

# Ymca canada essay



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Introduction The purpose of this paper is to present a critical review of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Greater Montreal. This review is based on information collected from various public sources including the 2003 annual report of the YMCA of Greater Montreal, as well as several historical documents collected from the holdings of Concordia University archives. The method of the project is to examine the YMCA of Greater Montreal as part of the larger framework of the YMCA Canada federation. The scope of the project is to present legal and contractual aspects as they related to the YMCA of Greater Montreal. YMCA Canada The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was founded in London, England in 1844 by George Williams, at the age of 23.

Its purpose at the time was to " assist young workers during the Industrial Revolution" by creating a partnership between volunteers, staff members and local communities. In 1918, a national council of YMCAs in Canada was incorporated. YMCA Canada is a federation of 61 charitable not-for-profit YMCA and YMCA-YWCA members. The mandate of the federation is to help people attain good health through a healthy lifestyle: good health focused " on prevention, rehabilitation, self-management and the social support needed to grow in spirit, mind and body" .

The federation oversees its mandate by monitoring and identifying relevant issues relating to all aspects of the environment of the associations' members in Canada. The federation functions on the following set of principles : •Ethics and Accountability; by upholding the values, constitution and by-laws of the members of the federation in a transparent and trusted approach. Collaboration; by supporting the aspirations and expectations of

member associations. •Receptive and Responsive; by evaluating new ideas and leading according to member association’s needs.

•Proactive; by advancing and protecting the interests of member associations. The federation is governed by a national voluntary Board of Directors. Its mission is to supervise and govern national plans and priorities for the organization. More specifically, the national board is responsible for performing acts for council, controlling the budget, and giving direction to the Chair and CEO. Members of the Board are most commonly volunteers from local association boards. All sixty-one member associations report to the national council.

The national council is divided into three key areas: the policy setting body, voting members, and the non-voting members. The policy setting body is responsible for prioritizing the use of resources, maintaining the YMCA national identity, exchanging information and electing officers, national board members and nominating committees. The voting members are elected to represent each of the 61 associations. The non-voting members include national board members, life members, fellowship of honor recipients and fraternal representatives. Ultimately, the national council is responsible for approving the guiding principles that are adopted by all the regional member associations.

YMCA of Greater Montreal The YMCA of Greater Montreal was established by the church in 1851 to provide a venue for religious discussions and activities. Its present mandate is to support the community by providing programs and services for the “ the fulfillment of people in spirit, mind and body”. The

programs and services reflect “ the needs and aspirations” of local communities, to work with “ individuals and communities in developing countries in achieving social justice and control of their environments” . The organization’s policies, programs and services help to support key values such as; •Participation and Access •Education and Prevention •Respect for others •Volunteer work and Philanthropy •Self-Empowerment Board of Directors The Board of Directors at the YMCA of Greater Montreal is composed of seventeen members, all volunteers. The members are all prominent in the business world. The current chair of the Board of Directors at the YMCA of Greater Montreal is Suzanne Aboud.

The Board of Directors of the YMCA of Greater Montreal is responsible for appointing board committees, officers, and employees to carry out the daily activities of the organization. The Board can only exercise its power and authority as a group. Individual members are powerless without unanimous support of the board of directors. The executive committee is composed of five officers; the president, secretary, vice-presidents and the treasurer.

Its purpose is to present ideas and issues and for the Board to vote on. The Board of Directors delegates a number of functions and power to the four board committees; audit, nominating, strategic planning and governance. The audit committee is responsible for the legal and financial overview (aspects). Its tasks in the organization include analyzing the financial reporting process, reviewing the system of internal control and management of financial risks, and monitoring the organization’s compliance with the laws and regulations of the community. The role of the nominating committee is to evaluate and elect candidates to the Board of Directors. The strategic

planning committee is responsible for supporting the mission of the organization by presenting and evaluating future strategic activities.

The role of the governance committee is to assist the Board on matters relating to the effective management of the organization, by reviewing strategies and making recommendations based on the committee's assessment. The directors and administrators at the YMCA of Greater Montreal demonstrated an understanding of their legal obligations: at a general meeting for members in “ good standing” for the purpose of amending the Corporations letters of patent regarding the sale of property. Marcel Cote, Chairman of the Board of Directors, called a meeting concerning a building owned by the Corporation at 1475 Drummond Street. The meeting was held on the 6th day of February of 1992 where approximately 30 members participated. Mr. Cote requested the approval of a motion that allowed the corporation to offer “ apartments or rooms at a low cost, to persons with low incomes or persons with disabilities” .

The motion also stipulated that the Corporation could not transfer ownership of the building, except to a non-profit organization or a rental cooperative-housing project. The request was put to a vote and approved on a motion by B. Matte, and seconded by T. Gillespie Note: The 3-page document available in the appendix 2 is a photocopy of the official minutes of the meeting that took place in 1992. Organizational Structure According to a 1981 internal document, the organizational structure of the YMCA of Greater Montreal is divided into several departments.

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the overall guidance of the organization. Directly below are five departments, which include the administrative services, operations, human resources, external relations, and funding development. Each department is responsible for specific aspects of the organization, which support the local member associations. Provision of administrative support systems The administration department is responsible for all the financial, legal, structural, and internal information needs of the organization and the member associations.

These areas of responsibility are managerial in nature, which requires a sharing of information between employees to ensure effective use of human resources. The financial control in the framework refers to the management of purchases, payroll, and taxes. Operations Management The department of operations is responsible for identifying needs, budgeting resources, coordinating programs and activities, and marketing for the local member associations. Human Resources Planning and Development The department of human resources is responsible for labor relations, staff and volunteer development, and the allocation of manpower within the organization.

External Relations The department of external relations is responsible for managing government relations, public and media relations, and associations with national and international YMCAs. Government relations includes managing how legislation affects the orientation of the organization.

Funding Development The department of funding is responsible for managing the financial support received from the corporate sector, the YMCA foundation, government grants, and Centraide support. Membership Policy The Membership Policy, adopted in 1978, described four categories of

members, each with its rights and responsibilities. The program ensures that “ a commitment to essential democratic principles and the development of a supportive environment” is established to provide members with a “ self-sustaining and open association”. In 1978, the four categories of membership implemented into the structure of YMCA were; Association, Honorary Association, Association Life, and Program membership.

The association membership is open to all persons who have previously contributed as employees to support the mission and values of the YMCA. Associate members may participate in policy decisions, elections and hold office. The honorary association membership were elected by the Greater Montreal YMCA Board. It was granted to those who had served as previous association members, but who had no rights or responsibilities in terms of participation. The association life membership was granted to association members, continuing their responsibilities and rights as participants, who had already served a long tenure with the YMCA.

The program membership was reserved for individuals who participated in program activities by paying a fee for the membership. The membership fee was calculated from the associated administrative costs. Volunteers and Employees The wide range of services offered by YMCA Canada creates a wealth of opportunity for people of all skill levels and interests. Furthermore, the YMCA of Greater Montreal offers a training program for new employees and/or volunteers to learn new employment skills, CPR, fitness instruction, and leadership. At the local YMCAs in the Greater Montreal area, there are approximately 1, 700 volunteers and 1, 200 employees working to support the mandate of the YMCA.

These tasks include: fitness instruction and personal training, working with seniors, children or teenagers, fundraising, and special events. The YMCAs across Canada offer excellent benefits and salaries to their full and part time employees. Full-time employees are entitled to a comprehensive health benefits package and pension plan. Part-time employees are simply offered the pension plan. Programs, Activities and Policies The central governance of the YMCA of Greater Montreal establishes the guidelines for programs and activities for each member association. The 2002-2003 annual report of the YMCA of Greater Montreal indicates that 129, 038 people participated in the programs and activities.

This is an increase of 2794 (2%) from the previous year. Fitness Instructor Training Program The purpose of the training program is to “ offer nationally recognized certification in specific areas of physical fitness” . The program is taught in three phases, over a total of 65 hours. The course prepares the participants with the necessary skills to lead and instruct YMCA members in fitness activities. The minimum age requirement is 16 years.

An up-to-date certification in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is also required. International Language School The language school has been in operation since 1965; when it was created in response to the local community's request for courses in the two official languages of the country. The courses are available to foreign and local residents in five different languages; including English, French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. The courses are intensive, focusing on four essential language skills; conversation, listening, grammar, and pronunciation. A placement test is



administered to classify the students by level. There are computerized language labs available for certain courses.

The average class size is between 5 and 15 students. The YMCA hires native speakers with university training to teach the courses. Teenagers, aged 9 to 17 years old, can take intensive courses during the summer. During the school year, these courses are offered on Saturdays. The cost of registration is based on language and number of hours per week the course is offered.

An additional fee is required of foreign students applying for the first time. A \$20 surcharge is applied for registrations after the deadline. International Policy The international programs established by the YMCA Montreal have two main goals: “ to inform and educate by encouraging local participation of people in international issues; and to develop and strengthen partnership relationships between local and overseas YMCAs” 5. Participation is encouraged through educational activities and exchanges with overseas partners. The YMCA of Greater Montreal upholds these goals by “ informing the population about local and overseas initiatives that are based on community development and social justice principles”.

These initiatives include a newsletter, special events, kiosks, and activities in local YMCA centers. **Preschool Programs** The pre-school programs are designed to create “ an atmosphere for developing social skills, confidence and the child’s autonomy” . The core values taught are caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. The program is designed for children aged 2 to 5 years old.

A ratio of 1 adult to 6 children is kept at all times. A typical day in the program includes time spent in the pool, which teaches the children confidence, and in the gym, which allows the children to develop their motor skills. Some of the restrictive conditions include the fact that the children must be toilet-trained and that snacks must be healthy. Privacy Law The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act was passed to protect Canadians from misuse of their personal information. The act came into effect in three stages, with the full implementation occurring in January 2004.

It covers all personal information that is collected, disclosed and/or used by private organizations in the course of commercial activities; online or in the real world. Under the act, a complaint can be filed to the Privacy Commissioner of Canada for the following reasons:

- You run into any difficulties obtaining your personal information
- An organization covered by the Act refuses to correct information you consider inaccurate or incomplete
- You suspect your personal information has been improperly collected, used or disclosed, or
- You believe an organization is not following any provision of the law.

YMCA Canada offers an online privacy policy, which indicates that “no personal information is collected” from its visitors. The only personal information that is collected is voluntary such as, email address and mailing address. The YMCA Canada website explains the cookie technology, which is used to collect non-personal information, such as name of ISP, date and time of site access, previous and following website accessed. YMCA has safeguards to ensure that the information that is collected is not disclosed or shared for any other purposes.

The YMCA protects its own personal information by stating “ Any images, graphics, multimedia or content is copyrighted by YMCA Canada and may only be used in the manner provided for in these Terms and Conditions” .

**Equitable Access** The equitable access policy was implemented by the YMCA Montreal to “ allow the greatest number of individuals possible to participate” 4 in all the activities offered. This program is possible because the activities program is based on the principle of shared costs. Eligibility is based on the fulfillment of three distinct criteria. The first is “ proof of the gross family income” . The report of family income is necessary to establish an applicants’ ability to pay.

The application must include proof of income for all members of the applicants’ family who live at the same household. A list of the documents required based on situation is as follows:

- Claim booklet if under social assistance.
- Most recent notice of assessment – federal form (T-451) or provincial (TPF-98).
- Employment insurance certificate.

**Membership Agreement** The use of the YMCA facilities is reserved for members and their guests. These facilities include cardiovascular exercise stations (treadmills, stair-masters, and stationary bicycles), an indoor jogging track, a gymnasium, a 20-meter pool, squash courts, a free weight room, and several studios for instructional classes. There are several types of annual membership available based on age and student status. The age categories include child (age 0-12), teen (age 12-14), young adult (age 15-17), regular membership (age 18-60), and senior (age 60+).

A student membership discount rate is offered with a proof of full-time status. Additionally, there is a membership Plus offered. It includes access to the Plus private locker room, equipped with a whirlpool, sauna, lounge and television. This membership is only available to adults and seniors.

There is a \$15 administrative fee applicable to each category of membership. The YMCA centers provide members the option to put their membership on hold for 1 to 3 months, once per year. Financial Assessment Financial Statements The YMCA of Greater Montreal has its fiscal year end in May. The financial statements are audited by Samson Belair Deloitte & Touche. Some observations of the financial statements indicate: The statement of operations for the year ended May 31st 2002, indicated that revenue for Program Activities had increased by \$3, 130, 481 to \$18, 177, 774 from the previous year, an increase of 20%. This event is partially explained by the fact that the Downtown YMCA moved into its new facility in January of 2001, which raised registrations for programs.

Donations for the year 2002 increased by 69% from the previous year, to \$210, 391. This is explained by the successful campaigns of the Foundation implemented during the year. Under the expenses for the year ended 2002, Rent Expense increase by over 400%, to \$558, 749. This increase is a result of a temporary move of the Downtown YMCA Residence to a rented facility in 2001. The funding expense that went to Employee Development in 2001 was increased by 40%, to \$812, 523 for 2002.

The statement of financial position as at May 31st 2002, indicated the holdings of Cash and Short-Term Deposits increased by 150% between 2001

and 2002. A partial explanation for this increase is explained by the 35% decrease in Accounts Receivable. Foundation The Montreal YMCA Foundation was established to “ ensure long-term funding” of the organization and all its members, in order to provide access to all programs and services for the community. Furthermore, the Foundation “ offers financial assistance to more than 4, 000 people” in the Greater Montreal area. The operation of the Foundation is delegated to different departments within the organization; governors, honorary members, the chairman, the president of the foundation, and members of the advisory board.

These departments work together to provide guidance and direction for the Foundation, “ to secure the organization’s long-term independence and viability” . The Foundation raises funds through campaigns, special events, and endowments. An annual golf tournament is an example of a special event. In 2002, the YMCA Golf Tournament held at the Pinegrove Golf and Country Club drew over 150 people (players). Among the sponsors of the event were the Bank of Montreal, Imperial Tobacco Canada, and Standard Life.

The event was successful in raising \$52, 121, all of which was used to finance youth programs in the community. Startup Business Fund In December of 1986, the YMCA launched a program that would award selected entrepreneurs a grant for setting up their own businesses. The program, conceived by Al Hatton of the Montreal YMCA, was designed to finance eight Youth Enterprise Centers across Canada in a 3 year period. It was estimated that 849 jobs would be created, 113 of them in Montreal.

A screening process was established to narrow the candidates to 15 people between the ages of 16 and 30 years old. These individuals received training on how to set up a business and seek startup capital. The federal government agreed to cover the projected costs in three installments, based on the progression and stability of the project. A payment of 30% was issued when the candidates were selected. Another 30% was paid when the project was started and the remaining 40% on the condition that the jobs lasted at least two years.

The program was created because of a growing concern that the unemployment rate was rising, especially among the younger generation. Government Regulations Partnership Contract In a email received by Benoit Tremblay, director of marketing and development at the Greater Montreal YMCA, a draft provided by the City of Montreal was attached concerning the establishing of a partnership with organizations in the field of sport and recreation. The partnership contract is in French. The City of Montreal and the offeree, whomever that may be, are described on the first page. Within the subject matter of a contract, a distinction must be made between a promise, and a representation which is a statement of a past or present fact.

(Funk & Wagnalls, p. 1644) The draft contract Partenariat – Convention avec contribution financiere prescribed by the City of Montreal, provides representations (definitions) of their relevant positions. The social significance of a contract refers to the “ assumption and shifting of risk”.

(Funk & Wagnalls, p. 644) In the City draft, the civil liability insurance is shifted from the city and assumed by the organization. The doctrine of

freedom of a contract assumes that there is bargaining equality between the parties.

However, due to complex business systems nowadays, governments have legislated doctrines that can restrict this freedom. (Funk & Wagnalls, p. 1644) In the City draft, an example of this restriction of freedom is revealed in clause 7. 4.

1, which obliges that any contribution above \$100, 000 must be verified according to article 107. 9 of the laws governing cities and towns.

Conclusion: Strengths and Weaknesses  
The YMCA has a rich history , partly because of the members “ in top political and financial circles who clearly recognize the key social and community role” of the institution. An important factor of the continued success (continual expansion) of the YMCA as an organization has been its vision towards the future. An example of this vision was presented in a document over 20 years ago as a summary to the membership policy overview. The document stated that “ the strengthening of the role of volunteer structures, the practices of recruitment, informing, consulting, and decision-making at the local level is critical to future growth”.

At the time, the membership policy was viewed “ as a tool to actualizing ” the vision of expansion. Today, the YMCA of Greater Montreal served more than 125, 000. It has provided leadership and support to this and other communities within the legal framework of not-for-profit organizations. Through the years, the association has met the needs of the people and it continues to strive for greater visibility in the future. The association does not rest on its laurels. It has recently published a document entitled Vision

2005 which outlines its view of the future based on consultations with volunteers, staff and partners.

A video clip of a television commercial on the YMCA web site states “ We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities” . This expresses clearly the principles of the YMCA. The 2002 annual golf tournament lists among its twenty-six sponsors Imperial Tobacco Canada Limited. This choice of sponsor does not match the spirit or the mandate of the YMCA. For years now, tobacco sponsorship of sporting events has been controversial at the very least.

Assessment Doing this assignment provided the basis for what might be an interesting organization to do an internship. It allowed me to learn more about the organization than can be obtained on their web site. It also provided me an opportunity to work with personnel at the Concordia University Library Archives. More recent versions of the articles used in the paper were not available. I was able to obtain information directly from a former executive director of the Downtown YMCA. Other information was provided by others referred to me by the former director.

Unfortunately, the administrators were not able to receive me for an interview . References Brochures Equitable Access Policy, brochureInternational Programs, brochure Fitness Instructor Training Program, brochure Preschool Programs, brochure Dictionary Standard Dictionary of the English Language, “ Business Law and Wills”, Special Supplementary Features, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, Comprehensive International Edition, p. 1635-1672. Electronic Documents YMCA Canada, “



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5 Appendix 1: YMCA Canada – Corporate Governance Appendix 2: Minutes of Special and General Meeting Appendix 3: Metro Staff Organizational Structure Appendix 4: Montreal Y. M. C. A – Membership Policy Appendix 5: Partenariat – Convention avec contribution financiere

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