respective Boards of Education and community groups
- A simplified permit fee application process
- Generally, better information on the permit fee application process
- Resource, electronic or hard copy, that provides information about the availability of school space (e.g., days, times, facilities and equipment) and the fees
- Guarantee that community groups will not have their activities cancelled because of school functions, especially since the permitting of school space has to be done so long in advance of the actual date of the activity
- The significant power that caretakers have in determining access and by extension program times. For example, depending on caretaker's availability some programs start later or others have to end earlier than scheduled.

Recommendations

Ministry of Health Promotion, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Children and Youth Services

Communication

1. That the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) negotiates year-two Community Use Agreements with Boards as quickly as possible to enable community groups to do adequate planning for future programs.
2. That MHP in consultation with key stakeholders develop a comprehensive multi-pronged communication and outreach strategy aimed at increasing public awareness of the Community Use of Schools Program (CUSP) across Ontario.
3. That MHP seek the resources necessary to implement a comprehensive multi-pronged communications and outreach strategy.
4. That MHP enhances its capacity to provide centralized contact and support for School Boards /community groups and other stakeholders to resolve implementation issues associated with the CUSP.
5. That MHP work with ALL Boards of Education to improve and simplify information. Boards to provide the public with information about the Community Use of Schools fee-rates and application procedures.

Transparency/Accountability

6. That MHP ensure all future CUSP agreements with School Boards explicitly state that the Agreements and the tracking data will be publicly released.
7. That MHP contract with an independent organization to develop effective evaluation tools to assess the impact of the CUSP in achieving the objectives and outcomes set out in the government's Community Recreation and Use of schools Policy Statement.
8. That MHP produce an annual evaluation report on the outcomes and achievements of the CUSP program and recommendations for improvement.

Future Funding for CUSP and to Support Non-Profit Programming in Schools

9. That MHP confirm the annualized government funding commitment through the Ministry of Education budget to the Community Use of Schools Program and policy and to provide this information publicly.

10. That MHP and the Ministry of Education seek additional resources in the provincial budget to expand the effectiveness of the CUSP and more fully achieve the goals established in the Community Use of Schools Policy Statement (see Appendix 1). The MHP to develop Agreements with Boards that build on best practices and achieve more consistency across Boards: including fee rates, insurance coverage, and custodial over-time.
11. That the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Children and Youth establish a new Community Infrastructure Challenge Fund to leverage financial and volunteer investment by community and non-profit organizations in school-based programs in support of a broad set of established provincial objectives that can be effectively advanced through such initiatives.

Boards of Education

Communication

12. That Boards work with MHP to develop an improved communication/outreach strategy regarding new community use policy and reduced permit fee rates, and ensure information is “user friendly” and equitably accessible. Strategies would include:
 - Promote CUSP information more visibly on web sites/ and home pages.
 - Making outreach information available at local schools and to community organizations/municipality and social planning groups (including different languages depending on local demographics)
 - Mapping of all schools where there is permit access after-school, weekends and in the summer for community groups.

Transparency/Accountability

13. That Boards post CUSP Agreements on their web sites.

Outcomes

14. In addition to providing information as required by the MHP, that Boards develop local evaluation measures with the input of community organizations, the municipality, permit holders, the local social planning councils so continual improvements can be made to the CUSP program delivery at a local level.

Reducing Barriers to Community Use of Schools

15. That Boards of Education consider and take steps to:
 - 15.1 Establish Community Advisory Committees regarding the CUSP to ensure input from stakeholders at a local level
 - 15.2 Improve promotion of the CUSP at the local school level with principals and caretakers

- 15.3 Seek opportunities to improve the permitting system and reduce barriers to the permit application process
- 15.4 Discourage 'block booking' of Board space, where possible
- 15.5 Organize repair schedules to minimize disruption of community programs and use, and ensure school facilities are available year-round
- 15.6 Plan school activities to minimize and prevent last minute cancellation of permits, except where absolutely necessary
- 15.7 Include School Board Trustees and staff in community engagement processes designed to meet community needs including: after-school and summer programs for children and youth, seniors and newcomer communities which can be operated in schools (see Recommendation 18).

Municipalities

16. That Municipalities review their own facility access policies and seek opportunities to reduce their fees in line with those of the School Boards.
17. That Municipalities take proactive steps to promote awareness of the CUSP, and community use of municipal recreation centres and other facilities among non-profit community groups and the general public, especially among the current non-users of school space.
18. That Municipalities facilitate a community level engagement process with community and non-profit groups aimed at identifying programs and activities that are designed to meet community needs, including after-school and summer programs for children, youth, seniors and newcomer communities which can be operated in local schools and other community facilities.

Community Organizations/ Non-Profit Sector

19. That non-profit organizations and sector bodies take steps to ensure that their staff, members and contacts are aware of the CUSP, and actively engage in a process of identifying opportunities to initiate or expand programs and activities that utilize school space and facilities.
20. That non-profit organizations and sector bodies promote public awareness of the CUSP by utilizing outreach/communication tools and other vehicles such as, newsletters, websites, list-serves and agency /networks or inter-agency networks.
21. That non-profit groups/ clubs participate in local planning initiatives and, where needed, facilitate wider community convening to plan programs to meet community needs including after-school and summer programs for children, youth, seniors and newcomer communities in local schools and other community facilities.

22. That individual non-profits and community organizations investigate opportunities to resume programs curtailed or reduced as a result of high fees, and take steps to restore and expand such programs.
23. That individual non-profits and community organizations takes steps to reconnect with and re-engage volunteers who were previously involved in operating or supporting school-based programs, and take steps to actively recruit new volunteers.

Charitable Foundations and Private Sector Funders

24. That funders take steps to promote information about the CUSP by utilizing internal and external newsletters, web sites, and other vehicles to share information with contacts, and funding recipient organizations.
25. That funders take advantage of funders' forums and other networks to promote the CUSP.
26. That funders seek opportunities to create or increase funding aimed at supporting non-profits and community organizations to initiate or expand programs in schools.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sample Community Recreation & Use Agreement

Background

Many District School Boards across the Province encourage community use of their facilities. Some District School Boards allow use of their facilities by charging a fee based on the user group classification in accordance with their community use policy.

The *Education Act* (Section 183) also provides that District School Boards may enter into joint agreements with municipalities to provide for the maintenance and operation of facilities for cultural, recreational, athletic, educational, administrative and other community purposes.

In recognition of the many benefits associated with community use of school space, the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation (the “MTR” or “the Ministry”) and the Ministry of Education (the “EDU”) have recently announced a \$20 million Community Use of Schools Program (the “Program”) to encourage greater and more affordable access to school facilities for community Not-For-Profit Groups (as defined in the attached Schedule “B”). In addition, the government also adopted a Policy Statement that outlines provincial objectives and principles respecting community use of school facilities (attached as Schedule “A”).

Purpose

The Program has been specifically established to provide assistance to District School Boards to increase affordable access for Not-For-Profit Groups to both indoor and outdoor school space. It is envisioned that these measures will help achieve greater accessibility across the Province with respect to community use of schools at reduced rates. It is recognized that changes to accessibility and costs to users as a result of this program are ultimately intended to benefit the individual participants.

Allocation

In support of the Policy Statement, MTR and the xx District School Board (each a “Party” and together the “Parties”) hereby enter into a Community Recreation and Use Agreement (the “Agreement”). To this end the xx District School Board has been provided with \$ in the 2004/05 academic year through the Grant for School Operations to increase affordable community access to school space (“Funds”). The Funds provided must be used exclusively for the purposes of the Program.

Conditions

The xx District School Board covenants that it will:

1. Reduce cost barriers commencing September 1, 2004 for Not-For-Profit Groups

2. Endeavour to increase access for Not-For-Profit Groups.
3. Encourage discussions with municipalities on joint use agreements with the intent of improving accessibility and reducing cost barriers where appropriate.
4. Offer Not-For-Profit Groups fair access to school space during non-school hours.
5. Provide priority access for Not-For-Profit Groups serving children and youth and low-income groups.
6. Agree to the provisions contained in the attached Schedule "D".
7. Work with MTR to plan communications aspects related to the signing of the Community Recreation and Use Agreement.
8. Abide by Schedule "E".
9. Report on the use made of the Funds in a standard report form provided by MTR.

Baseline Data

The xx District School Board agrees to provide MTR with the following baseline data for the 2003-2004 academic year by December 31, 2004 in a standardized reporting template (to be provided by MTR):

- a. Current user fee schedule and user group classification (if applicable).
- b. The number of permitted hours allocated to all users.
- c. The number of permitted hours allocated to Not-For-Profit Groups.
- d. Total permit revenue collected through user fees from all users.
- e. Permit revenue collected through user fees from Not-For-Profit Groups (if available).
- f. A copy of the District School Board's community access policy.
- g. The number of participants as per permit information (if possible the number of participants serviced by Not-For-Profit Groups).
- h. A description of existing joint use agreements with municipalities.

Note: if baseline information is not available in the format outlined above, the xx

District School Board will develop a mechanism to gather the requested information for 2004/2005 no later than December 31, 2004.

Reporting

The xxx District School Board shall provide to MTR by the end of June 2005 (or earlier) the following information in a standardized reporting template (to be provided by MTR):

- a. Current community use of schools policy and user fee schedule detailing any changes as a result of the Community Recreation and Use Agreement.
- b. The number of permitted hours allocated to all users.
- c. The number permitted hours allocated to Not-For-Profit Groups.
- d. The total revenue collected through user fees from all users.
- e. Revenue collected through user fees from Not-For-Profit Groups.
- f. The number of participants as per permit information (if possible the number of participants serviced by Not-For-Profit Groups).

- g. Report on progress in developing joint use agreements with municipalities.
- h. Accounting for funds expended in standard report form provided by MTR and providing any other details as requested by the Ministry.

This Agreement is not intended to affect existing joint use agreements or policies in a manner that is inconsistent with the Provincial Policy Statement or result in increasing existing user fees.

It is understood that this document constitutes an agreement between the Parties, and shall be in effect from September 1, 2004 to August 31, 2005. By signing below, the Parties hereby indicate their agreement with the provisions contained in this document, together with the attached Schedules A, B, C, D and E.

Name: _____ Date _____
Title :

Name: _____ Date _____
Title :

I / We have authority to bind the xx District School Board

Jim Bradley _____
Minister of Tourism and Recreation Date

W.R. (Bill) Allen _____
Deputy Minister of Tourism and Recreation Date

SCHEDULE A

Ministry of Tourism and Recreation & Ministry of Education

Joint Policy Statement on Community Use of Schools

a) Statement on the need for a government policy on community use of schools:

Non-profit community Groups and organizations depend on affordable access to publicly funded school space to conduct their activities.

Community Groups and District School Boards have identified a number of factors that have resulted in significant decreases in community use of school facilities particularly by Not-For-Profit Groups. These include:

- a) The difficulty community Groups have in accessing school facilities for their activities due to either unavailability of space or unaffordable rental fees;
- b) The additional costs which District School Boards incur when keeping schools open in the evening or on weekends as a result of:
 - 1. Heating and lighting costs
 - 2. Custodial costs
 - 3. Greater liability risk with community use of schools
 - 4. Shortage of dedicated funding to offset costs of community use of schools in on-school hours
- c) Variance of school rental fees from school board to school board throughout the Province.

These factors have created new barriers to community programs and participation in those programs by members of the public who rely on affordable access to school facilities.

This policy framework is being issued to guide partnership involvement in preserving the community use of schools as a cornerstone of building strong and healthy communities.

b) Vision:

"Schools in Ontario are recognized as hubs for community activity and will be affordable and accessible to communities in order to support the goals of a healthier Ontario, stronger communities and student success."

c) Policy Goals:

- a) Remove cost barriers associated with community use of school facilities and increase participation in community programs located in publicly funded school facilities.
- b) Achieve consistency across the Province in terms of community access to schools at nominal rates.
- c) Encourage co-operation between District School Boards and municipalities regarding use of school space.

d) Policy Principles:

The following are defining principles and that should guide the implementation of the policy:

- a. Schools as Hubs of Communities
Schools are the hubs of their communities and offer an effective use of taxpayers' investment in providing citizens with a place to come together, volunteer, build skills, access community programs, become physically active and build strong and healthy communities.
- b. Fair and Equal Access
Schools are welcoming and inclusive and will offer community organizations and citizens fair access to use of school space at nominal rates for community purposes in non-school hours.
- c. Respect for Roles and Responsibilities
Community use of school facilities will be facilitated by stakeholder partners who respect each other's roles, responsibilities and obligations to the community and education system.
- d. School Activities are a Priority
School day activities and extra-curricular activities organized or administered by the school or school board shall have priority use of school space during and after regular school hours.

- e. Not-For-Profit organizations to be charged nominal rates.
District School Boards, where feasible, should ensure that after-hours user fees for school facilities in their district are affordable for Not-For-Profit community users.

e) Roles and Responsibilities

Provincial Government – The provincial government has a responsibility to build strong and healthy communities by providing policy direction and supporting and promoting cooperative planning processes and approaches amongst the partners involved in community use of schools.

Municipal Governments – Municipal governments are responsible for providing a range of community, sport, and recreation opportunities by encouraging engagement with District School Boards to facilitate community use of schools.

District School Boards – District School Boards are responsible for coordinating community use of affordable school space when not being used for school purposes as a regular part of board business, and for engaging their municipalities in joint planning to facilitate community use of schools.

Community Groups using school space – Community Groups seeking the use of school facilities are responsible for adhering to the school board's administrative procedures for the use of school space. They are also responsible for ensuring that school facilities are utilized in a responsible and respectful manner.

SCHEDULE B DEFINITIONS

Not-For-Profit Groups

Not-For-Profit Groups are corporations incorporated for the purpose of carrying on, without financial gain, objects of a patriotic, charitable, philanthropic, religious, professional, sporting or athletic character.

For the purposes of this document Not-For-Profit Groups shall be further defined to include:

- a) **Not-For-Profit Youth-Related Community Groups** –run by local youth groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, 4H Clubs and Cadets etc., are local youth groups where the activities are intended for participants under the age of 18 (or where the participants are under a disability then under the age of 28).
- b) **Not-For-Profit Recognized Children's Sport And Recreation Service Providers**- are as defined by the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation's Recognition Criteria For Children's Recreation Services (attached as Schedule C).
- c) **Not-For-Profit Childcare Operations** – groups involved with before and after-school childcare programs delivered by eligible operators (as per the *Day Nurseries Act*) within the school board district.
- d) **Other Not-For-Profit Or Charitable Groups** – other groups such as local service clubs, community health associations, seniors Groups etc. as determined by the district school board.

Note: municipal programs and services (as identified in Schedule C) are eligible only if the municipality providing the program has a joint use agreement with the District School Board.

Recipient - The District School Board.

Program – Community Use of Schools Program.

Joint Use Agreement – Agreements concerning use of facilities as provided for under Section 183 of the *Education Act*.

Municipality - Includes Local Service Boards (the "LSB" in unorganized Territories / excludes bands).

Charitable Status - An organization established and operated for charitable purposes, that devotes its resources to charitable activities. The organization must be registered with Revenue Canada as a charity, under the *Income Tax Act*.

SCHEDULE C
RECOGNITION CRITERIA FOR CHILDREN'S RECREATION SERVICES

The following are recognized by the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation:

1. Recreation committees appointed by,
 - i. the council of a local municipality,
 - ii. the councils of two or more local municipalities,
 - iii. the council of the band,
 - iv. the councils of two or more bands,
 - v. the council of one or more local municipalities and the council of one or more bands,
 - vi. a school board,
 - vii. two or more school boards,
 - viii. a local services board.
2. Recreation camp organizations accredited by the Ontario Camping Association.
3. Sports organizations that are members or affiliates of provincial sports organizations that are recognized by the Ministry.
4. Ministry agencies.
5. Ministry of Tourism and Recreation agencies and attractions.
6. Organizations that are recognized as children's recreation service providers by a resolution passed by the entity described in subparagraph i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii or viii of paragraph 1 that appointed the recreation committee in the jurisdiction in which the organization operates.

SCHEDULE D ADDITIONAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Conflict of Interest. Recipient shall carry out the Program and use the Funds in a manner so that no person associated with the Program in any capacity (directly or indirectly) shall have a potential or actual conflict of interest. For purposes of this Section, a "conflict of interest" includes, but is not limited to, situations where a person associated with the Program or any member of his or her family is able to benefit financially (directly or indirectly) from his or her involvement in the Program. Nothing in this Section prevents the Recipient from reimbursing its volunteers for their reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred in connection with the Program. The Recipient shall disclose to the Ministry without delay any situation that may be reasonably interpreted as either an actual or potential conflict of interest.

2. Limitation of Liability. The Ministry, its officers, employees and agents shall not be liable to the Recipient or its officers, directors, employees or agents for any general, consequential incidental, indirect, or special damages, or for any injuries, loss, death, costs, expenses, lost profits or any other losses howsoever caused that arise out of or are in any way related to the Program or this Agreement. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Ministry shall not be liable for any punitive, indirect, special, consequential or incidental damages whatsoever (or for any loss of revenue, profits or data), whether such damages arise in contract or in tort, including without limitation such damages based in negligence, strict liability, material breach or any other legal theory. The provisions of this section shall survive the termination or expiry of this Agreement. This Section shall survive any termination or expiration of this Agreement.

3. Indemnity. Recipient together with any and all subcontractors, hereby agrees to indemnify and hold the Ministry harmless from and against any and all liability, loss, costs, damages and expenses, causes of action, actions, claims, demands, lawsuits or other proceedings, (collectively, "Claims"), by whomever made, sustained, brought or prosecuted, including for third party bodily injury (including death), personal injury and property damage, in any way based upon, occasioned by or attributable to anything done or omitted to be done by the Recipient, its subcontractors or their respective directors, officers, agents, employees or independent contractors in the course of performance of the Program, or otherwise in connection with this Agreement. The Recipient further agrees to indemnify and hold the Ministry harmless for any incidental, indirect, special or consequential damages, or any loss of use, revenue or profit, by any person, entity or organization, including, without limitation, the Ministry, claimed or resulting from such Claims. The obligations contained in this section shall survive the termination or expiry of this Agreement. This Section shall survive any termination or expiration of this Agreement.

4. Insurance. The Recipient shall at its own expense put in effect and maintain, with insurers acceptable to the Ministry, all the necessary insurance that is appropriate for a prudent person carrying out a project similar to the Program, including, but not limited to Commercial General Liability Insurance, for third party bodily injury, personal injury and property damage to an inclusive limit of not less than Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) per occurrence and not less than Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) products and

completed operations aggregate, with such policy to include, at minimum, the following provisions: Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario as represented by the Minister of Tourism of Recreation as an additional insured; Contractual Liability; Products and Completed Operations Liability; a valid WSIB Clearance Certificate; and a thirty (30) day written notice of cancellation. The Recipient shall provide the Ministry with a valid Certificate of Insurance that references the Program and confirms the above requirements.

5. No Waiver & No Assignment. A waiver of any failure to comply with any term of this Agreement shall be in writing and signed by the party providing the waiver. Any waiver must refer to a specific failure to comply and shall not have the effect of waiving any subsequent failures to comply. The Recipient shall not assign this Agreement or the Program Funding Funds or any part thereof without the prior written consent of the Ministry.

6. FIPPA. The Recipient acknowledges that the Ministry is bound by the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c.F. 31, as amended from time to time, and that any information provided to the Ministry in connection with this Agreement is subject to disclosure in accordance with the requirements of that Act.

**SCHEDULE E
EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

| Permit Type | Description | Last Year's Fee (2003-04) | Revised Fee for 2004-2005 |
|--------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Not-for-profit Youth-related Community Groups – Activities run by local not-for-profit youth groups. Groups directly involved with children and youth (Scouts/Guides, YMCA/YWCA) Not-for-profit recognized children's sport and recreation service providers – as per MTR's Recognition Criteria (Schedule C) Activities covered in Reciprocal Use Agreements School based education parent groups including school councils and home & school associations. Board Non-credit continuing education courses | | |
| 2 | Other not-for-profit or charitable groups such as local service clubs, community health associations, etc. as determined by the DSB. Not-for-profit adult and seniors groups | | |

NOTES:

1. The Community Use of Schools Program shall not result in increased user fees for not-for-profit groups.
2. Rates shall be sustainable for the term of the Agreement.
3. Total Fee: Total rate (hourly or as otherwise specified) to user groups must be noted in Schedule E.
4. Custodial costs will not be charged when custodians are regularly scheduled to work.
5. If more than one Group is using enhanced custodial services (when custodian is present in unscheduled hours) the custodial costs shall be distributed evenly amongst the user groups.
6. The DSB agrees that the revised fee schedule will be retroactive to September 1, 2004 and will reconcile with the community groups within one permitting cycle.
7. If there is a misunderstanding about permit categories, the Definitions as per Schedule B will apply.
8. Equipment charges will not apply to the groups noted above.

News Release Communiqué



Ministry of Tourism
and Recreation

Ministère du Tourisme
et des Loisirs

For Immediate Release
February 9, 2005

FEES DROP DRAMATICALLY FOR KIDS USING WATERLOO CATHOLIC SCHOOL FACILITIES AS BOARD, ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SIGN COMMUNITY USE AGREEMENT *Adult Groups Also Get Fee Breaks*

WATERLOO -- Community not-for-profit groups will now be getting a substantial price break when using Waterloo Region school facilities, thanks to a special agreement signed by the Waterloo Catholic District School Board and the Ontario government, John Milloy, MPP for Kitchener Centre announced today.

“Our schools should be community hubs where people can gather to learn, participate in community-based activities and stay active,” said Milloy. “Today, the McGuinty Government and the Waterloo Catholic District School Board are making that happen.”

“Education cutbacks by the previous government caused many school boards to price their grounds and facilities out of reach of community groups — but we’re changing that. This is great news for students, not-for-profit groups and the community at large, which has already paid for these schools,” said Minister of Tourism and Recreation Jim Bradley, whose ministry oversees the Community Use of Schools program. The program is funded by the Ministry of Education.

Improvements effective immediately include:

- Rental fees charged to community not-for-profit groups serving children and youth will be eliminated. Rental fees had ranged from \$4 an hour for classrooms and libraries, to \$10 an hour for single gyms and lunchrooms, to \$31 an hour for auditoriums.
- The \$30 an hour custodian fee that had been charged on Saturdays, and on weeknights at some schools, is reduced to zero for all community not-for-profit groups serving kids. The \$40 an hour Sunday custodial fee is cut in half to \$20 an hour for groups serving kids.
- The \$35 administration fee has been reduced to \$10 for community not-for-profit groups serving children and youth. It has been reduced to \$25 for adult community not-for-profit groups.
- Rental fees charged to adult community not-for-profit groups are reduced. Rental fees for a single gym, for example, drop from \$16 an hour to \$10 an hour. Classroom and library rental fees drop from \$6 an hour to \$5 an hour.

- More board facilities will be made available to community not-for-profit groups, including weeknight use of five rural schools.
- The board will also endeavor to open three or four schools for community use in the summer.

In July, the Ontario government announced \$20 million to help boards open their schools to their communities. As part of that initiative, the Waterloo Catholic District School Board, representing 52 schools, has signed a Community Recreation and Use Agreement and will receive \$204,641 to help make school facilities more accessible to not-for-profit groups at reduced rates.

“Opening the doors to our schools is making our communities better places to live, where people are able to be active, healthy and more connected regardless of their financial circumstances,” said Bradley.

"We are pleased to be working in partnership with the provincial government to open our school gyms and classrooms to community groups, maximizing the use of our facilities," said Education Director, Roger Lawler.

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News Release Communiqué



Ministry of Tourism
and Recreation

Ministère du Tourisme
et des Loisirs

For Immediate Release
February 9, 2005

VIRTUALLY ALL FEES ELIMINATED FOR KIDS USING WATERLOO SCHOOL FACILITIES AS BOARD, ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SIGN COMMUNITY USE AGREEMENT

Adult Groups Also Get Fee Breaks

WATERLOO — Community not-for-profit groups serving kids will now be able to use Waterloo Region school gyms and classrooms for free, thanks to a special agreement signed by the Waterloo Region District School Board and the Ontario government, John Milloy, MPP for Kitchener Centre announced today.

“Our schools should be community hubs where people can gather to learn, participate in community-based activities and stay active,” said Milloy. “Today, the McGuinty Government and the Waterloo Region District School Board are making that happen.”

“Education cutbacks by the previous government caused many school boards to price their grounds and facilities out of reach of community groups — but we’re changing that. This is great news for students, not-for-profit groups and the community at large, which has already paid for these schools,” said Minister of Tourism and Recreation Jim Bradley, whose ministry oversees the Community Use of Schools program. The program is funded by the Ministry of Education.

Improvements effective immediately include:

- Rental fees charged to community not-for-profit groups serving children and youth are reduced to zero. Rental fees for classrooms (\$4 an hour), single gyms and lunchrooms (\$10 an hour), double gyms and cafeterias (\$16 an hour) and auditoriums (\$31 an hour), for example, no longer apply.
- The \$35 permit fee for using school playing fields not booked by a municipality is eliminated for community not-for-profit groups serving kids.
- The \$30 an hour custodial fee that had been charged on weekdays where staff was not otherwise present, and on Saturdays, has been eliminated for community not for profit groups serving kids. The \$40 an hour Sunday rate has been reduced by 50 per cent to \$20 an hour.
- Fees charged to all other community not-for-profit groups will be reduced by approximately 40 per cent. Rental fees for classrooms drops from \$6 an hour to \$3.50 an hour. Single gyms

and lunchrooms drop from \$13 an hour to \$8 an hour. Double gyms and cafeterias that used to cost \$26 an hour are now \$16 an hour.

- The \$35 permit fee for using school playing fields not booked by a municipality is reduced to \$21 for adult community not-for-profit groups.
- The \$30 an hour custodial fee that had been charged on some weekdays and on Saturdays, is reduced to \$18 an hour for adult community not-for-profit groups.
- Rural schools that were previously unavailable to community not-for-profit groups will now be made available for weeknight use.

In July, the Ontario government announced \$20 million to help boards open their schools to their communities. As part of that initiative, the Waterloo Region District School Board, representing 114 schools, has signed a Community Recreation and Use Agreement and will receive \$508,779 to help make school facilities more accessible to not-for-profit groups at reduced rates.

“Opening the doors to our schools is making our communities better places to live, where people are able to be active, healthy and more connected regardless of their financial circumstances,” said Bradley.

"We are pleased to be working in partnership with the provincial government to make it easier and more affordable for community groups to use our school gyms and classrooms," said Bill Gerth, Director of Education of the Waterloo Region District School Board.

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News Release

Communiqué



Ministry of Education

Ministère de l'Éducation

For Immediate Release
October 4, 2004

MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT REDUCES FEES, OPENS SCHOOLS TO COMMUNITY

Students Benefiting From Smaller Classes, More Teachers, Too

WINDSOR — Windsor's schools are reducing fees for community groups, thanks to a special agreement signed by the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board and the McGuinty government, Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy said today.

"Windsor's schools should be community hubs where people can gather to learn, participate in community-based activities and stay active," said Kennedy. "Today, the McGuinty government and the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board are making that happen."

Kennedy was joined by Essex MPP Bruce Crozier, Windsor-St. Clair MPP Dwight Duncan and Windsor West MPP Sandra Pupatello at H.J. Lassaline Catholic School in Windsor. The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board is the first area board to sign a Community Recreation and Use Agreement to assist in making school facilities more accessible to not-for-profit community groups at reduced rates.

Improvements effective immediately at the board's schools include:

- Gym rentals for community not-for-profit groups are reduced by more than 90 per cent from a range of \$75 - \$120 to \$5 for one to four uses a month.
- Classroom rentals to not-for-profits are reduced 58 per cent from \$12 an hour to \$5 an hour.
- Cafeteria rentals to not-for-profit groups are reduced 50 per cent from \$90 to \$45 per use.
- The minimum custodian fee of \$72.50 for Monday to Saturday use or \$96.65 for Sunday use that had been charged on weekends and at some schools on weekdays, is eliminated for all community not-for-profit groups.
- Facilities will be made available to community not-for-profit groups for an additional 4,000 hours a year, including during the summer.

In July, the Ontario government announced \$20 million to help boards open their schools to their communities. As part of that initiative, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, representing 52 schools, has signed a Community Recreation and Use Agreement and will receive \$232,561 to help make school facilities more accessible to not-for-profit groups at reduced rates.

“Opening the doors to our schools is making our communities better places to live, where people are able to be active, healthy and more connected regardless of their financial circumstances,” said Recreation Minister Jim Bradley.

In May, the McGuinty government also announced \$90 million to begin phasing-in a cap of 20 students per class in junior kindergarten to Grade 3 starting with the largest classes. Students across the province have already begun seeing the result of this investment, with more than 1,100 teachers hired for the new school year. The Greater Essex County District School Board received \$1,782,176 and hired 24.5 teachers. The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board received \$1,211,800 and hired 18 teachers.

Kennedy visited a class of 19 Grade 2 students at H.J. Lassaline Catholic School. The class would have had 28 students had it not been for the class size reduction funding. The school added two more primary teachers this fall to prevent split grade classes and ensure that young students benefit from smaller classes.

“Smaller classes, more teachers and better access to our schools for community groups are just a few of the ways Windsor’s schools are better this fall,” said Kennedy. “I hope parents will visit their children’s schools to see the positive changes underway.”

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News Release Communiqué



Ministry of Tourism
and Recreation

Ministère du Tourisme
et des Loisirs

For Immediate Release
June 9, 2005

FEES REDUCED FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS USING ESSEX COUNTY SCHOOLS AS BOARD, ONTARIO GOVERNMENT SIGN RECREATION AGREEMENT

WINDSOR — Community not-for-profit groups in Essex County will now be able to use school facilities at significantly reduced rates – and for the first time on weekends, thanks to a special agreement signed by the Greater Essex County District School Board and the Ontario government, Dwight Duncan, MPP for Windsor-St. Clair announced today.

“Our schools should be community hubs where people can gather to learn, participate in community-based activities and stay active,” said Duncan. “Today, the McGuinty Government and the Greater Essex County District School Board are making that happen.”

“Education cutbacks by the previous government caused many school boards to price their grounds and facilities out of reach of community groups — but we’re changing that. This is great news for students, not-for-profit groups and the community at large, which has already paid for these schools,” said Minister of Tourism and Recreation Jim Bradley, whose ministry oversees the Community Use of Schools program.

“Opening the doors to our schools is making our communities better places to live, where people are able to be active, healthy and more connected regardless of their financial circumstances,” said Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy, whose ministry funds the program.

Improvements effective immediately include:

- Rental fees for not-for-profit community groups serving children and youth under the age of 18, or under the age of 28 for disabled groups, are reduced by 65 per cent. Fees for double gyms drop from \$36.25 an hour to \$12.78 an hour – and from \$15.50 an hour to \$5.46 an hour when booked for the season, for example. Classroom rents drop from \$12.50 an hour to \$4.41 an hour – and from \$6.50 an hour to \$2.29 an hour when booked for the season. Rents for use of libraries, cafeterias and auditoriums are similarly reduced.
- Rental fees for other not-for-profit community groups are reduced by 40 per cent. Fees for double gyms drop from \$36.25 an hour to \$21.90 an hour – and drop from \$15.50 an hour to \$9.37 an hour when booked for the season. Classroom rents drop from \$12.50 an hour to \$7.55 an hour – and from \$6.50 an hour to \$3.93 an hour when booked for the season. Rents for use of libraries, cafeterias and auditoriums are similarly reduced.
- The \$21.08 an hour weeknight custodian overtime charge is reduced to \$13.35; the time and a half \$31.63 an hour (Saturday) rate is cut to \$20.03 an hour, and the double time \$42.17 an hour (Sunday) rate is now \$26.70 an hour for all community not-for-profit groups.

- The \$25 processing fee is reduced to \$15 for all community not-for-profit groups.

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In July, the Ontario government announced \$20 million to help boards open their schools to their communities. As part of that initiative, the Greater Essex County District School Board, operating 78 schools, has signed a Community Recreation and Use Agreement and will receive \$352,700 to help make school facilities more accessible to not-for-profit groups at reduced rates.

"We are pleased to be working in partnership with the provincial government to make use of our school gyms and classrooms more affordable to community groups," said Penny Allen, Superintendent of Business for the Greater Essex County District School Board.

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Appendix 2 – Twelve Good Reasons to Support Affordable Community Access to School Space

1. Improves student performance

Studies have shown that participation in school-based after-hours programming like Guides, Scouts, sports and recreation has a positive impact on learning and improves education outcomes for children and youth. Children's programs in the early years support their early learning, brain development, and readiness to learn when entering school.

2. Encourages physical activity and healthy lifestyle development

Access to social and recreational programs for children, youth, and adults results in a healthier population with lower rates of obesity. This helps reduce pressure on health care and social service budgets. For example, the Sports Alliance of Ontario reports that for every 1% increase of physical activity among our population, government saves \$30 million dollars in health care costs. Any reduction of programs using school facilities has a direct impact on the rates of childhood obesity and the onset of other potential health problems such as childhood diabetes.

3. Provides a cost-effective use of school space

Providing after-hours access to schools maximizes use of school space. Taxpayers get better value for their investment in schools. Accessible recreational and social opportunities for children are more affordable in the long-term than the costs associated with reducing access to such programs. Research by Dr. Gina Brown of Hamilton has clearly demonstrated spin-off savings from after school recreation programs for children and young adults (e.g., social assistance, counselling, and health services).

4. Prevents crime

Organizations such as the National Crime Prevention Centre recognize that recreation, leadership opportunities, and other development programs for children and youth prevent crime. Shrinking access to school space for social and recreational activities leads to higher costs for dealing with delinquency and crime. Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry, for example, cited the importance of recreation to reducing crime during the opening of the Courts in 2001 (Toronto Star, Jan 8, 2001).

5. Increases opportunities for newcomer settlement and integration

School-based *English as a Second Language* (ESL) and settlement programs provide essential supports to newcomers and help them adapt to their new life in Canada.

6. Promotes volunteerism and community participation

Volunteers are the hallmark of a healthy community, performing many valuable services for their communities at minimal costs. Access to community space

creates opportunities for people to participate in community activities and to contribute their volunteer time and energy to community initiatives.

7. Sustains community programs

Escalating permit fees for community use of school space mean that higher fees “trickle down” to program participants. Some participants drop out, and programs are forced to pass on still higher fees to remaining participants. Resulting losses of participants have caused many volunteer-based, not-for-profit groups in Ontario to cancel programs or cease operating.

8. Encourages artistic and cultural expression

Opportunities for communities to 'come together' in community spaces increase social cohesion and nurture the development of cultural and community events. Extracurricular community programs involving the arts, dance, or music support children's readiness to learn and enrich community life.

9. Promotes life-long learning

A wide range of *pre-school, school-age, youth, and adult education* programs depend upon access to affordable space such as schools. A community culture of lifelong learning creates a more educated, skilled, and competitive labour force.

10. Fosters accessibility and inclusion

The Canadian Council for Social Development reports that children from economically disadvantaged homes tend to have reduced rates of participation in recreation. High participant fees disproportionately affect low-income families and children by limiting their access to programs. Disadvantaged children and youth are the first to drop out of programs when fees rise.

11. Promotes community well-being

Prior to the new provincial funding formula in 1997, school boards had the financial resources to offer space freely or for nominal fees. This not only upheld the principle of public access to publicly-funded facilities, but allowed schools to become important hubs of community activity offering a wide range of after-hours programs and activities for children, youth, adults, and seniors. Schools serve as voting centres during elections, meeting places for the community, and offer refuge during natural disasters. The contribution to community well-being is enormous.

12. Fits with government policy directions

Access to public space and school facilities also helps advance many objectives of the Ontario government. These include:

- ◆ health promotion and physical activity (e.g., obesity and diabetes prevention);
- ◆ crime prevention;
- ◆ student achievement and life-long-learning.
- ◆ volunteerism and youth leadership development

Appendix 3 - Methodology

The survey instrument and cover letter were developed collaboratively between CSPC-T and the SPACE Coalition Research Reference group, with CSPC-T having the lead. See Appendix 3 for sample of the cover letter and survey instrument.

Distribution of Survey

Community groups often operate with limited staff and volunteer labour. Recognizing that this would be a major challenge in responding to the survey, we offered community groups three ways to fill out and submit the survey: mail, email and on-line posting at the CSPC-T website.

CSPC-T, the SPACE Coalition Research Reference Group, the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and Community Development Halton were the primary source through which the survey was distributed. In turn, each distributed the survey through their respective networks

CSPC-T and the SPACE Coalition distributed their survey at the end of May 2005; ten months after the provincial announcement of the CUSP. The Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and Community Development Halton distributed their surveys in July 2005. Given that distribution was decentralized and some community groups received the survey by both mail and email and from multiple sources it is not possible to calculate a response rate. In addition, respondents were required to submit a survey for each school board from which they are currently permitting or intend to permit school space. In many cases one respondent works with several Boards. For example, the Girl Guides filled out one survey for all their community groups in a particular area.

The categories used by the community groups/organization to identify themselves were adopted from the United Way of Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto community Use of Schools Survey.

CSPC-T

CSPC-T mailed out 875 surveys and cover letters to community groups within the GTA. All the mailed out surveys included a business reply mail. In addition, 777 surveys were emailed out. This was based on a review of the 2005 community organizations that comprised the electronic Blue Book. The following categories of organizations were excluded from our mailing/email list:

- (a) federal, provincial, & municipal government offices/departments;
- (b) community health centres (CHCs), walk-in clinics, & doctor's offices;
- (c) university/college offices;
- (d) legal clinics;
- (e) long-term care facilities (retirement & nursing homes);
- (f) Montessori schools;

SPACE Coalition

A total of ten members of the SPACE Research Reference Group received the survey and cover letter for distribution through their respective networks. It was further distributed through the SPACE Coalition network, which is quite extensive¹⁸ comprising an email list of over 200 organizations and covering several (regions) areas of the province. Respondents from the SPACE Coalition network were submitted directly to CSPC-T

The Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and Community Development Halton

Both the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and Community Development Halton collected their respective completed survey (via facsimile or mail) and then submitted them to CSPC-T for data entry, cleaning and analysis.

In order to guarantee confidentiality of individual responses, only aggregated data are presented. Permission has been sought for use of direct quotes.

¹⁸ Because of the SPACE Coalition has a very broad distribution network some of their surveys were distributed to community groups in the Halton and Waterloo areas. There was no overlap in response from community groups.

Appendix 4 – Survey Respondents by Agency/Group Type

| Agency/Group Type | # of Respondents | Percent (%) |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Social Service Agency | 73 | 24 |
| Sports Club | 56 | 19 |
| Multi-Service Association | 53 | 18 |
| Other | 47 | 16 |
| Social Club | 45 | 15 |
| Information/Referral Service | 44 | 15 |
| Education Service | 33 | 11 |
| Child Care Centre | 31 | 11 |
| Recreation/Hobby | 30 | 10 |
| Family Resource Centre | 30 | 10 |
| Community Sports Association | 26 | 9 |
| Employment Service | 26 | 9 |
| Health Service | 25 | 9 |
| Immigrant & Settlement Service | 23 | 8 |
| Community Recreation Association | 14 | 5 |
| Arts & Culture | 11 | 4 |
| Faith/Religious Group | 7 | 2 |
| Cultural Centre | 6 | 2 |
| Professional Association | 5 | 2 |
| Tenant Association | 3 | 1 |
| Ratepayer Association | 1 | 0.3 |

(Respondents were allowed to have multiple responses)

Appendix 5 – List of Report Endorsees

Applegrove Community Complex

Basketball Ontario

Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario

Canadian Adult and Community Education Alliance

Children's Aid Society of Toronto

Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

Family Services Association of Toronto

Girl Guides of Canada – Ontario Council

Middle Years Matter Coalition

People for Education

ProAction Cops and Kids

Scouts Canada Greater Toronto Council

Special Olympics Ontario

St. Christopher House

United Way of Ontario

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