

Testimonials and expressions of interest in the facility on Main Street being the Bridge Facility:

“I worked for the ymca for 8 years. Often working Friday night fun and free swims. I watched so many kids come through our doors with smiles on their faces, excited to jump in the pool and play with their friends and family. I loved talking with them and getting their young views on life. It made working there a joy. Then things that kept you up at night. Like the kids who were hungry, so we started a food program and fed them and taught them to cook. Like the kids who didn't have proper winter clothes, so we got donations and staff family knitted hats and mittens. Like the kids who craved attention from an adult and just so badly wanted to share something as simple as what they did that day. So we listened. Not only staff participated in helping these children grow, but volunteers who put on classes, other children who took on roles as leaders, and YMCA members who took the time to simply smile and wave when a child had their face pressed against the glass watching them work out. The ymca wasn't just about fun. It was about support, guidance, a feeling of safety and a space free from judgement.”

Renee Hanf, Former Membership Supervisor

“The impact of not having a swimming pool available in the Yarmouth area would have significant negative long-term effects to swimming in the Southern Region of the Province.

Yarmouth Y Whitecaps have had a rich history of excellence in swimming in Nova Scotia; if a pool is not accessible to them in the next few months, their team may fold. They are currently down in membership by almost 75%; it will be difficult for the remaining members to be part of the Yarmouth Y Whitecaps with no access to a swimming pool in Yarmouth.

Quite simply, with no swimming pool in Yarmouth, there will be no swim team. Children and youth will not have the opportunity to learn any basic lifelong water safety skills. There will be significant negative impact on the health care system.

The Whitecaps are an integral part of the swimming community in Nova Scotia – Swim Nova Scotia cannot afford to lose them!”

Bette El-Hawary
Executive Director | Swim Nova Scotia



“Not only were the Whitecaps the ones who guarded most of the beaches, but they also guarded for school trips and outings. They were most often the ones who guarded the pool and helped to teach swimming and water safety lessons.

Water safety and learn to swim are not now being taught here in this end of the province where we are surrounded by water, live by lakes and rivers and cross a body of water to get off the island of Nova Scotia. It is unthinkable that there should not be anywhere within a reasonable distance for people to learn to swim.”

Virginia Smith

“There is very little for youth to do in a small rural community. Yarmouth has one of the highest child poverty rates in Nova Scotia. Yarmouth also sits in one of the worst positions in Nova Scotia on the Early Development Instrument. We have had the same honor when it comes to teen pregnancies; obesity at many stages of life, and much more.

We have an aging population that lacks adequate services for seniors. We have been in a health care crisis for many years, being unable to attract physicians and other health care providers to our region.

YMCA Yarmouth was serving to fill a small portion of those gaps, including encouraging physical activity, providing healthy options to improve one's mental health, free child and youth programs, teaching a seafaring community to swim, seniors' swims, etc. It's been a place for people new to the community to connect with others and make friends, just as I did so many years ago, and again recently.

I am quite simply terrified at the prospect of what will become of all of these gaps without the work the YMCA does in our community.”

Trish McCourt, Executive Director at the Tri-Counties Women's Centre

“I started teaching at the YMCA in 1995, making it a total of 25 years and have been a member for 30+ years. What I've always loved about the YMCA, first a member, was the classroom environment and feeling of belonging from the first time I walked through the door. Volunteering to teach classes was a huge part of my life and fulfilling in many ways, mostly because of the members, watching their progress, making each other accountable; it was a huge loss for all of us when the doors closed. The people I have met throughout the years made it all worthwhile, along with the many friendships formed with fellow instructors, members and staff. I have seen a lot of people coming through those doors over the years and it truly is a big, extended family where new members always felt welcome to join. My children have also both benefited from swim lessons and being members of the YYW swim team, including 2 trips to Maine as part of a Nova Scotia Tour Team for one of them; this never would have been possible if we didn't have a pool. They have attended pool parties, worked out in the gym and also made many friends too. The physical and mental health benefits of



attending the gym and pool on a regular basis are being missed by so many people in the community and we need it to reopen ASAP.”

**Amanda Maillet,
Past Instructor, YMCA**



“I loved the [former] YMCA, it was my home and sanctuary, it was a place where I wasn't sick.”

Jackie Landry

“The [former] Yarmouth YMCA noon classes were ideal for the busy working moms. Not only did it help to keep you fit and resilient for family responsibilities, but you were able to return to work more productive and mentally prepared for the challenges of the afternoon. Your workout was done for the day so you could focus on your family after work! A win-win!”

Tanya Van Buskirk (former Public Servant)

“The [former] YMCA has played a key role in the Yarmouth area for so many years. It provided not only a place for our physical well-being but also contributed to enhancing our mental health!”

Freeman Libby, Ocean-Agri Solutions Ltd.

“The old YMCA was not just a workout facility for me it was a community. Over the last 35 years I was a full-time member. There I met many like-minded people who share the passion for health and fitness. Many became friends and mentors. The volunteers who taught classes were knowledgeable enthusiastic and welcoming. They supported each other as well as the new and old members in their classes. They were a family and made you feel like one of their own. Yes the Y organization is gone but the building remains and the family is waiting. Please open the doors and welcome the family back!”

Patricia Thibault

"I have always been a Y girl. I grew up in Halifax and went to the Clayton Park YMCA. I lived in Fredericton for four years and went to the YMCA there for different activities. When I moved to Yarmouth in 1981, I would go to Friday night swimming at the Y, hoping to make some friends. Fast forward a few years. I took a weekend instructor workshop to be able to teach fitness classes, and taught aerobics, body toning, and step classes at noon for several years until it didn't work out anymore with my job. I continued going to the gym and working out for many years. And have been known to teach and help train people with weights. My daughter took individual swimming lessons when she was little and did very well. She also went to March Break and summer day camps until they stopped. She loved going to the Y. In 2017, I had a heart attack and attended the Cardiac Rehab Program for 10 weeks. It was a great way for people who had heart issues or a heart attack to slowly work on getting back into shape. They had a topic each week with guest speakers and a lot of excellent information to take away. This is a necessary program, in my opinion. I have gone to the YMCA for the better part of 40 years, off and on. It truly has something for everyone. Yarmouth needs a community based place for fitness and swimming. Something affordable to allow access to everyone., no matter the age."

Shauna Donaldson

"I have worked at YMCA for 19/20 years.y was my life.my family and my building.seen many changes and [challenged.it](#) was not just a job to pay the bills but a social event.I met a lot of people and became friends with some.It was my first job.had 3 maintenance supervisors many co workers."

Maxine d'Eon, Former Cleaner

"It's been almost a year since my last Cyclefit class at the YMCA. When we were told the Y was shutting down due to the pandemic closures I knew in my heart it likely would not reopen but I was still saddened when the official announcement was released. I miss my faithful class participants, and I miss the rush of excitement I would get when someone new entered my class. I always tried to make people feel welcome in "my" spin room. I still have all my playlists in my spin binder tucked away in my gym bag, perhaps foolishly hoping I will get to use them once again. If by some miracle this facility reopens to the public and "my" spin bikes still stand, I'll be happy to return to my post and volunteer once more. "

Lynette Amirault

"I am already seeking employment in HRM. I can't live in a community without a pool. Swimming is my number one love and form of exercise (running second). 17 years ago when my family and I looked into moving into the area, I wouldn't have moved here without a pool-without the opportunity for my kids to learn to swim and for me to swim 4-6 times a week. My daughter then joined the swim team and became a lifeguard. The pool and community facility has been part of my family's life for 17 years. Not only the pool but the weight room, treadmills, kids' Christmas parties, pool birthday parties and so much more."

Cheryl Clayton

"I grew up in the town of Yarmouth and currently reside in Wedgeport. The YMCA, as a recreation centre, has been part of my life from pre school age to my current status as a senior citizen.

I support the reopening for several reasons:

1. Health & wellness – physical and mental
 2. Social – many new friendships are formed and a great place for adults to network.
 3. Swimming Pool – the only place for year round swimming lessons for all ages. Also, teenagers become lifeguards and get part time jobs or summer employment not only at the pool but also at Lake Milo, Ellenwood Park etc. Swimming is an exercise for all ages – from a parent with a 6 month old to a senior keeping fit with water exercise and everything in between.
 4. A recreation centre is necessary to attract and retain new residents from all walks of life. I have met new people to the area who stated that Yarmouth county was chosen because of the YMCA facility.
 5. We cannot afford not to have a place,(for several years) offering various activities for our youth.
 6. I feel that waiting up to 10 years for an expanded Mariners Centre, without opening the former Y will be a step backward and hard to recover from. How would we attract doctors or keep the resident doctors here without a safe place for their children to learn to swim, play, etc. or adults to take advantage of the variety of programs/equipment that the facility can offer?
- Statistics show that residents from all municipal units benefitted from having the Y so I feel three units should be supporting the reopening without question.”

Kathryn Murphy

“The problem we have is that the YMCA is being viewed as a "fitness facility". The fact is that the YMCA is so much more than a fitness facility. I volunteered at the YMCA for many years and I saw people who never knew each other come to class, bond over the cruelty of the instructors and become best friends to the point that their family will vacation together. The volunteers have come together, when one of us goes through hardship, not just to support them in class, but out of class as well, being a good friend that they can count on. I have seen kids that wandered around the streets come into the YMCA, spend time, and develop skills and even good relations with people and stay off the streets. The YMCA does not build better health, it builds better communities. And if we had a community fitness center that is modelled after the YMCA but not bound by all the rules of the YMCA, then that facility could help Yarmouth grow into an even better town. That is what you should be investing in...not a building, not a sports plex, but a community. And that is well worth the investment.”

Leland Whitman

“I joined the Y a few years ago. It became so much more than just a gym or fitness centre to me. It was a place I enjoyed going to almost every single day. I met people that have become friends and I also encouraged friends to come to the Y with me, whether it was to try a class, go swimming or the try out the equipment. It became something I looked forward to every day...going to a group fitness class in the aerobic studio or in the pool. So many friendly faces, making class so much fun while getting healthy. I enjoyed going so much and all that it gave to our small community that I wanted to give back myself....I was hoping to become certified so that I could teach group fitness classes. I miss this routine which became such a huge part of my everyday life.

Sure I can go for a walk or run and workout at home but it's just not the same for me. Group classes motivated me and pushed me to reach goals I never thought I could reach. I know that I am just one person

that benefited from the Y but everyday I saw so many others, families, my best friend from high school elderly parents , coworkers and small children who benefited from the Y as well.”

Cheryl Wheelans-Forster

“I realize this closing took place a while ago; however, it is now urgent and I now feel the need to respond. Although I have 2 adult children living in the Yarmouth area , it has been several years since I moved out of the area. But my concern for YMCA and the Community it has served for years, remains firm.

I feel the town and people of Yarmouth did the community and area a GREAT disservice, by allowing the 150 plus year history and relatively new facility to close. Now said facility is just sitting there doing nothing when it could be providing a very valuable, vital even service. The pool alone has taught 1,000's of people to swim, in addition it has provided many doctor related therapy sessions as well as plain old recreation. What a sin! - Using the pool again as a vital service, may I quote, "We Canadians spent a great deal of time - in, on or around the water! - Knowing how to swim, could save your life or that of a bystander or loved on." - - If the Town does nothing more PLEASE consider opening the pool - it is vital to the life and lives of the community. The town has wasted more money on a ferry that is a figment of a few politicians' imagination, when a small portion of this waste could have provided a vital service to the people/families of this community, plus restore the Yarmouth YMCA heritage.”

The late J P Hugh Sproule, Former Yarmouth YMCA Executive Director 1970-1975

“As a (very) amateur athlete, a ‘newbie’ to the world of triathlon and a recent competitor in the Ironman circuit of racing, the YMCA Yarmouth facility has been indispensable and absolutely crucial to my training. As a member and user of the gym section and pool in particular up to 6 days a week, I would have never been able to train and prepare for races without it. As a “come from away”, without a doubt, the YMCA has given me a sense of community where I’ve made lifelong friends and met other fitness enthusiasts.

The closure of this facility has meant I’ve had to totally drop swim training for the winter, fall and spring months, a total loss of a supportive community hub and an overwhelming loss of what made Yarmouth an appealing place to plant roots.”

Holly Amirault

“The loss of swimming lessons in a town surrounded by water is huge. It will have an impact in years to come if it is not dealt with. We cannot allow a whole generation of children to be non swimmers . This could end up devastating. With no swim lessons we also do not have a feeder program for the Swim Team . The team will dissolve if we have no new members and after so many years that would be devastating. Also without swim lessons we have no one building up to be lifeguards. With a lack of lifeguards to cover our beaches and a generation of non swimmers well , you know where I’m going with this. It will not be good. Let’s hope enough people with the power to do something understand the huge impact this has not just on adults but children for years to come. It will have deep impacts on our society .”

**Jennifer Hood, Former Aquatics Director, YMCA
Area Supervisor, NSLS**

Having a new or developing barrier to mobility can lead to becoming disconnected from your community, friends and family. It can remove you from accessing the places you shop, visit and take comfort in. It can quickly prevent you from participating in the activities that define your sense of self.

Mobility, and with it, independence is something that most of us take for granted, until we lose it. Regaining and maintaining our physical abilities helps prevent this disconnect. Doing this in a self-determined manner through therapeutic exercise gives us a level of control and independence that builds resilience.

For many of my patients, the YMCA played a vital community level role in maintaining this. For many, the pool allowed a freedom of movement that could not be achieved by any other means. It was a gold level standard of treatment that prevented people's conditions from worsening.

Since the closure, I have seen a decline in how patients that used the YMCA have been able to manage. Those that identified as regular YMCA members are sliding in the wrong direction. It will lead to a heavier burden on our health care system.

Losing this resource is a loss to our community's wellness that is felt through the decline of individuals.



Todd Lacey – Physiotherapist.

“My Wife and I are going on 76 and we are admired for our youthful attitude. We attribute this to the Yarmouth Y facility. It is not the pool, it is not the gym. It is the unique combination that made it so. Frankly the Yarmouth Y is a unique facility in that it stands alone. We have now paid to use the pool facilities of St Annes because if we wait for an add on to the Mariner's center without a pool gym facility we might not make it. We are not alone in this. To the council who had the good faith to purchase the Y and the council who is willing to assist I say, "if there is a roadblock, you can find a detour. We are not against the mariners center proposal but we need something else too. A bit of reality should be in order. My father and his siblings inherited cash from their grandfather Ferguson and they gave it to a fund to build an ice rink in 1936. When did we get that ice rink? The money to build the pool by the Y was not the first fundraiser for a pool. An earlier fund got absorbed into an enlarged auditorium at Yarmouth High, as can be seen projects take a long time to get done... and they might not even end up as first visualized.”

John Hood

“I have needed a hip replacement for many years. I lived with the pain, after I retired the pain became unbearable. I used to walk 50 minutes every day. Someone suggested I try the pool. I did (5 years ago), I was scheduled to see my surgeon to book the surgery. Whatever happened at the pool, my pain almost left me. I couldn't walk any distance. But I could do the pool running and pool exercises. I saw my surgeon, told him what I was doing, off my pain medication, and he told me to keep swimming and not to stop. I haven't swam since March, I'm trying to walk 25 minutes, some people see me and say, you're in pain. I am.”

Debbie Ross

