



# YMCA Ontario submission on the regulatory proposal to change the community benefits authority under the Planning Act

## Introduction to YMCAs of Ontario

For more than 160 years, YMCAs have been at the centre of communities across Ontario – helping people to reach their full potential and making life easier for hardworking families. Today, 18 YMCA associations serve 1.2 million people across 125 Ontario communities. Our programs are tailored to meet the needs of Ontarians in rural, suburban and urban centres. As a charity, YMCA programs are accessible to all.

YMCAs are more than just “gym and swim”. We provide subsidized access to modern health, fitness and aquatic centres, including access to cutting-edge fitness equipment and programs. We are also the largest provider of licensed child care in the province – with more than 55,000 licensed spaces. We are experts when it comes to delivering programs for youth, newcomers and other people facing barriers, including employment programs and training supports. And, our physical structures serve as vital community meeting spaces – bringing families together and supporting people of all ages to lead productive and healthy lives.

YMCAs benefit the communities we serve in exponential ways. Last year, [ground-breaking new research across the GTA](#) revealed that those who participate in YMCA programs experience higher levels of well-being than those who do not. This research also revealed that communities with YMCAs experience higher levels of well-being overall – even for people that do not interact directly with the YMCA. This means that just having a YMCA in the community brings benefits to everyone living there – a stunning finding that speaks to the far-reaching impacts that centres of community can have on people’s lives – both directly and indirectly.

## Feedback on the Proposed Regulation

YMCA Ontario supports the intent of the proposal to regulate community benefit charges with the aim to improve transparency and consistency around the collection and administration of community benefits funding at the municipal level. We are encouraged by the progress that has been made toward the achievement of complete communities that are compact, transit supportive and that make effective use of infrastructure. We understand the direction towards intensification prioritized around strategic growth areas in order to make efficient use of land and to support transit viability. Finally, we agree that as more housing is built, we need more social services that contribute to strong, healthy communities. **We therefore believe it is imperative that this regulation guarantee historical levels of community benefits funding to ensure that important social services can be afforded within communities.**

## ***Recommendation 1)***

**Ontario YMCAs recommend that the proposed regulation fully protect the ability for municipalities to collect community benefits fees from developers in order to guarantee historical levels of funding for social services. Any reduction in the amount of community benefits funding available for important social services would be detrimental to the people of Ontario who count on important social services in their communities.**

## **Unique Role of YMCAs as Community Developers and Charities**

YMCAs are charities that provide valuable assets to the communities that we serve. YMCAs help to build healthy communities by providing opportunities for personal health and wellness, enrichment, belonging and connection, and by helping people and communities to reach their full potential. Our programs and services:

- ✓ **Nurture the potential of children and youth** through child care, after-school programs, camps and youth leadership programs.
- ✓ **Promote healthy living**, helping people to stay physically fit and reach optimum health.
- ✓ **Support older adults and seniors** to remain active and develop their social network.
- ✓ **Connect job seekers with jobs and help employers** to train and hire people with the right skills, ensuring local economies succeed.
- ✓ **Support newcomers** by connecting them with community supports and resources.
- ✓ **Give people the chance to meet, volunteer**, learn, connect and give back to their community.

Many of the YMCA associations throughout Ontario are engaged in capital expansion projects. These range in size from approximately 60,000 – 100,000 square feet and represent a combined investment of approximately \$300 million. These projects will be funded by a combination of provincial, federal and municipal funding, along with capital campaign donations. Collecting community benefits charges on these developments would represent an unreasonable burden for YMCA developers, jeopardizing or delaying the projects.

## ***Recommendation 2)***

**Given the value that YMCAs bring to the communities that we serve, we recommend that YMCAs (and comparable charitable recreation and social service program providers) be added to the list of high-demand developments that are exempt from paying community benefits charges.**

As a charity that provides critical social services to the communities where we operate, including subsidized child care, employment training, newcomer services and more, YMCAs are eligible recipients of community benefits funding. Being both a recipient of, and a contributor to, the community benefits fund is not logical. This could be rectified by eliminating the requirement for new YMCA developments to be required to pay community benefit chargers.

Currently, the regulation proposes that the following high-demand developments be exempt from paying a community benefits charge: retirement homes, long-term care homes, hospices, colleges and universities, memorial homes, clubhouses or athletic grounds of Royal Canadian Legions, and non-profit housing. **Ontario YMCAs recommend adding charitable recreation and social service program providers to the list of developments exempt from paying a community benefits charge.**

**For more information, please contact:**

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