



Questions for Political Parties

For more than 10 years, the SPACE Coalition (Saving Public Access to Community space Everywhere) has conducted research and advocated for community access to space in public facilities, with a primary focus on schools. Over the years, research has demonstrated the extent of the problem, identified barriers to accessibility and shown the impact of provincial funding on community use of schools.

In preparation for the provincial election on October 6, 2011 the SPACE Coalition has prepared these questions and has circulated them to all four major political parties. We will post their replies after the requested response date of August 10.

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; and
 - 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?

2. Many school 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?
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 (FOY) 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?

If you are attending any political events or have candidates knock on your door please consider asking these questions.

Thank you for helping Ontarians understand the importance of public access to community space!