



# Another Winter, Another Spring:

Toronto Youth Speak Out about Space

## Acknowledgements

Social Planning Toronto would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups for their support and contribution to this project:

### Project Advisory Committee

- Andrea Zammitt, Grassroots Youth Collaborative
- Clare Nobbs, Supporting Our Youth (SOY), Sherbourne Health Centre
- Cutty Duncan, Social Planning Toronto, ANC Mount Dennis
- Jenny Katz, Frontline Partners with Youth
- Keddone Dias, RAY Rathburn Area Youth
- Javid, LOFT Youth Centre for Social Enterprise and Innovation
- Lynn Daly, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre
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### SPACE Research Committee

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- Susan Fletcher, Applegrove Community Complex

**We are exceedingly grateful to all of the youth and their supporters who took the time to support this project.** Generally the youth sector is underfunded, overworked and marginalized. Talking to another researcher for another report need not have been a priority. Many youth, however, took the time to tell us their stories – and we are grateful to them.

### SPACE Coalition Members

Applegrove Community Complex, Girl Guides of Canada–Ontario Council, Scouts Canada, Middle Childhood Matters Coalition, Social Planning Toronto, Boys and Girls Clubs of Ontario–Ontario Region, Basketball Ontario, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, People for Education, Erin Hoops, Colour of Poverty Campaign, Family Services Toronto, Sport4Ontario, Toronto Sports Council, Neighbourhood Basketball Association, Ontario Special Olympics, Citizens for Lifelong Learning, ACORN, United Way of Ontario, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre, Exhibit Change

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We wish to extend our gratitude to The Laidlaw Foundation for its support on this project and its longstanding support of youth, including their strategic investments in Youth Social Infrastructure and Youth Organizing.

We are also grateful to the United Way Toronto, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and the City of Toronto for their continued funding and ongoing support of Social Planning Toronto.



“There is an overwhelming consensus in favour of building community hubs and, accordingly, no reason to delay action on that front. ... [T]he Province should promptly initiate discussions with municipal governments, to begin to plan for a hub if none exists and in particular to determine the availability of recreational and arts facilities. ...Another winter and spring should not go by in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods with there being no safe place for youth to gather and play”.

*Excerpt of Recommendation 30, for priority implementation,  
Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling  
The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, 2008, Vol. 2, p. 41*



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## Setting the Stage - Youth & Space

### Public Space

Public space is a social space that should be open and accessible to all, regardless of gender identity, ethno-racial background/heritage, faith or cultural background, ability-disability, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, etc. Creative use of public space (such as schools, community centres, health centres, public libraries, etc.) strengthens neighbourhoods; it acts as a catalyst to bring people together for activities that create a healthier and more engaged society. Using these spaces to offer accessible programs and nurture ideas generates a greater sense of belonging, new relationships and connections, more organizing, volunteer and leadership opportunities, and more creatively engaged residents in all of our neighbourhoods.

### Youth and Public Space

#### *How Youth Use Space*

#### Formal Use

- Arts (drama, technical/digital, visual art, music)
- Education (homework clubs)
- Sports (indoor and outdoor, fitness)
- Events (community, family, faith, cultural)
- Awareness raising (social justice and civic engagement)
- Skill development (fundraising, leadership)
- Support services
- Career development (learning skills and trades, mentorship, resume writing)
- Youth-led enterprises (not-for-profits, businesses, social enterprise, etc.)

#### Informal Use

- Relax/Have fun
- Build shared community
- Broaden horizons
- Stay safe
- Build friendships
- Find support
- Nurture creativity
- Cultivate experience
- Networking

Youth use space in a number of ways. It is used to develop youth-led enterprises. It is used for extracurricular activities. It is a safe space in which to spend time with friends. It is a space to develop skills or access services. It is a place that nurtures artistic creativity and innovation.

Ideas and actions need time to develop and evolve to reach their full potential and to benefit large numbers of people. In order for this to happen youth need space that is welcoming, appropriate, healthy, LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (transgender, transsexual, trans-

identified), two-spirited, intersex, queer, and questioning) positive, safe, and respectful of a broad range of identities and perspectives, where exploration is welcomed and innovations supported.

While the benefits that result from community use of public spaces are well documented, youth organizations struggle to access affordable space in environments where youth feel included. They often don't feel welcomed, or are not received with a friendly and accessible application process. Organizations often are unwilling to trust young people with the space, time and funds needed for their ideas to evolve into a tangible reality. **Policies, procedures** and **attitudes** directed toward young people and public access can directly impact how "welcome" or "safe" youth feel, as well as what they are capable of creating.

## Definitions

**Policies** - an overall approach or method of action selected in light of given conditions to guide decisions: the space providers' over-arching approach to use of space

**Procedures** - a traditional or established way of doing things: the space providers' rules and practices on use of space

**Attitudes** - a mental position, a feeling or emotion with regard to a fact or state: the space providers' perspective on use of space

## Introduction

When schools and other public spaces are welcoming and affordable or free for community use, we see an improvement in the quality of life of people living in the neighbourhood and community engagement is enhanced. Young people have many uses for this space. Some youth want to relax and hang out with friends in a safe place, some want to organize activities or events or develop skills in the arts or access services and further learning, some young people want space for youth-led not-for-profit/small business/social enterprises. All these youth need space but they are very different groups with very different needs. Community should support all three options.

Like everyone, young people require open, equitably accessible, healthy and friendly spaces for their initiatives to take root and prove successful, and to run thriving programs and activities.

### A welcoming space:

- Is equitably and physically accessible
- Is open and responsive to all organizers or sponsors
- Is healthy, safe and LGBTIQ positive
- Is welcoming to youth from diverse ethno-racial communities
- Is youth-friendly
- Involves young people in decision-making
- Builds a sense of shared community
- Is permanent
- Broadens horizons (provides opportunities to meet new people and cultures, get involved, learn new skills – especially important for marginalized groups like young people)
- Is a refuge where one can get away from a bad situation
- Fosters relationships with supportive staff
- Has a positive impact on health and well-being, learning, arts and culture, belonging and leadership, and economic development
- Supports innovation by sustaining youth-led initiatives and enterprises

### An unwelcoming space:

- Is expensive
- Is exclusive - unavailable to all members of the community
- Is temporary
- Hosts negative attitudes toward young people
- Leads to social exclusion
- Has access that is barrier-ridden
- Doesn't support innovation

If the goal is to create welcoming space for youth, incorporating the youth perspective into the policies, procedures and attitudes that determine community use of public space is essential. A shift in space providers' perspective is needed for young people to have more independence and the use of space to create initiatives and enterprises more freely. **Recognizing that youth are usually not represented at tables discussing these issues, including our own, the SPACE Coalition decided to seek out young people, to hear their stories and learn from their experiences, involve them in our work and support them in theirs. This report is our attempt to capture what we heard from youth - their stories and their experiences.**

## Background

With generous support from the Laidlaw Foundation, the SPACE Coalition conducted an action research/advocacy project to assess the policies, procedures and attitudes youth face when trying to access space in Toronto. Specifically, the core questions guiding this project are, and remain:

1. How are youth using space and what are the barriers they face when accessing it?
2. What do young people need to be better supported and involved in conversations around space creation and its uses?
3. What advocacy and mobilization efforts are needed to move their agenda forward?

We conducted five policy and advocacy analysis sessions and ten interviews with youth (ages 13-29) and youth-workers in our attempt to answer these questions. Efforts were made to engage diverse<sup>1</sup> voices – across geography (from Scarborough to Etobicoke, including two interviews from York Region), age groups, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethno-racial background/heritage, lengths of time one has lived in Canada, interests, and priorities. This report is a product of these conversations and is our attempt to capture the youth experience and perspective, as it relates to accessing space.

While efforts were made to include a broad cross-section of youth voices this report is by no means meant to represent the definitive ‘youth voice’. In fact we learned there is no such thing. What we did learn is that most youth are over-extended and lacking the needed supports, capacity and infrastructure to do their work and fulfill their passions. Additionally, these youth have become accustomed to being marginalized and having their voices ignored. Despite this these young people took the time to tell us their stories – and we are grateful to them.

This project has two phases:

**Phase 1** is establishing community contacts, information gathering and question-creation, holding the sessions, analysis of the sessions, and sharing the information we gathered.

**Phase 2** is coordinating, developing and implementing an advocacy plan with young people from SPACE and other organizations.

The following is a summary of our key learnings from Phase 1.

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<sup>1</sup> SPACE defines diversity as a cross-section of Toronto residents’ perspectives based on characteristics as they relate to geography and demographics. Demographics include: age, sexual orientation (LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified), two-spirited, intersex, queer, and questioning), gender identity (male, female, transgender), ethno-racial background/heritage, length of time lived in Canada, socio-economic status, ability-disability, interests and priorities.

## Key Learnings

All groups and organizations face barriers to accessing public space. Young people, however, may face many additional obstructions, including discrimination due to their age or stereotypes about their behaviour and capacities – made that much worse if they happen to fall into one or another of the historically disadvantaged groups in our society (ethno-racial, disability, sexual orientation, etc.).

### Limiting Policies - *Recurring Themes*

- Youth are not often consulted and are rarely involved in decision-making around space creation
- Ability to use space depends on the nature of the event, and the time and type of space needed
- Insurance – may be required and youth must be 25 to purchase insurance
- Even though youth may receive funding for a project funders rarely include a budget for space
- Space is usually available for one time or short term use only; access to permanent space is nearly impossible
- No non-discriminatory policies in place and/or in practice
- Staff may not be trained in anti-oppressive practices and may not know how to support youth, especially youth who are marginalized
- Youth often do not have access to the networks of support that would allow them to thrive, either in accessing space or in establishing programs

“If there were more hubs of activity, young people would be more civically engaged and better able to contribute to making communities healthier.”

“Spaces need to have non-discrimination policies that are clearly posted and that staff and volunteers are trained to support. This would be essential to accompany any kind of intention to make a space more LGBTIQ positive. A positive space poster isn't enough and can sometimes be a set up.”

“Youth unemployment is a deep and socially-destructive problem but it is possible to transform the system and outcomes; however, this requires flexible and transformative policies and processes.”

## Limiting Policies - Highlights

There is an over-emphasis on ‘attitude’ over resources. The City of Toronto is treating Parks, Forestry and Recreation as a **cost-recovery model**. This is a systemic problem which leads to skewed budgeting and broken subsidy programs. It also leads to attitudes that tend to view recreation and space as a ‘privilege’ as opposed to a right. If public services are considered public, and run that way, this will go a long way towards shifting attitudes.

There needs to be **more coordination between the agencies** – find out who can provide what across agencies, not just within agencies. There should also be community and youth involved in planning and implementing programs and activities, as well as space creation.

Often **schools are not seen as part of the community**. If schools are more welcoming to parents they will also be more welcoming to youth. For instance, newcomer families may require help figuring out the system; they may need interpreters and/or advocates. Linking schools with families is critical to lowering youth “push-out” [drop-out] rates. The institutional nature of the school can create a power imbalance where youth and parents alike don’t feel like they belong. Not welcoming parents is a deterrent for youth which affects their engagement with schools and other institutions.

“The systemic under-funding of the City of Toronto by the Province plays directly into the lack of resources for community recreation, and the lack of access to youth space. This has to be addressed by the provincial government and relates to the downloading of services onto the municipality in the late 1990s by the Harris-Eves governments. This downloading has not yet been substantially reversed by the McGuinty government.”

“Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation must be required by City Council to meet its own access policy – to ensure year-round access to quality recreation programs for everyone, regardless of ability to pay. Currently, this is not the case. In fact, the Parks and Rec subsidy policy, the Welcome Policy, is frozen city-wide until June 4<sup>th</sup>, and no child or youth can register for any summer camps or programs right now using the subsidy.”

## Limiting Procedures - *Recurring Themes*

- Very limited options during high-use times
- Costs (permits and insurance)
- Unclear communication surrounding the permitting process; forms are complicated
- Information is not easy to access – limited online booking, difficult to reach booking staff
- Most accessible locations are the hardest to acquire (e.g. near public transit, accessible, healthy, safe)
- No centralized online schedule and/or booking website
- Bureaucracy – the process is slow while the booking, forms, security requirements, and rules and regulations are complex
- Rules may not be clearly explained (or readily available); youth are rarely consulted in their creation
- Limited flexibility in the amount of time a space can be booked
- May be required to book space several months in advance with little flexibility if the renter needs to make a change
- Little access to free space; may be possible to acquire space for a workshop, but rarely for a basketball program or a big community event
- Space monitored by video cameras is viewed as demonstrating a lack of trust

“The bureaucracy baffled me. You need to know someone to get anywhere.”

“Schools shouldn’t be charging for the use of space. These institutions were not created to generate revenue but to support youth and create a community that values youth, learning, culture and community.”

“Everyone is so strapped for cash, if you had space, why would you share it? You’d rent it.”

“Liability and liability insurance is a massive problem – if people didn’t have to worry about that to the degree they do everyone would be more open to sharing space.”

“We like to see action in a fairly short timeframe. This is why so many of us are taking our ideas and looking to have our needs met by the private sector rather than with inflexible and slow existing structures.”

## Limiting Procedures - Highlights

While youth did discuss enjoying their freedom and independence this didn't mean they didn't want supportive adults around. In fact youth were **eager to find mentors** who understood the needs of young people and treated them with respect and as equals as they develop their skills.

Getting office space to start a business or run a social enterprise presents different challenges. As cheaper office space is often shared, it can get crowded and noisy which can become a barrier to completing work. Youth-led groups are also **not always sure how to obtain office space**: What is the process? Can groups/ youth exchange services for office space?

There are staff at the City of Toronto (**Community Development Officers**) hired to help youth. They should be **better promoted and there should be more of them**. There is currently only one per neighbourhood, although not every neighbourhood has one. Part of their role should be helping youth find equitably accessible space. Community Outreach Coordinators with the school boards should do the same.

Grassroots youth projects have particular challenges obtaining space as they often **need space on a permanent basis**. Groups that receive funding on a project basis don't always receive funding for space. There is very little free and equitably accessible space that is youth-friendly and appropriate for whatever initiative or enterprise is being explored.

Youth-friendly space is really important, especially in under-served or variously marginalized communities. There is a **diversity of need**. For example, when working with young people in the Muslim community a small room for prayers should be provided.

"One issue identified by community groups is the need to **streamline the permitting process**. Red tape gets in the way of events intended for the public in parks, streets, the waterfront and other public places; it stifles the creative activity in the city."(pg. 20)<sup>2</sup>

"We've had to meet in my apartment because that was the only place we could access."

"Youth-led enterprises are trying to fill a gap or meet a need. These initiatives need to be supported rather than squashed."

"Priority neighbourhoods are better covered in terms of accessible space but what about the neighbourhoods that don't fall under this heading?"

"Accessing regular programming space is tough. Getting meeting space for occasional use was far easier."

<sup>2</sup> Mark Foster, R., Kain, K. and J. Prentice. (2011). Creative Capital Gains An Action Plan for Toronto. City of Toronto Economic Development Committee and Toronto City Council. <http://www.livewithculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CCI-Final.pdf> <sup>2</sup>

## Limiting Attitudes - Recurring Themes

- Staff resistance
- Discrimination (age, faith, culture, ethno-racial background/heritage, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.)
- Lack of respect
- Lack of trust
- Credibility – youth lack credibility unless they are an established mainstream organization
- Power and policing of youth vs. respect and independence
- Security concerns about youth by space providers
- Physical and socio-emotional feel of the space
- Activities offered may not have been created by youth or are not reflective of their interests, they may therefore have low participation rates
- Youth asked to divulge personal information
- Not recognizing young people as capable of creating and developing their own initiatives

“You don’t have to do anything particular – just create a safe space that isn’t intimidating, with youth-friendly staff. It is best if the youth feel like it’s their space, rather than they’re borrowing someone else’s space. In our space they are welcome in the whole building, whereas in a community centre there can be red tape in booking space, ID may be required, and when the program is over youth are kicked out. These spaces can be intimidating.”

“People think in terms of ‘social investment’, a comforting paradigm, but when you invest in youth and possibilities and spaces and those that have a vision for change you get more than you ever imagined.”

## Limiting Attitudes - Highlights

Some youth want to relax and hang out with friends in a healthy and safe place, some want to organize activities or events or develop skills or access services or further learning; some youth organizations want office space. All need space but they are **very different groups with very different needs**. A supportive community would offer options for all three.

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Youth build trust and feel safe as staff get to know them and vice versa. Relationships with caring staff keep youth coming back. A barrier to building this trust is that **most frontline workers are on contracts as the funding for their positions is unstable**. This means that many successful programs and spaces only remain that way for the length of their contract. Youth lose trust when staff keep changing and they feel the uncertainty of the space and become reluctant to form relationships.

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“When we believe we’ve exhausted the possibility for creating youth employment we accept that it is alright for 30% of marginalized youth to be unemployed, but what we’re doing is **cheating ourselves of their potential and cheating our society’s future**. Social policy with all forms of government needs to understand this and adapt appropriately by exploring ways to support youth that include supporting space needs and social enterprises. Social enterprise is a key strategy to escape an unemployed status.”

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“City-wide youth consultations spoke overwhelmingly of the need for mentorships and partnerships with existing institutions. While needing to maintain their autonomy and authenticity, **youth want partnership opportunities** with established cultural organizations, successful creative businesses, and experienced artists, producers, and managers. These will enable skills development and provide access to resources. Relatively minor investments in incentives for mentorships, partnerships and collaboration can result in major increases in organizational capacity and resource development for young people.”(pg. 20)<sup>3</sup>

“Building relationships is essential – especially with young people. That’s what keeps people coming back. When you invest in the lives of people and build caring relationships - that’s what makes a difference. It’s not so much about the activities, relationships help to engage young people; they will invest more because they know you care. Relationships mean young people feel supported so they can work through struggles.”

“Youth are really eager to work with the adults. Adults need to get there. They need a willingness to work with youth but they also need a particular skill - to truly appreciate and take on a youth perspective.”

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Foster, R., Kain, K. and J. Prentice. (2011). Creative Capital Gains An Action Plan for Toronto. City of Toronto Economic Development Committee and Toronto City Council. <http://www.livewithculture.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CCI-Final.pdf>

## Young Peoples' Differing Space Needs

Conversations revealed that there are three distinct categories of youth who seek space.

- **The first group** seeks services, programs or opportunities for further learning. Some young people are interested in organizing activities or events, or developing their skills in the arts or in sports, etc. Some may seek social supports, skills training, mentorship, resources and networking opportunities, as well as the opportunity to learning trades or write a resume.
- **The second group** seeks space in which they can have fun, relax and hang out with friends in a healthy and safe space. It is important to emphasize the “drop-in” aspect of these effective youth spaces. Many youth do not connect with organized activities but still need healthy and safe places to go and hang out. They may or may not eventually join structured programs; however, they are still getting what they need from the space. Drop-in spaces are often marginalized because youth are “just hanging out”. This attitude needs to change to understand the developmental importance of “just hanging out” as well as participating in programming. Youth have less access to caring and responsible adults than ever before. Drop-in space where youth can be with each other and have supportive adults on hand is invaluable.
- **The third group** wants youth-led initiative and enterprise space to develop their own youth-led not-for-profits, businesses and social enterprises, etc. All groups seek to determine a place for their organizations within their communities. Space needs to be respectful, healthy, LGBTIQ positive, safe and create a sense of belonging but in this group of young people are not participants but directors of the space. Their work requires independent exploration of ideas and innovations and space is an important part of this process. Compared with an adult unemployment rate of 7.7% in 2010<sup>4</sup>, youth face an unemployment rate of 18% and are well aware of the unemployment problems facing their demographic<sup>5</sup> (with a rate far higher for marginalized youth). They would like to be supported in their innovations and as they explore their passions and possible careers.

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<sup>4</sup> Toronto Region Labour Market Monitor: Service Canada. 2010. Service Canada. <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/on/offices/2009lmb/gtr.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> City of Toronto: Economic Development and Culture Division. (2010). Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

## Lessons from the Field: Youth Space in Action

There are already youth-dedicated spaces across Toronto that can teach us lessons about how to create respectful, healthy and safe space for young people. Here we feature three of these spaces and share some of the lessons they have learned. These are all hub models with permanent and dedicated space. Youth also need flexible access to space around the city for events and programs.

Two common themes should be noted:

- 1) It took a lot of time and a lot of work to find appropriate space;
- 2) All three face cost concerns in keeping their space open for youth.

### *RAY (Rathburn Area Youth Project)*

<b>Initiator</b>	Organizing for this space began when a youth worker approached the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) for space in Burnhamthorpe C.I. The project had formerly been housed in a Toronto Community Housing (TCH) building but became too crowded. Initially the school administration was reluctant, concerned that school property could be destroyed. With support from the United Way and the Multi-Agency Partnership Project they were able to negotiate use of the space. RAY has been housed in the school for the past five years and enjoys a great relationship with the current principal.
<b>Location</b>	500 the East Mall (Room 124), Burnhamthorpe C.I.
<b>Status</b>	Currently renegotiating their permit with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)
<b>Specific</b>	Renegotiation is underway as the cost of renting the space is increasing from \$7.44/square foot to over \$9.61/square foot.
<b>Population/Community</b>	Youth 12-24. The majority of the youth RAY serves are from the TCH buildings in the vicinity.
<b>Primary Purpose</b>	Provide a support system for youth in an area where there are few services. Programs build employment skills, support education, provide leadership opportunities, develop social skills, and offer new experiences. Youth can be involved in two specialty programs: 1) <i>YMCA Youth Exchange Program</i> which involves a Canadian youth exchange or 2) <i>Creating Global Citizens</i> , a program that focuses on universal primary education and the Millennium Development Goals. For example, last year RAY and TCH partnered with a community library in Ghana and traveled to Ghana to help upgrade and renovate their library. They also met with Ghanaian young people to discuss education. They created a journal about access to education in Ghana and a documentary about the project.

<b>Governance form</b>	RAY is part of LAMP Community Health Centre and is governed by LAMP policies and procedures. RAY staff and youth also developed their own policy on violence in community and have created their own rules and regulations to create a safe space. RAY has a youth council that plays a key role in decision-making. Each summer the youth council organizes a strategic planning camp to set the agenda for the upcoming year.
<b>Governance lead</b>	The youth council and staff lead RAY together. This helps things run smoothly; youth are involved in the organizing process so there are no surprises. For instance, the youth council is currently discussing the RAY budget, trying to find a way to reduce the cost of their space. When they discovered that community youth groups are charged lower rates by the TDSB than non-profit groups, the youth suggested they apply as a youth council to reduce their rate. This would save a couple thousand dollars a year and help offset the rent increase.
<b>Co-location form</b>	RAY is located in Burnhamthorpe C.I. While RAY doesn't share space it does collaborate with partners on the programs they run out of RAY's space. These partners include: Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Parks and Recreation, the George Hull Centre for Families, Tropicana, and the TDSB for Focus on Youth employment opportunities for youth. Organizers are hoping to create a youth hub and will work with Etobicoke Youth Network to make this plan a reality.
<b>Funding</b>	RAY covers the cost of programming and space through fundraising, donations and grants. The United Way provides core funding. Many organizations make in-kind donations: Parks and Rec provides one staff; George Hull sends a social worker once a week; TCH supports RAY whenever necessary and vice versa. Rent for the space comes from the annual program budget. For the last five years they have paid \$18,280 annually plus \$4,300/year in gym permit fees for a rough total of \$22,000 per year in rent and fees. Renegotiation is underway as their rent is increasing from \$7.44/square foot to \$9.61/square foot which would increase the cost of the space by thousands of dollars. RAY is exploring ways to keep the space more affordable by using the TDSB's Community Use of Schools Priority School Initiative (PSI) and Focus On Youth (FOY) programs. Under these programs community groups can apply for free summer space; however, as RAY is already a paying, yearly tenant currently bureaucratic barriers prevent them from permitting the space for free during the summer. If they were an outside group or if they only wanted the gym it would be free. RAY would like to stay in their current space as they are not only right in the middle of the community they serve, they have also completed many renovations to their space. For instance, they built a kitchen with money from the Vince Carter Foundation. RAY can't afford a rent increase. They are working with TDSB to find a solution.

<b>Programming focus</b>	<p>Monday: Speaker series, Employment program (March and June is Jobstart: job search and resume help)</p> <p>Tuesday: Young men’s program, Youth council</p> <p>Wednesday: Young women’s group, Rec program: basketball, volleyball, etc.</p> <p>Thursday: Youth support group with social worker</p> <p>Friday: <i>Free for all</i> – youth choice</p> <p>There is also a tutoring program Tuesday and Thursday. On Tuesday the program is located at Toronto Public Library Eatonville Branch. Thursdays it is at RAY as the library doesn’t have enough space. Next year they hope to use Eatonville both days.</p> <p>RAY also runs a summer camp from July 4<sup>th</sup> to August 12<sup>th</sup>; youth plan the program which includes activities, trips, community exchange, global engagement; etc.</p>
<b>Community involvement</b>	<p>Work with Toronto Parks and Recreation, the George Hull Centre for Families, Toronto Community Housing and Etobicoke Youth Network. RAY youth are youth reps with TCH, on the LAMP Board of Directors and beyond. Youth also engage with the greater community through various youth-led initiatives.</p>
<b>Employment focus</b>	Employment program, Jobstart
<b>Online Information</b>	<a href="http://www.lampchc.org/content/rathburn-area-youth">http://www.lampchc.org/content/rathburn-area-youth</a>

### Studio 109

<b>Initiator</b>	<p>The Canadian Youth Arts Network project <i>Ignite the Americas</i> brought together Schools Without Borders (SWB) and Manifesto Community Projects. In 2008 the two groups decided to form a youth collective and rent a space for a youth collective together. Initial funding for the space, Studio 109, came from Canadian Heritage. The collective, now consisting of 12 organizations, decided to keep the space when funding ended, with SWB and Manifesto taking the role of lease holders.</p>
<b>Location</b>	109 Dufferin St.
<b>Status</b>	Currently, all partners are looking to vacate the space due to cost. The landlord has tried to help accommodate their timing needs.

<p><b>Specific</b></p>	<p>Some of the organizations are searching for space together, which is requiring the collective to examine its goals, mandate and values to help decide who should be part of their new space and how it should function. Studio 109 is a large space and the collective invited other groups to share the studio. However, some of these groups don't share the same values so there have been challenges in ensuring that the working culture and respect for space is consistent. The collective is exploring new models for space in commercial property at Richmond and Strachan, Queen and Fuller and a storefront in Kensington Market. They are taking time to find the right space and exploring sharing space with other aligning organizations. Their space requirements are also quite specific, for instance they need accessible, private and LGBTIQ-friendly space for their program for queer and trans people.</p> <p>There have been many successes for this collective run space.</p> <p>What worked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared boardroom, kitchen, printing services, health benefits package</li> <li>• Shared programming space for groups between 10 - 30 people. Flexible office space has allowed for programming to take place on site. (It's important to have all programming materials in the space and for people not to have to carry them all around town.)</li> </ul> <p>Co-location has proved successful. In their new location the collective will be building on what worked and exploring new models of organizing, as well.</p>
<p><b>Population/Community</b></p>	<p>Youth artists and youth organizers, 16-29</p>
<p><b>Primary Purpose</b></p>	<p>Committed to community development and supporting youth organizing in Toronto. The collective involves youth-led groups that function in at least one of five ways: 1) they are intermediary organizations that support other groups; 2) they are neighbourhood-based; 3) they have a cultural aspect (culture could mean ethnicity or be defined more broadly e.g. hip-hop culture); 4) they are arts-based; 5) they offer health-based programming e.g. Seed to Table.</p>
<p><b>Governance form</b></p>	<p>The collective has noticed there is a difference in attitudes and needs between tenants and lease holders, resulting in a struggle with some of the tenants. They tried hiring a space manager to help handle the challenges; however, this staff person would get absorbed into the collective's projects rather than strictly overseeing the space. There was also a high turnover rate for the position. Currently, there is no funding for this position though it is an essential role for such a large space and diverse group of tenants, i.e. scheduling tenant meetings, overseeing IT needs, keeping collective space up to standard, etc.</p>

<b>Governance lead</b>	SWB and Manifesto are leads but they are busy running their own operations. A space manager is needed to handle challenges with the space and space holders.
<b>Co-location form</b>	Manifesto and SWB are lease holders. SWB provides the platform for many other groups, such as Grassroots Youth Collaborative (GYC). Businesses, social enterprises, etc., also share the space and pay rent. The space is also available to members for meetings and events.
<b>Funding</b>	Studio 109 received an eight month Trillium Grant to cover operational and capital costs and manage the space. Member organizations mainly receive project-based grants which often don't include funding to cover rent. They need core funding to sustain space. Some foundations are flexible with money being spent on space because they can also use the space for their community meetings; however, this is not a substitute for actual space funding as a line item in a grant budget.
<b>Programming focus</b>	<p>Manifesto Community Projects: Promote arts and host events across Toronto for youth-urban life. They host the tenant meetings and are the lead administrators for Studio 109.</p> <p>Schools Without Borders: Provide an administrative platform to youth-led organizations across city. They assist Manifesto in administrative work for Studio 109.</p> <p>Grassroots Youth Collaborative: Supports networking, capacity building and advocacy for youth. The GYC accountant handles the bookkeeping for Studio 109.</p>
<b>Community involvement</b>	Members use the space for different reasons: programs, meetings, flex desk space, administration, etc. Some members may be tenants and may attend Studio 109 workshops, meeting and activities and try to include their voices in how the space is run.
<b>Employment focus</b>	N/A Have interns through Youth Employment Services: roles often include responsibility for space management
<b>Online Information</b>	<p>Manifesto Community Projects: <a href="http://themanifesto.ca/">http://themanifesto.ca/</a></p> <p>Schools Without Borders: <a href="http://www.swb.ca/">http://www.swb.ca/</a></p> <p>Grassroots Youth Collaborative: <a href="http://www.grassrootseyouth.ca/">http://www.grassrootseyouth.ca/</a></p>

## *The LOFT Youth Centre for Social Enterprise and Innovation (LOFT YCSEI)*

<b>Initiator</b>	For many years there had been turf wars in west Toronto. There was a concurrent silo-ing of community stakeholders with everyone working in isolation. From schools to politicians, from local businesses to police, no group had found a way to meaningfully support youth. After many years of effort and relationship building a new collaborative approach was finally nurtured into being - one that looked to support health and well-being for all. The LOFT YCSEI, originally “LOFT” (Life Opportunities Food and Technology), emerged out of a youth-driven plan for action to address the needs of local youth. The Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre (CONC) has been providing programming under the LOFT banner since 2001. The LOFT Youth Centre for Social Enterprise and Innovation (LOFT YCSEI) has its foundation in art, music, food access, programming innovation, employment and skills training programs. Currently, the LOFT is expanding into a new youth space that will house three social enterprises that have emerged from the programs that have been operating the past ten years.
<b>Location</b>	850 Bloor St. West
<b>Status</b>	The LOFT is currently engaged in a capital campaign to raise \$950,000 to purchase, refurbish and equip a building that serves as a social enterprise and innovation centre for Toronto youth.
<b>Specific</b>	Youth felt there were no places to learn how to create and run a social enterprise in Toronto. Youth who have not succeeded in traditional environments succeed in the LOFT; it is egalitarian, inclusive, non-judgemental and youth-driven.
<b>Population/Community</b>	Toronto youth. The Christie Ossington area has the highest drop-out rate in Toronto and the second highest rate of youth violence. The LOFT works closely with high schools, connecting youth with their work in the community.
<b>Primary Purpose</b>	The LOFT YCSEI is a pioneering multi-use space that fosters creativity, community engagement and entrepreneurship among youth in Toronto. It provides youth with social supports, skills training, mentorship, resources and networking opportunities through programs and employment operated (offered) by three in-house social enterprises.
<b>Governance form</b>	Youth set their goals with support of staff. The Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre has a very strong Board of Directors with a bold vision that supports social enterprise and is respectful of youth. The board is highly skilled, competent, resourceful in getting needs met, and is not risk-adverse. They support youth in their vision and will do everything they possibly can to translate vision and passion into a tangible outcome.
<b>Governance lead</b>	Youth report to the Board of Directors on a monthly basis.

<b>Co-location form</b>	N/A
<b>Funding</b>	Broad strategy of revenue generation – productive enterprise, social enterprise, government, foundation and individual donations.
<b>Programming focus</b>	The LOFT offers mentorship opportunities and employment/ entrepreneurship/social enterprise training/resources. Under the Radar Design, the LOFT Sound Studio and the LOFT Kitchen/boutique/art gallery are social enterprises providing youth with outlets for artistic expression, planning and development and a chance to explore career paths, learn marketable skills and overcome employment barriers. The LOFT also links with youth globally to social enterprise activity around the world.
<b>Community involvement</b>	All community stakeholders are willing to share their expertise. What’s key is to have great people with a bold vision.
<b>Employment focus</b>	30-60 youth are employed at any one time, with 150 placements and internships (within CONC) across the city at various academic, for-profit and non-profit organizations, as well as 1,200 volunteers (within CONC)
<b>Online Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LOFT YCSEI:      <b>Website &amp; blog:</b> <a href="http://www.loftycsei.org">www.loftycsei.org</a>  <b>Facebook:</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/LoftYCSEI">www.facebook.com/LoftYCSEI</a>  <b>Twitter:</b> @LoftYCSEI</li>   <li>• Under The Radar: <b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.undertheradarto.com">www.undertheradarto.com</a>  <b>blog:</b> <a href="http://undertheradarapparel.blogspot.com">undertheradarapparel.blogspot.com</a>  <b>Facebook:</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/undertheradarto">www.facebook.com/undertheradarto</a>  <b>Twitter:</b> @UnderTheRadarTO</li>   <li>• Sound Studio:      <b>BandCamp:</b> <a href="http://loftmusic.bandcamp.com">loftmusic.bandcamp.com</a>  <b>Facebook:</b> <a href="http://www.facebook.com/loftmusica">www.facebook.com/loftmusica</a>  <b>Twitter:</b> @LOFTMusic</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

Like all of us, youth need space that is welcoming, appropriate, healthy, LGBTIQ positive, safe, and respectful of a wide spectrum of identities and perspectives, a space where exploration is encouraged and innovations are supported. Good policies, procedures and attitudes can ensure that young people feel a sense of belonging, feel trusted and respected and are given the space, time and funds needed for their ideas to evolve into a tangible reality.

Progress has been made over the years but in 2012 fee hikes and more space closures are expected that would further marginalize youth. Action must be taken to protect the gains that have been made, while increasing affordable, equitably accessible and youth-friendly public space.

Based on young people's thoughts and experiences the SPACE Coalition proposes the following recommendations to ensure that public space is open and equitably accessible to all young people.

### *A Broad Recommendation for the Province*

The *Roots of Youth Violence* report highlighted the need for 'safe places for youth to gather and play'<sup>6</sup> and the Province has recognized the importance of this recommendation [see Appendix].

**Recognizing the protective factors that affordable and equitably access space has in a community we need the Province to act on its promise to preserve space and create new space – especially for young people. This action requires strong leadership and cross-sectoral Ministry direction.**

### *Specific recommendations for the Province, City and School Boards and other space providers and policy-setters*

#### **Involve youth in decision-making:**

- Create a youth advisory group that can inform access to space and programming issues and involve youth in decision-making committees
- Create the position of a youth space advocate
- Involve youth in decision-making in space creation and design, such as in the building of Community Hubs

#### **Recognize space as an employment issue**

- Provide appropriate support, space, ideally for free, and funding for youth-led enterprises and initiatives as part of the youth employment strategy. Include business incubators in neighbourhoods as required
- Expand mentorship programs for youth as they develop skills in program development and space use

#### **Address cost barriers**

- Increased funding from the Province for the City and School Boards to address the systemic under-funding which has led to the conversion of public and universal programming to cost-recovery programming with some subsidies

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<sup>6</sup> McMurtry, R. and Curling, A. (2008). *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*. Vol. 2, p. 41.

- Reduce permit costs
- Create fiscal policies to reduce cost barriers and increase access to space, such as the Ministry of Education's *Priority School Initiative*
- Encourage and facilitate organizations to trustee grants for youth
- No fee hikes

#### Increase available space:

- Create or open up more spaces to increase opportunities and reduce over-crowding during peak times

#### Remove access barriers

- Create a centralized, accessible website with a shared schedule and booking function that is coordinated between a number of space providing agencies and institutions
- Ensure that rules and regulations are readily and equitably available, easily understood and involve youth in their creation
- Create a more youth-friendly permit process

#### Regularly evaluate space provision and process and track usage for youth

#### Hire appropriate staff and monitor staff culture

- Hire youth-friendly staff, representative of the youth being supported and served
- Ensure staff is youth-friendly, culturally conscious and linguistically relevant
- Examine staff culture to ensure that youth feel safe, welcomed, trusted and respected
- Staff is trained in anti-oppressive practices
- Staff knows how to support youth, especially youth who are marginalized
- Anti-oppressive policies are in place and practiced

#### Prioritize youth access

#### Create a welcoming space

- Ensure gender neutral washrooms are available
- Space is physically accessible
- Space is welcoming to youth from diverse communities

#### For Community Hubs

All over the city community hubs are emerging – in schools and strip malls, in libraries and abandoned business spaces. Reports such as McMurtry and Curling's *The Roots of Youth Violence*<sup>7</sup> and ICE's *Community Hubs: A Scan of Toronto Summary Report*,<sup>8</sup> articulate a vision for how these hubs should be designed and created on a larger scale. As part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy the provincial government promised \$7 million for the creation of these hubs **but the money has yet to be spent.**

- The Ministry of Child and Youth Services should adopt a flexible and youth-friendly definition of Community Hubs and spend the money it has reserved for the hubs
- Create an appropriately diverse youth advisory group that can inform access to space and activity/program development

<sup>7</sup> McMurtry, R. and Curling, A. (2008). *The Review of the Roots of Youth Violence*. Vol. 2, p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> WoodGreen Community Services. (2011). *Community Hubs: A Scan of Toronto Summary Report*. Intergovernmental Committee for Economic and Labour Force Development. [http://www.icecommittee.org/Community\\_Hubs\\_in\\_Toronto.pdf](http://www.icecommittee.org/Community_Hubs_in_Toronto.pdf)

- Involve youth on decision-making committees for both the development and operation of Community Hubs

#### *For the City's Recreation Review*

Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) policy affects thousands of youth across the city. When PFR undergoes its recreation review it should:

- Not treat recreation as a revenue generating stream
- Ensure year-round access to quality equitably accessible recreation programs and activities for everyone, regardless of ability to pay
- Directly address the issue of barrier-free access to space, including permit fees for community groups

#### *For Funders*

- Explore social finance options for funding space. Foundations might invest in a mortgage for a not-for-profit rather than in mutual funds or other investments, getting a return on their investment while doing public good
- Allocate funds to cover the cost of space in their grants, etc.
- Trustee grants for young people and for insurance on their behalf

## Next Steps

SPACE is grateful to everyone who contributed to this report and for the opportunity it gave us to better understand a range of youth perspectives on space. We look forward to furthering the partnerships we have developed and exploring new connections.

### **Three major themes emerged during our conversations with young people:**

- **Youth need more space to accommodate their varied needs**
- **Space providers need to examine their process and the cost for accessing space from a youth perspective**
- **Young people need to be treated with respect and trust and their voices need to be included in decision-making**

We anticipate deeper partnership development as well as the exploration of ever richer connections as we now move into Phase 2 of the project: exploring what advocacy and mobilization efforts are needed to move a broadly diverse youth agenda forward, and in coordinating, developing and implementing an advocacy plan with young people from SPACE and other organizations.

## More Information on SPACE

Since 2000, the SPACE (Saving Public Access to Community Space Everywhere) Coalition has worked for social change by educating communities and government about community access to public space. While we are focused at the provincial level to affect change, we also try to advocate in our local school boards. We believe in building our collective skills in advocacy, and bringing forward the expertise of community voices to educate governments, school boards, and other key stakeholders and to reform policies.

Working with Social Planning Toronto (SPT), SPACE is a strategic outreach and action research coalition composed of diverse community organizations in Toronto and across Ontario. SPACE and SPT have reached out to over 300 groups across Ontario, and built a coalition of over 20 city and province-wide community-based and voluntary organizations serving thousands of residents across Toronto and Ontario. The SPACE Coalition has carried out public awareness campaigns, outreach, media relations, and public policy and research work and has seen the impact of its work through a number of policy shifts at the provincial and schools board level. Despite the progress to date, research conducted in 2009 highlighted that marginalized groups, such as racialized groups (Aboriginal Peoples and people of colour), newcomers, seniors and youth, continue to face specific barriers when attempting to access public space. There was a concern that our research had not adequately captured the special access barriers these groups face. We conducted this project to reach out to youth, support them in their work and incorporate a youth voice into our work with SPACE.

For more information see the SPACE Coalition website at: [www.spacecoalition.ca](http://www.spacecoalition.ca)

## Checklist for a Youth-Friendly Space

We strongly recommend that space providers refer to this checklist when creating **new** youth programming and space, as well as when they examine their **existing** space to ensure they are youth-friendly and equitably accessible.

### Policies

- Space providers have a broad framework or strategy in place, ensuring equitable access specific to youth (not a stream of shifting priorities) that reflects the needs of those looking for space
- Space providers reach out to parents as well as youth to ensure that both feel welcome
- Space providers offer mentorship opportunities for young people
- Space has an anti-oppressive policy in place and practiced
- Staff are trained in anti-oppressive practices and know how to support youth, especially youth who are marginalized

### Procedures

- Space is affordable, if not free
- Create a multi-stakeholder, centralized database with clear information, a schedule and online booking and have transparent allocation rules to provide equitable access for all marginalized groups
- Subsidies for insurance costs available
- Permanent space for youth provided
- Space can be used flexibly and is not restricted to certain types of programming/ activities or for certain groups
- When designing space, multiple uses are considered so programming and event spaces can accommodate different kinds of activities. Consider specific interests (i.e. music studios, faith and cultural variability, technology)
- Spaces are in easily accessible locations
- More spaces are created or made available for peak-time use
- Quiet spaces are available
- Permit forms are simplified and staff members are available to answer questions
- Rules and regulations are readily accessible and easy to understand; youth are involved with the creation of the rules and regulations
- No video camera monitoring

## Attitude

### Welcoming physical environment:

- Accessible location
- Physically accessible space
- Gender neutral washrooms
- Aesthetically pleasing
- Good lighting
- Fair and well-explained rules that are visibly posted
- Pictures, posters and other images of diverse figures on the wall

### Welcoming social environment:

- All youth feel valued and appreciated – a discrimination-free space
- Staff invested in forming caring relationships with young people and interested in partnership, cooperation, collaboration with youth
- Staff willing to mentor youth interested in running their own programs, activities, initiatives or enterprises
- Diverse staff, including youth, hired on the basis of employment equity principles to reflect the young people present
- Power imbalances and attitudes of organization regularly examined
- Feels healthy and safe
- Nurtures respectful partnerships between adults and youth (mutual respect, trust, support etc.)
- Youth feel supported and encouraged to take initiative and develop their ideas
- Able to accommodate under-served or marginalized communities (i.e. a small room for prayer, or flexible to requests)
- Youth autonomy and self-determination supported
- Youth voice and perspective involved in decision-making of how space will be used, including designing and building new space
- Youth involved in creation of rules
- Youth involved in creation of programs in which they want to participate, strengthening their leadership skills and building their confidence

### Youth-led enterprise and initiative specifics:

- Equitably accessible opportunities exist for all youth to take initiative and develop their ideas into tangible realities, this includes financial support, consistent access to space and respect for young people's capacity
- Funding for space is provided in funding streams specifically for youth-led initiatives/ enterprises

## Appendix

Ministry of Education  
22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Mowat Block  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2

Ministère de l'Éducation  
22<sup>e</sup> étage  
Édifice Mowat  
Queen's Park  
Toronto ON M7A 1L2



2006: B13

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Directors of Education

**FROM:** Dominic Giroux  
Assistant Deputy Minister, French-Language Education and Educational Operations

Nancy Naylor  
Assistant Deputy Minister, Elementary/Secondary Business and Finance

**DATE:** November 24, 2006

**SUBJECT:** Community Use of Schools Program

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We are writing to provide you with information about the 2006-07 Community Use of Schools program. You will recall that in April of this year the Ministry of Education assumed the lead for the program. The ministry remains committed to ensuring the continued success of the Community Use of Schools program.

The Ministry of Education has allocated \$20 million to the Community Use of Schools program for 2006-07. The \$20 million is allocated in proportion to your board's 2004-05 Grant for School Operations. Your board's allocation can be found in the table attached in Appendix 3.

The ministry will continue to track the effects of the funding on increasing access outside of school hours and reducing costs for not-for-profit community groups. In response to school board concerns about workload resulting from reporting requirements, the ministry will limit the information collected to expenditures and key performance indicators. This information will be collected through regular reporting on EFIS (Education Financial Information System) and will include:

- hourly rates;
- number of permits issued;
- number of participants and number of permitted hours by type of space permitted (e.g. double gym, classroom);
- an accounting of Community Use of Schools program funds expenditures; and
- information about any joint use agreements with municipalities and/or co-terminous boards.

The information in the attached appendices explains the purpose of the program, conditions of funding, and eligible and ineligible costs for 2006-07.

If you require further information about the Community Use of Schools program, please contact your local Ministry of Education Regional Office. A list of contact names and numbers is provided in Appendix 4.



Dominic Giroux  
Assistant Deputy Minister



Nancy Naylor  
Assistant Deputy Minister

c.c. Kit Rankin, Director, Field Services Branch  
Nancy Whynot, Director, Business Services Branch  
Andrew Davis, Director, Transfer Payments and Financial Reporting Branch  
EDU Regional Managers  
Superintendents of Business  
Senior Plant Officials

## **Program Purpose: Community Use of Schools**



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

The Community Use of Schools program provides assistance to District School Boards to increase affordable access for Not-For-Profit Groups to both indoor and outdoor school space at reduced rates outside of regular school hours.

### **Program Principles**

#### School Activities Take Priority

School day activities, extra-curricular activities and parent involvement activities organized or administered by the school or school board have priority use of school space during and after regular school hours.

#### 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.



#### Support for a Positive Climate for Youth

The Community Use of Schools program supports and promotes healthy, active lifestyles for community youth.

#### Fair and Equal Access

Schools are welcoming and inclusive and offer parent groups, community organizations and other citizens fair access to use of school space at affordable rates for community purposes in non-school hours.

#### Respect for Roles and Responsibilities

Community Use of Schools program stakeholder partners respect each other's roles, responsibilities and obligations to the community and education system.

#### Not-For-Profit organizations to be charged affordable 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.

For the purposes of this document Not-For-Profit Groups shall be 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. 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 - groups that are: a.) sponsored or recognized by a municipality as providing services or programs for the benefit of the community, or b.) members of a provincial sports organization or an accredited camping organization, or c.) universally recognized as service providers, such as the YMCA or Red Cross.
- 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, parent groups, seniors groups, etc. as determined by the district school board.

