



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **The YMCA receives \$9.4 million in funding to advance equity in learning**

ST. CATHARINES, ONTARIO, March 31, 2026 – As part of \$9.4 million in funding received by YMCA Canada through the Government of Canada’s Support for Student Learning program (SSLP), the YMCA of Niagara is pleased to announce that the YMCA Youth Education Supports Program (YESP) will be available to support students in the Niagara area.

YESP will offer academic tutoring, mentorship, individualized case management, and access to vital resources that help youth thrive. Aiming to reach more than 7,700 participants nationally, the program will foster safe, supportive spaces where young people can stay engaged in school, strengthen their mental well-being, and navigate more confidently toward post-secondary education and meaningful employment.

The program will be delivered in partnership with YMCA BC, YMCA of Southern Interior BC, YMCA of Newfoundland and Labrador, YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford, YMCA of Southwestern Ontario, YMCA of Southwest Nova Scotia, YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth, YMCA of Niagara, YMCA of the National Capital Region, YMCA of Northern Alberta, and YMCA of Greater Toronto.

“When we invest in young people, we invest in Canada’s future,” said the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario. “By partnering with dedicated community organizations like the YMCA, we are empowering the next generation with the skills, experiences and opportunities that will shape their futures.”

*“We are deeply grateful for this investment in the young people of our community,” says Christian Wulff, CEO, YMCA of Niagara. “We believe education opens doors to opportunity, and a brighter future. Through YESP, more youth will have the support, guidance, and encouragement they need to overcome barriers and continue their journey into post-secondary education.”*

### **Key features of the program include:**

- Academic tutoring and study skills workshops for youth in Grades 11, 12, and first-year post-secondary education
- Mentorship and career planning to build educational aspirations and resilience
- Life skills and mindfulness workshops to strengthen well-being and belonging
- Access to resource rooms providing essential items like food, school supplies, and technology
- Financial and material supports, including scholarships, textbooks, education assessments, and support with post-secondary applications.

*“[YESP] helped me discover new time management skills, make new friends as a newcomer, and practice spoken English. Overall, this is helping me with my education. I appreciated the assessments during the registration process and the opportunity to speak about my needs with my youth worker.”*

— AR, 17, Grade 12 student and YESP participant

(quote has been lightly edited for clarity)

The YMCA Youth Education Supports Program is a vital step toward breaking down barriers and advancing equity in learning outcomes. By collaborating with schools, youth-serving organizations, communities, and families, the YMCA is empowering young people to stay engaged in their learning and build a strong foundation for future success.

To learn more about the YMCA Youth Education Supports Program, visit:  
<https://ymcaofniagara.org/programs/employment-services/yesp/>

## **About the YMCA of Niagara**

The YMCA of Niagara is a charity that ignites the potential in people, helping them grow, lead, and give back to their communities. We believe everyone has the innate potential to thrive and are dedicated to empowering individuals to tap into their full abilities. Through diverse programs and services, we foster connection, cultivate belonging, and support well-being to elevate the potential of every person and build a stronger, more connected Niagara Region. To learn more, visit [www.ymcaofniagara.org](http://www.ymcaofniagara.org)

## **Media contact**

YMCA of Niagara: Jen Schmaltz, General Manager, Marketing and Communications  
[jen.schmaltz@niagara.ymca.ca](mailto:jen.schmaltz@niagara.ymca.ca) | 905-246-7478

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