

## TOPIC: Community Use of Schools

### Trend / Issue

- The Ministry of Tourism and Recreation (MTR) and the Ministry of Education (EDU) jointly announced funding in July 2004 (\$20M) for a “Community Use of Schools Program” to be used to assist District School Boards with providing increased access to schools for non-for-profit groups
- To date, 54 Boards have entered into agreements with MTR to access the funds for year-one of the program

### Background

- changes in the Student-focused funding formula impacted access to schools for non-academic purposes, making access in many parts of Ontario non-existent or cost-prohibitive
- PRO and others continued to advocate for changes to the funding formula to permit increased access to schools, particularly for sport and recreation
- PRO continues to recognize the role of schools as part of the community infrastructure available to provide opportunity for participation in sport and recreation, and to act as a community-hub

### Current Status

- MTR is working with a Stakeholder group with respect to implementation issues and opportunities; PRO is represented on this committee
- Year 1 program goals as noted by MTR, include:
  - decrease rates for access to schools
  - increase in participation in schools for community use
  - strengthening relationships between School Boards and Municipalities
- PRO has offered to assist in collection of data, analysis of issues and best-practices, development of a template for a reciprocal agreement or shared- use agreement
- Implementation issues are varied throughout Ontario, but include;
  - fair access to all eligible users
  - varying rates and rate reductions
  - ensuring that rate reductions are passed along to the end user
  - gaining an increase in access to schools or parts of schools
  - impacting increased participation, particularly for children and youth in sport and recreation
  - communication to all stakeholders

### Links

Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, Ontario Physical and Health Education Association (Ophea), Space Coalition, District School Boards and PRO website for speaking notes from the launch [www.prontario.org](http://www.prontario.org)

## Impact / Implications

- The announcement of the funding program, and the subsequent flow of funding to District School Boards, should provide enhanced access to schools for community use
- Due to the timing of the announcement and the need to develop agreements with School Boards across Ontario, the impact in year-one will be variable
- MTR notes that the focus for year one will be to get all the agreements signed and to decrease rates for access to schools; next steps will be to determine range of benefits to users, and to ensure compliance with the agreements
- MTR staff have confirmed that the program will continue for year-two, likely at the same funding level
- MTR continue to express interest in the longer range goal of increasing participation by children and youth and aligning goals for participation with those of the *Active 2010* strategy
- Implementation challenges vary in different school districts in part due to the existing situations and relationships that had developed over the last couple of years
- Year-1 will be used for benchmark data and "Schedule E" to the Agreement will assist in this regard

It should be noted that the exact use of funds is determined at the District School Board level, in conjunction with MTR, and will vary throughout Ontario.

## Possible Sector Position

- Continued support of the program; PRO continues to participate in stakeholder initiatives
- PRO has offered to assist with and/or partner with others for data collection and best practices analysis
- Encouragement and support for MTR/EDU regarding their discussions with AMO and the need for close Municipal / District School Board relationships
- Encouragement and support for MTR to continue to assist in access to community infrastructure for participation in sport and recreation; support for Active 2010
- Need to continually assess options to assist in affordable access to parents and caregivers to participate in sport and recreation
- Potential to provide training regarding the development of Reciprocal Agreements
- Continued support of the partnership with OPHEA for the "Living School" initiative



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