



Finding New Ways to Serve Fort Erie



E.J. Freeland YMCA Q & A

Q. What was the status of the YMCA of Fort Erie in 2010? What was the motivation for amalgamation with the YMCA of Niagara?

A: The Fort Erie YMCA had been experiencing financial challenges for several years which prompted them to approach the YMCA of Niagara about the opportunity to amalgamate.

Q. How did the amalgamation with the YMCA of Niagara affect the EJ Freeland YMCA?

A: During the first five years following amalgamation, the YMCA of Niagara invested approximately \$300,000 annually to support operations of the EJ Freeland YMCA. Through the delivery of new programs and ongoing initiatives, the YMCA of Niagara was able to reduce the annual operating losses to an average of \$150,000 per year.

Q. Did the YMCA reach out for financial support to the municipality, funding partners, tenants, etc. prior to the decision?

A: The YMCA values our partnerships with municipalities across the Niagara region. The YMCA participated in a series of meetings over the past few years with the previous Fort Erie Council about the financial position and required capital needs of the building. The Town of Fort Erie also included the EJ Freeland YMCA as part of their regularly scheduled 2018 municipal building audit. This report validated the known capital needs of this facility. The Town of Fort Erie indicated that they were not in the position to support the YMCA on an on-going basis from either a capital or operating perspective. As recently as February 2019, the YMCA met with the Town to share the need to initiate plans to close the facility this fall and begin a community consultation process about future programs and services in Fort Erie.

Q. Given the poor financial performance of the EJ Freeland YMCA, what has the YMCA of Niagara done to support capital improvements? What about the building fee? Isn't that money used to support capital projects?

A: We have done several things to help improve operational & program performance at the branch including lowering membership fees with modest annual increases, investing in the membership growth program improvement initiative and implementing new programs in order to provide more on trend activities to support community needs, like GERAS Dance for older adults (aged 60+). We have invested approximately \$200,000 annually to respond to day to day maintenance along with the ongoing investment in managing operating costs.

For more information about the community consultation process, please visit ymcaofniagara.org/fort-erie-ymca-info

Q: The YMCA charges a Building Fee for members. How have these been invested?

A: The EJ Freeland YMCA charges one member per family a building fee (or join fee) of \$100 upon joining. The building fee is exclusively applied to adult memberships. This means the building fee is applicable to only a small portion of our membership. The annual building fee revenue has been reinvested in capital, but it is insufficient to offset the accumulated asset needs of this YMCA. At this time, we will not be charging the building fee to new adult members.

Q. Don't the membership fees cover the operating expenses?

A. No. Unfortunately, our total revenue generated from membership at EJ Freeland YMCA are not sufficient to cover annual operating expenses. This has been the case for more than a decade, even prior to amalgamation.

Q. Is there a possibility the EJ Freeland YMCA could remain open?

A. The EJ Freeland YMCA requires significant capital investments in order to maintain safe operations. It is unlikely that we can continue our current model of operations in this facility past Fall 2019.

Q: What does a community-based program model mean?

A: Across Canada, there are many different program and service delivery models to meet the needs of their local community. At this point, no decisions have been made as to what the final program model will look like to support Fort Erie. We want to hear from the Fort Erie community through community consultations and an online survey. We plan to review staff recommendations, community feedback and related research to develop the new sustainable model.

Q. What can people expect from the community consultation process?

A: The consultation sessions are future-focused, structured meetings. The consultant will provide background information and context to our process and lead participants through collaborative activities presenting several potential new models for program delivery in order to gather feedback and recommendations.

Q: Once you close the doors, what are you planning to do with the facility?

A: At this time, we have not identified a long-term plan for the building.