



YMCA of Niagara  
Strategic Plan 2016 - 2019

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## Table of Contents

Our YMCA Today.....	3
The Time Is Now .....	4
The Canada We Want .....	5
The Road Ahead .....	5
The YMCA We Need .....	5
Our Commitment .....	6
Our Strategic Focus	
• Deepen Our Impact.....	8
• Live Our Mission Through Quality Experiences .....	10
• Foster Organizational Sustainability.....	12
YMCA Core Programs.....	14
Acknowledgements .....	15



## Our YMCA Today

Positive impact, responsiveness, endurance and values; the hallmarks of the YMCA in Niagara. For nearly 160 years, we've inspired change focused on health and wellness and responding to shifting community needs across the Niagara Region.

In 2012, we published a strategic plan designed to address some of the emerging trends in our community - growing concerns about the health status of Niagara including childhood obesity, the decline of industry and rise of unemployment, an aging population and increasing rates of poverty across our region.

Since that time, we learned many things and experienced some changes of our own. We need to refine our focus, ensure continuous investment in people, and operational excellence as we seek to have a greater positive impact on people and families, and strengthen our commitment to community. We look forward to building upon our successes focused on quality, caring service at the Y.

In our planning process, we embraced an ambitious plan to engage people across our community through multiple channels. Their backgrounds, ideologies, and knowledge of the YMCA and our Mission varied, yet everyone we engaged shared a common vision to influence a healthier, more vibrant Niagara and they shared insightful and inspiring ideas of the role the YMCA should play in contributing to this vision.

*Our role through this process was simple - we listened.*

Overwhelmingly, people expressed an urgent need to respond to growing health and social issues across the Niagara Region. They encouraged the YMCA to leverage our community hubs, our legacy of trust and collaborate with like-minded community organizations to provide solutions to complex community needs.

The result of this process is a strategic plan informed by local research, community engagement and a commitment to action. It also includes a refresh of current strategies that continue to be relevant and will transition into the new plan. It requires innovation, collaboration and in some cases, progressive changes at the YMCA to enhance our impact, serve people deeper and deliver on our simple vision for Niagara; *Inspiring health, wellness and community-For life.*



# The Time Is Now

The challenges facing individuals and families these days are increasing and getting more complex. For the first time, we're raising a generation of children with lower life expectancies than their parents. Our senior population is aging amidst a backdrop of increasing chronic disease and illnesses that dramatically deplete their quality of life. And our most vulnerable, including recent immigrants, individuals facing financial barriers or living with mental health illness and addiction, face increasing social isolation.

Niagara has higher rates of health-related conditions including obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease and arthritis than the national average. Children and youth today in our community are less active, less healthy, with less meaningful social connections. Despite efforts to improve the region's economic condition, Niagara continues to lag behind the national average across a series of economic measures with higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of economic growth.

As a result, more than 13 percent of families in Niagara live below the poverty line with the need for assistance increasing each year.

We believe good health is a necessity, not a luxury, regardless of life circumstance or age.

That is why we are committed to working with health partners to deliver innovative community-based programs to improve quality of life for those living with health and wellness challenges. Collaborating means the ability to create resources for people.

We are also committed to filling a growing need in our community to help individuals and families access life-enhancing programs; promote healthy living at every stage of life; and foster a sense of belonging and connection.







## The Road Ahead

Our strategic plan will guide our work for the next three years. As a living document, it is designed to be flexible and adaptable. Our strategies will be framed within an annual planning cycle and our success will be monitored and measured with clearly defined outcomes.

### The Canada We Want

The Canada we want will be respected internationally for its safe, vibrant communities, strong economy, and environmental sustainability. The hallmark of this Canada will be leadership in; improving the health of all its people; respect for diversity and pluralism; combating inequality; protecting its most vulnerable, global citizenship and nurturing the potential of young people. We want a Canada that is ranked the best country in the world for the health and well-being of children, teens and young adults. (*Plan Y: Federation Strategic Plan, Building a stronger YMCA for a stronger Canada, YMCA Canada, 2011*)

### The Community We Want

We envision a Niagara community that is healthy, vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and safe.

### The YMCA We Need

We need a strong YMCA deeply rooted in our community. We want a YMCA that:

1. Delivers programs that improve the health and well-being of people at every age and stage of life.
2. Collaborates intentionally to improve community health.
3. Provides meaningful volunteer and employment opportunities where leaders emerge, learn and thrive.
4. Embraces innovation, and research to enable outcomes-oriented programs and the achievement of results.
5. Inspires personal change to support the achievement of health and development goals.
6. Encourages a culture of 'giving back' to community, aligned with a strong values base.

Together, YMCAs across Canada are working to strengthen the foundations of community.



## Our Commitment

### Our Mission - Our reason for being

The YMCA of Niagara is a charity, open to all, providing leadership and opportunities for people and their community to grow in spirit, mind and body.

### Our Vision - The Niagara we want

Inspiring health, wellness and community – for life.

### Our Values - Our guide to decision making and behaviour.

**Honesty** - demonstrating honesty and trustworthiness.

**Respect** - recognizing and protecting the inherent worth of oneself and others.

**Caring** - acting with concern and compassion for the well-being of others.

**Inclusiveness** - appreciating diversity, striving to be open to all. Seeking to understand all differences and find common ground.

**Responsibility** - being dependable, and accountable for choices, actions and commitments.

**Health** - being committed to physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development.

### Our Enablers

- Strong Governance & Leadership
- Collaboration & Partnership
- Values-based Culture
- Service-focus





Deepen  
Our Impact



Live Our Mission  
Through Quality  
Experiences



Foster  
Organizational  
Sustainability

## Our Strategic Focus

To achieve our Vision, our Plan focuses on three key strategic objectives. These strategies are interdependent - the achievement of outcomes in one area will strengthen our capacity to achieve outcomes in another area.



## Deepen Our Impact

Each year, the YMCA of Niagara serves over 80,000 people across our community. As we look ahead, we know we could serve thousands more and continue strengthening our impact to improve the health of the Niagara population. Advancing this objective requires a targeted approach that defines the health and social issues where we can make a measurable positive impact.

### Strategic Priorities

Deliver a continuum of services that enhance the wellness of individuals and families across the lifespan.

Identify and target key health and social issues, in partnership with community health leaders, to improve the health of Niagara.

Outreach and improve service delivery to vulnerable and at-risk communities including individuals facing financial barriers, recent immigrants, youth and those experiencing social isolation.

### The Outcomes We Want by 2019

- Locate youth outreach services in 20 Priority Neighbourhoods in Niagara to impact health; create a sense of belonging and provide a positive role model.
- Move the dial on childhood obesity through collaborative leadership and program delivery through Niagara's Healthy Kids Community Challenge efforts.
- Support over 10,000 people annually in gaining a sense of belonging through the offer of financial assistance, so they can benefit from YMCA experiences.
- Enhance 6 sustainable health partners that leverage our collective assets to improve health in Niagara.



# Our Strategic Focus

## Deepen Our Impact

Strategic Priorities	Deliverables
<p>Deliver a continuum of services that enhance the wellness of individuals and families throughout life stages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Renew Membership Services model to better respond to needs of families with children.</li><li>• Provide a system of links to assist families in a smooth transition between YMCA core services.</li><li>• Create social connection within the member experience, especially for older adults.</li></ul>
<p>Identify and target key health and social issues, in partnership with community health leaders to improve the health of Niagara.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance 6 health partnerships through sustainable service delivery/business models that address childhood obesity, and chronic diseases relating to aging including cardiac rehabilitation, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), arthritis and dementia.</li><li>• Provide leadership for community collaboration to address childhood obesity through the Niagara Healthy Kids Community Challenge with a focus on physical activity and nutrition.</li><li>• Continued focus on physical literacy and other healthy child development frameworks specific to program area.</li></ul>
<p>Outreach and improve service delivery to vulnerable and at risk individuals and neighbourhoods, including those facing financial barriers, recent immigrants, youth and those experiencing social isolation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sustainable youth outreach in 20 Priority Neighbourhoods through growth in philanthropic support.</li><li>• Collaborative leadership in 4 of Niagara's Immigrant Serving Agency Networks including those focused on refugees.</li><li>• Leverage YMCA services in Child Care and Membership as part of the Immigrant Service experience to provide cultural and social experiences.</li></ul>





## Live Our Mission Through Quality Experiences

At the YMCA, we are committed to more than the delivery of programs and services; we are inspired to create life-enhancing experiences for all those we serve. As we respond to the changing needs of our community, we are revitalizing signature programs with a focus on quality improvement, and service.

As we initiate this period of transformation, we need to communicate our story beyond our walls to help our community partners, and funders understand the contributions we are making to strengthen Niagara and to create a compelling case to welcome new members and participants to join our YMCA community.

### Strategic Priorities

Lead transformational changes in YMCA health, fitness, aquatics and child care services to create life-enhancing experiences for individuals and families.

Leverage our trusted community voice, in collaboration with health leaders, to strengthen the health of Niagara.

Improve engagement and understanding of YMCA mission and impact.

### The YMCA We Need by 2019

- Achieve over half a million in annual support campaign.
- Demonstrate quality through 3 key measurements; net promoter score, customer satisfaction scores and retention rate.
- Leadership investment in 5 community collaborative networks that move the dial on complex health and social issues.



# Our Strategic Focus

## Live Our Mission Through Quality Experiences

Strategic Priorities	Deliverables
<p>Lead change in the YMCA health, fitness and aquatics plus child care services to create life-enhancing experiences for individuals and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership service renewal based on research results with a focus on 5 areas: “Getting Started” through individual or group orientation; enhanced personal training; relationship building; and service excellence to support people in meeting their health goal.</li> <li>• Reassess program and service compliments to match two core market groups with differing needs in Health Fitness and Aquatics: families with children and pre-seniors.</li> <li>• Quality dashboards for core program areas.</li> <li>• Assess and refresh Children’s program in health, fitness and aquatics to best match needs and interests of families.</li> <li>• Renewal of program delivery reflects government shifts in service framework.</li> </ul>
<p>Leverage our trusted community voice, in collaborations with other health leaders, to improve the health of Niagara.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in YMCA leadership within community forums and networks related to poverty, mental health, healthy child development, aging well, nutrition, education and personal development.</li> <li>• Marketing &amp; Communication Plan that includes collaborative health initiatives.</li> </ul>
<p>Improve engagement and understanding of the YMCA Mission and impact on our community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share results of YMCA collaboration Impact Research relating to youth programs and leverage that approach using other YMCA research to share with donors and staff.</li> <li>• Enhance stakeholder engagement through key initiatives including YMCA Report to Community, Cycle for Kids event, government relations plan and stakeholder communications.</li> <li>• Leverage Strong Kids Campaign story-telling and impact testimonials to connect staff, volunteers and stakeholders to our Mission using various media platforms.</li> <li>• Continue Philanthropy Strategy with a focus on Major Gifts, Sponsorship and renewal of Heritage Club.</li> </ul>





## Foster Organizational Sustainability

At the YMCA, we are not immune to some of the shifts in our community. Ensuring our relevancy and sustainability requires an intentional commitment to invest in the renewal of our organization.

Our people are the power behind this plan. Affecting transformative change will require us to work differently together, leverage our existing resources more efficiently and plan for future renewal and investment requirements.

### The YMCA We Need by 2017

Enhance the values-based culture among staff, volunteers and participants to improve service and inspire personal growth.

Strengthen service delivery through strategic investments in priority programs and staff development.

Model governance excellence to ensure transformative leadership within the YMCA and across Niagara.

### The Outcomes We Want by 2019

- A well-defined technology strategy which renews YMCA business systems and introduces customer relations management to support operational excellence.
- Be a recognized leader in good governance practices.
- Build capacity to service community through 3 collaborative initiatives with neighbouring YMCA.
- Strengthen operations and fiscal performance to be positioned to reinvest in human, technology and facility assets.



# Our Strategic Focus

## Foster Organizational Sustainability

Strategic Priorities	Deliverables
<p>Enhance the values-based culture among staff, volunteers and participants to improve service and inspire personal growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen 3 key areas of the YMCA service experience through staff and volunteer development in service effectiveness, values-based culture, healthy child development.</li> <li>• Focus on risk management and monitoring to ensure a healthy, safe environment for all.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthen service delivery and fiscal performance through strategic investments in priority programs and staff development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew the Human Resource Strategy that supports staff onboarding, compliance requirements, recognition and professional and leadership development that is aligned with service delivery goals.</li> <li>• Improve transition from rehabilitation program participation to lifestyle changes within the YMCA member experience.</li> <li>• Innovate through technology to enhance the health experience, communications, and relationship management.</li> <li>• Design marketing and communication plan that reflects the demographics of each community in Niagara.</li> <li>• Engage community service partners as tenants who are aligned with the YMCA Mission, to fully utilized and support YMCA assets as community hubs.</li> <li>• Consider operating options that position all services to contribute towards crucial association strategies and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Invest in YMCA physical environments to provide safe, welcoming environments.</li> </ul>
<p>Model governance excellence to ensure transformative leadership within the YMCA and across Niagara.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership support to Niagara Community Foundation “Centre of Excellence in Governance.”</li> <li>• Explore collaborative initiatives and implement 3, continue governance development with neighbouring YMCAs.</li> <li>• Successful completion of Imagine Canada Accreditation.</li> </ul>



# YMCA Core Programs

The following provides an overview of core YMCA services offered across 100 sites in Niagara.

## A. Licensed Child Care & Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC)

- Early Learning
- Before and After School Care
- Holiday Care for Junior Kindergarten
- OEYC (St. Catharines/Thorold)

## B. Health Fitness & Aquatics

- Niagara West (Grimsby/West Lincoln/Lincoln)
- Niagara Centre (Welland/Pelham)
- St. Catharines Walker Family YMCA
- Niagara Falls YMCA (MacBain Community Centre)
- Port Colborne YMCA (Vale Health & Wellness Centre)
- E.J. Freeland YMCA (Fort Erie)

## C. Community Outreach

- Youth Action After School Program
- Youth Action Friday Night Drop In
- Leadership for ProKids

## D. Day Camp

- Summer Camp
- March Break Camp
- December Holiday Camp

## E. Employment & Immigrant Services

- Employment Ontario Program
- Newcomer Resource Centre (St. Catharines & Niagara Falls)
- Language Assessment
- Settlement Workers in School Program







## Acknowledgement

Commitment and forward thinking by the YMCA Board, staff, volunteers and community and government partners will make this plan come alive. This strategic pathway will forge a solid future that will continue the YMCA legacy of strengthening the foundations of community.





# YMCA of Niagara Strategic Plan 2016 - 2019

YMCA of Niagara

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