

TIELINES

The Newsletter of the Canadian YMCA Alumni



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

April 2026

As I sit here today looking out into my backyard, Mother Nature is once again playing with us – teasing us with the hint of spring. And then the clouds come and the cold north wind blows again and it's back into our heavy winter gear. We can't avoid noticing the birds have started to come back, a sure sign of spring. Yesterday there were two Canada Geese on top of my local grocery store, they were loudly letting everyone know that they were staking that prime piece of real estate as their own. I'm sure by the time you read this newsletter these geese will have little ones following them around and spring will be in full bloom – but right now we have to just dream and wait for warmer temperatures. The joys of living in Canada.

I have heard that many of you were able to get away from our cold winter. I want to welcome you back to Canada. I hope all your travels had flights and luggage that made it on time and were uneventful. I was able to get away for a few days at the same time as Phoenix was having a heat wave with temperatures in the 90s F. Yikes, that was hot though it didn't slow me down too much as I played a couple of rounds of golf and did some hiking. Quite a lovely change but just a little too hot for me.

Although many of our executive members also were able to get away for a bit of warm weather we continued to meet on your behalf, planning for our April Alumni Gathering, working on the Story Telling project and I couldn't forget our TieLines editors. Technology enabled the Executive and our Committee members to meet regularly, regardless of what country or hemisphere they

found themselves in at the time of our meetings. I do want to extend my thanks to the Executive and Committee members for their dedication and who made the time to continue with our endeavours. True YMCA dedication.

Turning to a more somber note, as we were putting together this edition, we heard the sobering and shocking news of Medhat Mahdy's passing on April 5th. I know I speak for all of us who had the pleasure to call Medhat a colleague that the world is now missing a great leader, colleague, friend and family man. I had the pleasure of calling him a colleague for about 20 years as we worked together in the Delivery of Service system. In his quiet manner he was always thoughtful in the way he chose to share his wisdom. He never let us forget that our mission was to make our communities better places for all. And that we have a responsibility to ensure that the programs and services we provide always reflect the YMCA's values while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the YMCA.

Medhat's work life was only part of who he was, his role as a devoted father was also important to him. I can only imagine the heartbreak and emotions his family are feeling at this time. Death is never easy to accept but when it comes unexpectedly it is even more difficult to deal with and the loss is that much more intense.

I hope all of you who knew Medhat will not let his memory fade.

Until next time...

janet.giles@shaw.ca

A Warm Welcome!

To **Helen Francis**; a former CEO of YMCA of Northeastern Ontario and former Y Canada Board member **Bob Gallagher** who retired from the YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region and **Nick Parkinson** who recently retired from the YMCA of Northern Alberta. Yes – that Nick Parkinson who we have been thanking each issue! Welcome Bob and Nick!

Canadian YMCA Alumni News

Celebrating Birthdays!

Happy Birthday to:

March

Frances Cook, Lorna Ferguson,
Nick Parkinson and Peter Whitenect

April

Jim Bonk, Marlene Etherington, John Ferguson,
Scott Haldane, Kim Kanmacher, Karen Lewis,
Phil Minaker, Valerie Slater, Janet Sutherland and
Marlene Watson.

About TieLines

TieLines is the newsletter of the Canadian YMCA Alumni published bi-monthly at the end of February, April, June, August, October, and mid-December. Please forward articles for inclusion, any corrections/comments to Diana Deakin-Thomas and Trudy Brydges indicating TieLines in the subject line at geegeenb48@gmail.com and dianadeakinthomas@gmail.com. Don't want to receive TieLines anymore? You can unsubscribe by emailing editor.cdnialumni@gmail.com. To find back issues of TieLines, [click here!](#)

Who are our members?

The Canadian YMCA Alumni is a fellowship of former YMCA or YMCA-YWCA staff, volunteers and/or their partners. We stay connected through TieLines and various ZOOM events. If you know someone who might be interested in joining the Alumni, please share this issue and connect them with Mimi Price, our Membership Chair, at mimi.price@hotmail.com.

THOUGHT *for the* MONTH

LIFE... always offers you a second chance.

It's called **TOMORROW!**

BE HAPPY...
ENJOY LIFE.



© Trevor Haldane

We encourage you to write to your editors — whatever is on your mind (well, within reason)!

Please send to dianadeakinthomas@gmail.com or geegenb48@gmail.com anytime!

Walking Your Way to Better Health – McMaster University YMCA

Thanks for sharing, John Lilley!

McMaster

OPTIMAL AGING PORTAL

Walking Your Way to Better Health

with Dr. Marla Beauchamp

April 29, 2026 | 7:00 PM EDT

ONLINE



Alumni

Live Event: Want to know how many steps you really need? Walking is one of the easiest and most effective ways to stay active, independent, and healthy as we age. But how many steps do you really need? Does speed matter? What about Nordic walking or seasonal challenges? Should you use an assistive device? Join Dr. Marla Beauchamp for a free 60-minute webinar to learn the latest evidence on the benefits of walking, along with practical tips for walking safely and maximizing those benefits. [**Register now!**](#)

“Wild Places, Wild Faces”: Celebrating 5 years

A Presentation by Scott and Trevor Haldane

Submitted by Trudy Brydges; edited by Scott Haldane
– All of this issue’s photos are from Scott and Trevor’s presentation and hand picked by Trudy!

I hope you look forward to seeing the beautiful photos by Scott Haldane that are featured in each Tielines edition as much as I do. His wonderful wildlife images add greatly to the polished look of the newsletter.

On January 27, I took the opportunity to view the father and son wildlife photography show that Scott and his son Trevor presented in support of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT).

Scott and Trevor took us through the four seasons showing incredibly beautiful, dramatic and breathtaking pictures of Canada’s wide variety of wildlife found on or near the TCT. The commentary was informative and often humorous as they described the many extraordinary experiences they have had while observing and recording wildlife and nature.

The presentation was called “ Wild Places, Wild Faces: Celebrating 5 years ”.

The TCT is the longest trail system in the world, stretching more than 29,000 kilometres and connecting all Canadian provinces and territories. There are three “Kilometre 0 ”starting points: Cape Spear, Newfoundland on the Atlantic Ocean; Victoria, B.C. on the Pacific Ocean; and Tuktoyaktuk, N.W.T. on the Arctic Ocean.

Scott and Trevor have now raised nearly \$40,000 since 2022. There were an estimated 450 viewers this year. I was lucky to be one of them. Now I’m proud to be a supporter of the TCT through the donation I made when registering for the event.



© Linda Haldane

Scott with his grandsons!



© Linda Haldane

Scott and Conor

The next "Wild Places, Wild Faces" event will be held via Zoom in late January of 2027. This 6th. annual presentation will be promoted in the TieLines prior to that date. Watch for it. I hope you will consider registering and donating to support this worthy cause.

The presentation is always dedicated to Scott's Dad and Trevor's Grandad Gib Haldane. The fourth generation is now represented by Conor Vaughan, Scott's grandson and Trevor's nephew who often tags along with his Grandad.

I am so pleased that we can enjoy Scott's regular photo contributions to TieLines. Thank you Scott for sharing your wonderful passion for nature with us. I hope this partnership continues for many more editions.

In his closing comments during the presentation, Scott offered some important advice - nature is good for your soul so get out on the trail.



© Scott Haldane



YMCA Child Care Fast Forward 45 Years

Prepared by Martha Lee-Blickstead with reference to Linda Cottes' YMCA of Greater Toronto presentation fall 2025

It is a joy to have the opportunity to write this article. How many are fortunate to work in a portfolio in their twenties/thirties then fast forward 45 years to hear an update on the status of the work that is taking place now. In the fall 2025 Linda Cottes, Senior VP Child & Family Development, YMCA of Greater Toronto, presented highlights of the developments of YMCA Child Care focusing primarily on the YGTA. The event was sponsored by the YGTA Alumni with invitations to the Canadian YMCA Alumni to join in person or by Zoom.

I have always had a strong professional bias that providing quality early learning and child care to Canadian families is one of the best ways to achieve the mission of the YMCA. The YMCA Child Care programs that have evolved locally and nationally over 50+ years provide core family support to families while reducing isolation and building capacity in those who use our services and those that provide the services. YMCA teams have provided leadership in developing curriculum approaches that are grounded in current research on how to best nurture growing children. The YMCA should be proud that a few generations of children and families have been supported by the YMCA Child Care programs that are provided coast to coast.

In her presentation, Linda highlighted that during the 80's there was expansion of Y child care centres, and before and after school programs under the leadership of Judith Levkoe. In the 90's and into 2000, government funding contributed to further expansion and support with wage subsidies. In 1999, the YMCA's Playing to Learn, a research-based curriculum focused on brain development, was launched. Early in 2000 YMCA A Place to Connect curriculum was introduced for children 6 to 12 and expanded across Canada. By 2005 the expansion in child care programs was

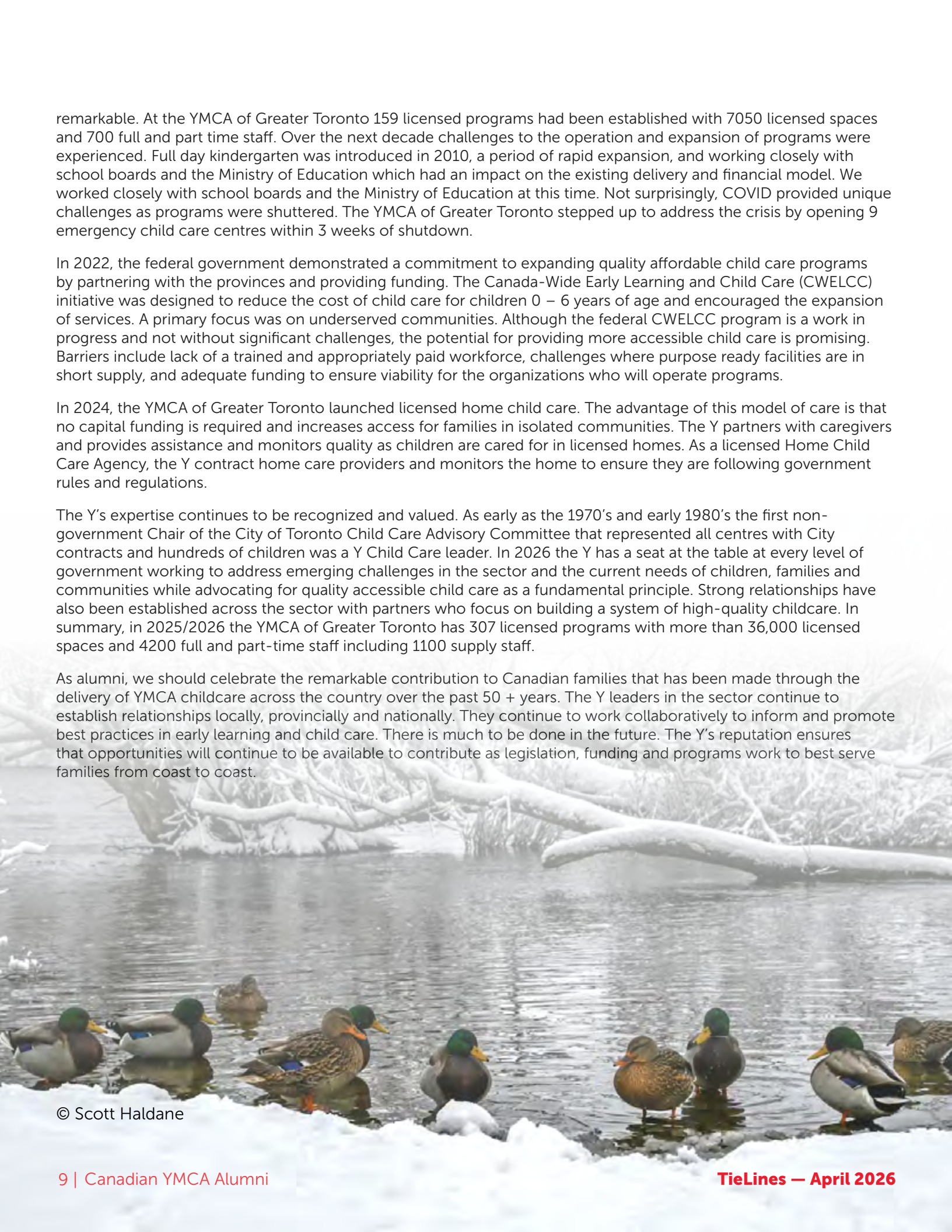
remarkable. At the YMCA of Greater Toronto 159 licensed programs had been established with 7050 licensed spaces and 700 full and part time staff. Over the next decade challenges to the operation and expansion of programs were experienced. Full day kindergarten was introduced in 2010, a period of rapid expansion, and working closely with school boards and the Ministry of Education which had an impact on the existing delivery and financial model. We worked closely with school boards and the Ministry of Education at this time. Not surprisingly, COVID provided unique challenges as programs were shuttered. The YMCA of Greater Toronto stepped up to address the crisis by opening 9 emergency child care centres within 3 weeks of shutdown.

In 2022, the federal government demonstrated a commitment to expanding quality affordable child care programs by partnering with the provinces and providing funding. The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) initiative was designed to reduce the cost of child care for children 0 – 6 years of age and encouraged the expansion of services. A primary focus was on underserved communities. Although the federal CWELCC program is a work in progress and not without significant challenges, the potential for providing more accessible child care is promising. Barriers include lack of a trained and appropriately paid workforce, challenges where purpose ready facilities are in short supply, and adequate funding to ensure viability for the organizations who will operate programs.

In 2024, the YMCA of Greater Toronto launched licensed home child care. The advantage of this model of care is that no capital funding is required and increases access for families in isolated communities. The Y partners with caregivers and provides assistance and monitors quality as children are cared for in licensed homes. As a licensed Home Child Care Agency, the Y contract home care providers and monitors the home to ensure they are following government rules and regulations.

The Y's expertise continues to be recognized and valued. As early as the 1970's and early 1980's the first non-government Chair of the City of Toronto Child Care Advisory Committee that represented all centres with City contracts and hundreds of children was a Y Child Care leader. In 2026 the Y has a seat at the table at every level of government working to address emerging challenges in the sector and the current needs of children, families and communities while advocating for quality accessible child care as a fundamental principle. Strong relationships have also been established across the sector with partners who focus on building a system of high-quality childcare. In summary, in 2025/2026 the YMCA of Greater Toronto has 307 licensed programs with more than 36,000 licensed spaces and 4200 full and part-time staff including 1100 supply staff.

As alumni, we should celebrate the remarkable contribution to Canadian families that has been made through the delivery of YMCA childcare across the country over the past 50 + years. The Y leaders in the sector continue to establish relationships locally, provincially and nationally. They continue to work collaboratively to inform and promote best practices in early learning and child care. There is much to be done in the future. The Y's reputation ensures that opportunities will continue to be available to contribute as legislation, funding and programs work to best serve families from coast to coast.

A group of ducks swimming in a pond with snow on the banks. The ducks are of various colors, including mallards and brown ducks. The water is dark, and the snow is white. The background shows a large fallen log in the water.

© Scott Haldane



Member Reflection

Sol Kasimer

My life is intertwined with my Y experience. I want to thank the many people who supported me throughout my career and allowed me to see the best of humanity during challenging times. Many of these individuals are my lifelong friends.

My family and I are forever grateful for this amazing journey.

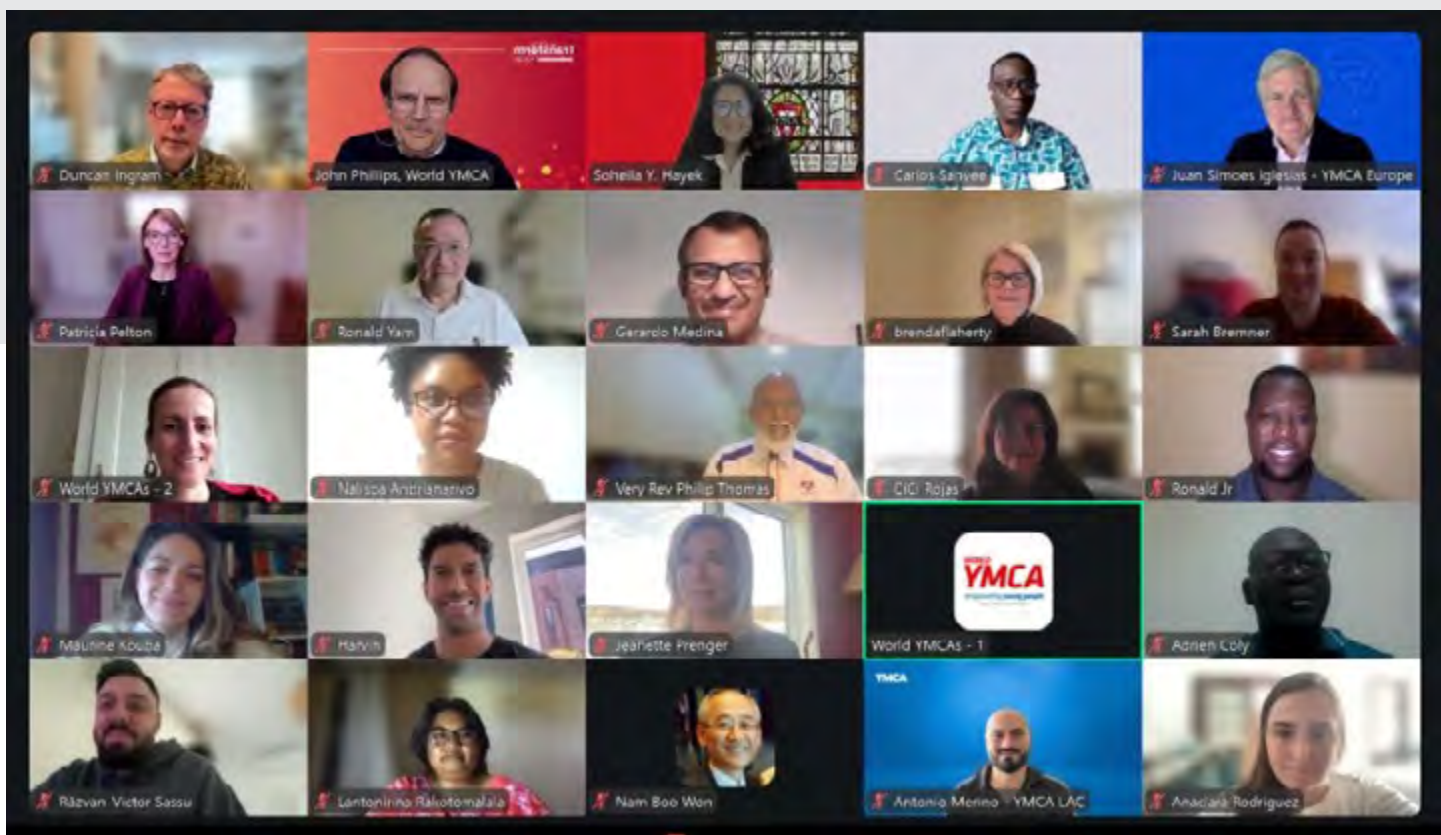


WORLD YMCA NEWS

Interested in knowing more about what is happening internationally?

Here you will find the latest [World YMCA news](#). If you haven't already, we invite you to subscribe to our [monthly e-newsletter](#) to stay updated on YMCA news and upcoming events.

World YMCA Leadership Aligns on Vision 2030 and Future Direction



The World YMCA Executive Committee met online 28-29 March for important business: approving the 2025 annual report and balanced 2026 budget, discussing YMCA Christian identity in the 21st century, and receiving updates on World Council preparations.

And there was a lot of energy around discussing progress on YMCA Vision 2030.

"Vision 2030 was the collective leap of faith we took in 2022. It's now our reality, and I am thrilled to see it happening all over the Movement," said World YMCA President Soheila Y. Hayek.

Secretary General Carlos Madjri Sanjeev emphasised the momentum building toward World Council in Toronto this July: "We are arriving at World Council with real substance - both in what we have achieved and in what we have put in place to meet the challenges that are still before us. It's not finished work, but it's real progress, with clear directions of travel. We are a movement, and we keep moving."




World Council webinar draws 320: "The YMCA pulls together"

More than 320 people from across the global YMCA Movement joined the first World Council webinar on 26 March, exploring programming, logistics, governance, and what to expect in Toronto this July. With 1,300+ registered to attend and 70% of webinar participants attending their first World Council, anticipation is building for the 21st World Council, to be held 19-25 July.

This year's theme is Transform, building on previous gatherings and tracing the Movement's journey through Vision 2030. World YMCA President Soheila Hayek set the tone: "*While the world pulls apart, the YMCA pulls together.*"

To watch the webinar, [Click Here!](#)

BRIDGES
WORLD FELLOWSHIP
OF YMCA RETIREES (WFYR)



Check out the most recent editions of Bridges

Dec 2025
[\(Click here!\)](#)

From February 27 to March 1, we brought together 14 local Ys, members of the national board, the supervisory and audit commission, and the national office team for an event of YMCA Ukraine in Kyiv. During these three days, we shared important updates, discussed the vision and strategic direction of YMCA Ukraine, and launched new projects. The meeting also created valuable space for dialogue between the national office and the board, where we explored expectations, strengthened cooperation, and agreed on the next steps in implementing our strategy.

We were honored to welcome our colleagues from YMCA Europe, Alina Pop and Dragoş Tarţa: Alina presented the work of YMCA Europe, while Dragoş led an inspiring advocacy training session. It is incredibly valuable when our partners and colleagues travel here during wartime, participate in our events, and connect directly with our leaders, ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)



News from Y Canada our RDCs and our Hubs



Peter Dinsdale

LinkedIn

Spent this morning at Health Canada with Minister Marjorie Michel and a great group of leaders talking about men and boys' health.

Mental health is the through-line. It shows up in everything, from physical health to connection to risk behaviours. If we miss it early, we pay for it later. At the same time, many men are not engaging with traditional supports. Not because they do not need them, but because they do not see themselves in them.

And when they do show up, it is often late. At YMCA Canada, we have seen what works better. Meet men where they are. Make it practical. Build it into community spaces. Be explicit about the outcomes. Simple idea, but it changes participation.

If a national strategy gets that right, early, accessible, and designed with men in mind, it will go a long way.

Good conversation today. More work ahead.

... Find it on LinkedIn!



News from our RDCs and our Hubs Canada West



Heidi Worthington, ICD.D



I am pleased to share that YMCA BC has been selected as the operator of the **leləm** Community Centre. This 15,000-square-foot facility is located within the University Endowment Lands (UEL) on the traditional, unceded and ancestral land of the Musqueam people. The centre, which will be known as the **leləm** YMCA Community Centre, offers spaces to support a range of health, fitness and community programming, including a fitness studio, meeting rooms, and a gymnasium.

YMCA BC operates municipal facilities across the province, including facilities in Chilliwack, Vanderhoof and Taylor. We're excited to bring our health expertise, incredible service, and commitment to building vibrant, inclusive and healthy communities, to the **leləm** YMCA Community Centre.

We're also incredibly proud to partner with UEL and the Province of BC, and to collaborate with the Musqueam Capital Corporation and Musqueam Indian Band on this project. Together, we'll provide even more people of all ages, stages, backgrounds and abilities with a welcoming place to build community and have access to healthier outcomes. We look forward to opening the **leləm** YMCA Community Centre's doors later this year. ... [Find it on LinkedIn!](#)





News from our RDCs and our Hubs Canada East



**YMCA of Newfoundland
and Labrador**



At 80 years old, Glennis has become a familiar and inspiring presence at the YMCA. She has been a dedicated member since 2011, finding connection, purpose, and community through daily aquafit and group exercise classes.

For Glennis, the YMCA is more than a place to stay active. It is where friendships form, routines matter, and well-being grows. She often says that the laughter, shared conversations, and simple moments in the leisure pool are what keep her coming back.

Over the years, Glennis has experienced the impact that movement and community can have on health. She has lost more than 60 pounds, recovered more easily after knee surgery, and celebrated small milestones that meant a great deal to her. ... **Find it on LinkedIn!**



News from our RDCs and our Hubs Ontario



YMCA of Greater Toronto

LinkedIn

With YMCA Youth Exchanges Canada, one week of travel can become a full adventure: new friends, sports, cultural discoveries, history lessons, and more. Each group builds its own journey — creating a map of Canada that reflects their interests. Learn more here: [@ymcaexchanges](#) or at ymcagta.org/yec

One week of
travel can
become a
full
adventure



Find it on LinkedIn!

It's official. The Toronto Star released their 2025 Readers' Choice Award winners, and the Y was selected in five categories:

- Best Kids Camps – Gold
- Best Non-Profit / Foundation – Gold
- Best Recreation Facility – Platinum
- Best Fitness Club – Platinum
- Best Swimming Instruction – Platinum

Thank you to everyone who voted! Our charity is so proud to help people across the GTA reach their full potential.

Learn more about the Y's programs, [Click here!](#)

Find it on LinkedIn!



Readers'
Choice winners!



REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS

Medhat Mahdy

Sharif Mahdy Facebook – April 5, 2026

On behalf of my family, it is with immense sadness that we are writing to let you know that the hero and foundation of our family has passed away. Medhat Sabet Mahdy died suddenly but peacefully in his sleep this morning. He was a father to Sharif, Jasmine Claire and Kareem, father-in-law to Michael Tomlin and Peter Hurson, devoted grandfather to Joseph and Claire. He eventually came to love Brando, a feisty Golden Retriever that he said reminded him of his wife, Ann Mahdy.

He was the Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA of Greater Toronto and had a long and distinguished career with the organization. This past September he had the honour of receiving the Order of Canada for his service to the community and beyond.

As per his request, the funeral and burial will align with Islamic tradition and will be private. A memorial will be organized at a later date. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the YMCA of Greater Toronto in his name.

Here are a few of my favourite photos with him:





THE LAST LAUGH

You know how they throw the ball into the crowd after the game?
That's not allowed in bowling.
I know that now...

**BE HAPPY
ENJOY LIFE**



Thank You!

I would like to start off by saying thank you to Trudy Brydges (Executive member and AWESOME Atlantic Hub member) who has graciously agreed to help me with the preparation and development of our TieLines. We will be co-editors—so now you have two of us searching for stories to keep you engaged!

And, as always, a hearty thanks to staff at YMCA of Northern Alberta for laying out and preparing TieLines for production. This incredible team makes us look so good every issue! The team to thank includes:

Katherine O'Neill (President and CEO), Amber Niemeier (Chief Community Engagement Officer) and Abdullah Al-Nono for designing.

Franca D'Angelo (General Manager, National Office YMCA Canada) and Alexandra Mooney (Y Canada) distribute TieLines for us. And, of course, thanks to Nancy Dube and Marg Flett who check your editors' work! To Scott Haldane for his beautiful photography used in our TieLines. And to those of you who have contributed this month — **THANK YOU!**



Canadian YMCA Alumni
TieLines • April 2026

Photo credit: Scott Haldane