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Susan Fletcher,
Chair, SPACE Coalition & Executive Director, Applegrove Community Complex
c/o Applegrove Community Complex
60 Woodfield Road
Toronto, ON M4L 2W6

10 August 2011

Dear Ms. Fletcher,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share with you the Green Party of Ontario's policies and position on the matter of community access to public space.

Please find our responses below. We would be happy to discuss these issues with you, if you have any further questions. You can also find our Five-point plan for Ontario's future at www.itstimeforgreen.ca.

Sincerely,

Emilia Melara
Office Coordinator
Green Party of Ontario

1. *There are several barriers to school accessibility. Examples include:*
 - *fee increases planned by school boards that find current levels of community use of schools (CUS) funding inadequate*
 - *red tape and rules*
 - *school boards that do not have Priority Schools (no charge for community use)*
 - *over-subscribed Priority Schools*
 - *fewer dates when schools are available*

All of these barriers reduce equitable and affordable access to schools. What, specifically, would you do to maintain and enhance affordability, equity, and accessibility?

Safe and strong communities are connected through interaction and participation in educational, recreational, and cultural activities. The Green Party of Ontario recognizes it's necessary that communities have available and accessible public space to encourage healthy and active communities. We would work with school boards in removing barriers to accessing public space due to high costs, inequitable grants, and red tape.

We believe that the role of government should be to empower local communities to develop programs that promote physical and mental well-being. The Green Party is committed to engaging community members in the decision-making process for public space creation, design, and use. This way, fair decisions can be made for granting access and determining where space availability should be increased, based on need.

2. *Many schools boards are facing the possibility of closing schools due to declining enrolment. This means both fewer schools available for permitting and increased use of remaining space. How would you improve the community consultation process regarding closing schools and how would you retain the benefits of community use of school space?*

The Green Party of Ontario is committed to government that works for people, which includes improved processes for consultation. Local decision-making and citizen engagement, rather than bureaucratic processes, are what build strong communities and neighbourhoods.

The Green Party of Ontario recognizes that the current community consultation process needs to be re-evaluated. We promote a model for the consultation process in which communities are supported and encouraged to provide input on matters such as the needs of local students, school curricula, and school building access. Not only that, we also recognize the need for, and will implement, a model in which the voices of citizens are actually acknowledged and incorporated into final decisions and plans.

Local decision-making benefits the way public space is used by communities. The needs of local organizations and individuals are better considered when these communities are involved in deciding how school space is used.

The Green Party would also implement a rural school strategy, acknowledging the important role schools play as community hubs.

3. *SPACE has recently published a report showing youth in particular have difficulties accessing community space. In addition, many more youth want to be involved in Focus On Youth than there are spaces available, both in communities already receiving FOY funding and also in communities without current FOY opportunities. What would you do to support youth access to community space?*

The Green Party of Ontario knows that it is important to connect youth to their communities. Safe and liveable communities are those whose members have formed social bonds and encourage stewardship of local resources.

We support involving youth in the development and operation of extra-curricular programs and community hubs. We will engage youth in deciding how available public space is used, taking into consideration the issues that generally create barriers for youth in accessing public space.

Also, we plan to create a user-friendly permit process, including investigating online options, that will make it easier and more youth-friendly to sign up to use community space. We would prioritize development of free public space in areas, such as developing Priority Schools.

We will develop youth employment opportunities by updating and strengthening our education system, including funding mentorship, training, and youth-employment programs. The Green Party will invest in our youth as part of our plan to build a strong future for Ontario.