



Achieving the goal of building  
better futures for women  
and their families

## Introduction

In June 2004, our Board of Directors and Senior Management Team defined a new strategic direction for YWCA Vancouver. Together, we reaffirmed our overarching vision of “achieving women’s equality” and shaped a new mission statement that defines our role and purpose and reflects the culture of the organization.

We also developed a Five-Year Strategic Focus for the organization, identifying two areas for concentrated effort in advocacy and program development:

### *1) A Healthy Start for Children*

To support the development of a universal child care system, based on research and evidence and in collaboration with pan-Canadian advocacy efforts, in order to:

- support the healthy development of children;
- build a strong economy; and
- achieve women’s equality.

### *2) Healthy Choices for Youth*

Build on the YWCA presence in schools in order to:

- promote healthier and more confident girls;
- foster mutual respect and equality between girls and boys; and
- encourage youth to assume responsibility for social and community issues.

In the past three years, we have made solid progress on both initiatives. Healthy Choices for Youth has been fully operationalized, with expansion plans underway, and is now integrated in our listing of Core Service areas.

Our advocacy to advance a universal system of quality child care continues to be a key priority for the YWCA. We recognize that a long-term commitment is required to realize this vision. Changes in federal direction in recent years – away from direct investment in provision of services, such as child care, and towards tax incentives and direct payments to individuals – have led us to reframe our child care advocacy strategy. Our approach is outlined in the Advocacy section of this plan.

## Advocacy and Core Service Areas

This plan defines high-level strategic directions for Advocacy and all Core Service areas for the organization. It also documents our progress and serves as a guide for departmental activities and program development, as they relate to the ongoing, mission-based work of the YWCA.

Underpinning our strategic plan is the Balanced Scorecard Performance Measurement System, which we initiated in 2004 and is now fully implemented, tracking performance in all YWCA programs and departments. The strategic directions highlighted in this plan will be integrated into our 2008 Balanced Scorecard, translating mission into action and action into outcomes, as we move forward to achieve the desired future for the YWCA and those we serve.



## Vision

To achieve women's equality

## Mission

To touch lives and build better futures for women and their families through advocacy and integrated services that foster economic independence, wellness, and equal opportunities

## Strategic Plan

### ADVOCACY

Universal Child Care

Violence  
Against Women

Affordable Housing

Single Moms

Work/Life Balance  
&  
Family-Friendly  
Workplace

### CORE SERVICE AREAS

Child Care Operations

Crabtree Corner

Employment Services

Health + Fitness

Hotel & Housing

International Services

Mentorship

Single Mothers' Services

Youth

Finance

Fund Development

Human Resources

Marketing and Communications

Sustainability

Volunteer Services

## Balanced Scorecard

Serve the Client

Run the Business

Learn & Grow

Be Financially Healthy

## Our 2007/2008 Strategic Plan At-a-Glance

ADVOCACY STRATEGIES	RANGE
	Short-term 0-2 years Mid-term 2-5 years Long-term 5-10 years
• Targeted engagement of business leaders to support public investment in child care	Short-term
• Promote family friendly workplace practices to Lower Mainland employers	Ongoing
• Integrate advocacy messages (housing, anti-violence, work/life balance & single moms) in YWCA materials & CEO speaking opportunities	Ongoing

CORE SERVICE AREA	STRATEGIES	RANGE
		Short-term 0-2 years Mid-term 2-5 years Long-term 5-10 years
Child Care Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess opportunities to expand child care operations without increasing YWCA child care deficit</li> <li>Educate parents, YWCA supporters, and government officials about the true cost of quality care</li> </ul>	Ongoing Short to mid-term
Crabtree Corner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess feasibility of capital expansion</li> <li>Expand community programs as funding &amp; child care becomes available</li> </ul>	Mid to long-term Mid to long-term
Employment Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribute to discussion on the Canada/BC Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)</li> <li>Assess opportunities to expand employment services for women, youth, multi-barriered clients or retirees</li> </ul>	Short-term Mid-term
Health + Fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on member growth &amp; retention to build a loyal &amp; stable membership (emphasis on workplace wellness)</li> <li>Develop business plan for capital improvements &amp; possible locker room expansion</li> <li>Provide training &amp; development for volunteer instructors &amp; coaches</li> </ul>	Short-term Short to mid-term Ongoing
Hotel & Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build partnerships with housing providers to improve access for single moms &amp; at-risk women</li> <li>Open Coquitlam single moms housing project in Fall 2009</li> <li>Explore new opportunities to develop housing for single moms and marginalized women</li> <li>Undertake hotel expansion as market conditions or funding opportunities warrant</li> </ul>	Ongoing Mid-term Mid to long-term Mid to long-term
International Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement youth-at-risk project in Russia</li> <li>Provide support to the newly formed YWCA of Russia</li> <li>Explore new opportunities to share YWCA Vancouver best practices in other countries</li> </ul>	Short-term Ongoing Ongoing

CORE SERVICE AREA	STRATEGIES	RANGE
		Short-term 0-2 years Mid-term 2-5 years Long-term 5-10 years
Mentorship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement new mentorship initiatives as funding &amp; partnership opportunities arise</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Single Mothers' Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand Single Mothers' Services as opportunities arise &amp; funding is available</li> </ul>	Short to mid-term
Youth - <i>Welcome to My Life</i> and <i>Boyz</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand <i>Welcome to My Life</i> to two new school districts in 2008</li> <li>Research &amp; develop <i>Boyz</i> program &amp; pilot in 2008</li> <li>Explore additional sources for volunteer facilitators</li> </ul>	Short to mid-term Short-term Short to mid-term
Balanced Scorecard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop new scorecards as new programs are undertaken</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build capital reserve through operating surpluses and undesignated bequests</li> <li>Ensure revenue producing areas of the organization are 50% or more of revenue generation</li> <li>Ensure annual balanced budgets</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing
Fund Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build endowment through planned gifts</li> <li>Increase major gifts from individuals &amp; corporations</li> <li>Conduct capital campaign for Coquitlam housing project</li> <li>Assess feasibility of endowment campaign and conduct campaign if volunteer leadership can be recruited</li> </ul>	Ongoing Ongoing Short-term Mid to long-term
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update Intranet to enhance interactivity</li> <li>Monitor recruitment &amp; retention strategies to ensure we remain competitive</li> <li>Implement &amp; assess employee workplace wellness program</li> </ul>	Short to mid-term Ongoing Short to mid-term
Marketing and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase print &amp; broadcast coverage to support organizational objectives</li> <li>Fully implement new brand &amp; monitor/evaluate impact</li> <li>Fully implement new website &amp; monitor/evaluate impact</li> <li>Monitor internal/external communications to address diversity in program delivery &amp; build/retain a skilled workforce</li> </ul>	Ongoing Short to mid-term Short to mid-term Short to mid-term
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Hotel/Residence environmental program</li> <li>Conduct review of purchasing practices</li> <li>Ensure sustainable features in Coquitlam housing project</li> <li>Ensure reserve funds are invested through socially responsible investment screens</li> </ul>	Short-term Short-term Mid-term Ongoing
Volunteer Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize group volunteer opportunities</li> <li>Develop new volunteer appreciation events/materials</li> <li>Develop volunteer feedback mechanism</li> <li>Engage more youth volunteers</li> </ul>	Ongoing Short to mid-term Short to mid-term Mid to long-term

## The Current Environment

In 2007, we conducted research on key issues affecting our clients and analyzed the information in relation to our service delivery and advocacy efforts. The research results reinforce front-line evidence gathered through YWCA programs.

In terms of women's equality, we see that Canadian women enjoy a measure of freedom and legal equality not experienced by most women in most countries around the world. Our equality rights are entrenched in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and we have made great progress on many fronts, including the education of women. As many women as men now have university degrees and young women are actually better educated than their male counterparts. Yet, public policy and prevailing social norms still discourage many women from assuming a full and equal role in society.

There is strong evidence of this in the 2006 edition of "Women in Canada", the Statistics Canada report which tracks progress on gender equality. The report shows that, over ten years, there has been little progress towards gender equality on key social indicators, and even a backwards trend on some. For example, although women now comprise half the paid labour force, there has been no change in the gender earnings gap. Women working full-time still earn just 71 cents for every dollar earned by men and numerous studies confirm that women still carry a disproportionate share of unpaid work – housework, child and elder care.

We also see that women's share of senior management positions has actually dropped – falling from 27 percent to 22 percent over ten years. We have long believed that the first female executives would lead the way for other women to assume these roles, but the statistics show that the path of senior leadership is one that fewer women are able, or are choosing, to follow.

At the same time, employers are increasingly concerned about skilled labour shortages across sectors and executives are naming retention of high caliber employees as a top priority. However, work/life conflict and lack of quality child care are key reasons why women are struggling with, and in many cases forgoing, these roles.

British Columbia's vibrant economy has boosted employment rates and economic security for many residents, but not everyone is benefiting equally. Increases to provincial welfare rates in the past year have been most

welcome, but BC's wealth gap is still the largest in Canada and new research demonstrates a strong link between income inequality and child mortality rates. While the economy appears strong, our low birth rate and aging population raise concerns about long-term competitiveness and sustainability.

Although we have seen a recent reduction in child poverty rates, single moms and their children remain the poorest families in BC; they have the most difficulty finding affordable housing, the least chance of owning their own homes and they are among the most likely to go hungry. This is a common experience for many YWCA clients. Contradictory social policies that force single parents into the workforce without access to child care, housing or training, serve only to reinforce this social inequality and the social costs that result.

Vancouver has now been identified as Canada's least affordable City for housing. This means that the provision of affordable housing for women and their families must assume even greater prominence in our advocacy and service delivery plans.

If housing is the foundation of stability for single moms, then child care and employment are the next steps to economic independence. Single moms often need to improve their employment potential to increase their income. Yet without child care, a single mom can't study or work. And without a decent income, she can't afford quality child care. At the YWCA, we see there is much to be gained by assisting women at the lower end of the income spectrum to enhance their employability, while supporting the best-educated generation of women in our history to use their skills and education fully.

The increasing diversity of the Lower Mainland population is reflected in the YWCA's client base and will continue to be an important factor in the Lower Mainland economy; as soon as 2010, all new labour force growth is expected to come from immigration. We are proud to employ a highly diverse workforce, providing services that respect and meet the needs of our clients and position the YWCA to compete effectively in the competitive labour market.

Research and evidence reinforce the critical role of YWCA Vancouver in the Lower Mainland, providing essential services and advocating for social change, as we build better futures for women and their families.



## Advocacy

### *Profile and Strategies*

This section outlines priority issues where YWCA Vancouver will continue to play a role in advocating for social change to promote the full realization of women's equality. Our work aims to address the systemic causes of poverty and social inequality and the particular challenges faced by single moms.

As always, our advocacy positions are grounded in our front-line service experience and informed by current research and evidence. We will continue to collaborate with key partners such as the UBC Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) and women's equality organizations, and will help advance the advocacy work of YWCA Canada and its member agencies.

### **UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE**

Child care is central to our mission of providing better futures for women and their families. We have consistently advocated for public investment to build a national child care system that is accessible for all children and this will continue to be our primary advocacy focus.

In 2004, we renewed our historic commitment by establishing the following goal:

Advance the development of a universal child care system, based on research and evidence and in collaboration with pan-Canadian efforts, in order to:

- support the healthy development of children;
- build a strong economy; and
- achieve women's equality.

Since then, we have worked to establish YWCA Vancouver as a credible, leading voice on this complex issue. We implemented a three-part strategy of government relations, business engagement and public education; we developed information materials and profiled our position in YWCA Contact and on our website; and we engaged a network of supporters through our "child care ambassadors" program. We worked with UBC HELP to conduct a literature review on the economic benefit/cost of universal child care, concluding that the benefits outweigh the costs. With YWCA Canada, we costed Vancouver's vision for a comprehensive child care system, and demonstrated a two to one return on investment in quality programs.

When significant Federal investment in a child care system appeared likely, we directed our advocacy efforts to ensuring evidence-based investment and accountability for these public funds. We were disappointed when the federal government moved to a different kind of investment, canceling bi-lateral transfer agreements and implementing a taxable direct payment of \$1,200 a year per child. While this income support has some value, it will not produce the benefits of direct investment in a system of quality child care options.

At present, we believe the best approach for advancing our child care vision is through the business community. The growing importance of women's participation in the economy has created an important opportunity to educate employers who are feeling the impact of the current labour shortage and are concerned about attracting and retaining female employees. We will put special focus on engaging business and community leaders in supporting our advocacy work. As well, we will continue to collaborate with pan-Canadian advocacy efforts and UBC HELP, and build on our child care ambassadors initiative.



We know that a long-term commitment is required to realize our vision of a universal child care system for Canada. We will continue to carry the message that a universal child care system – offering a range of options – is the key to leveling the field for all women and children. It is also fundamental to positioning Canada as a leader in the global knowledge-based economy. The benefits are thoroughly researched – greater employability for all parents, higher income earned, higher taxes paid, enhanced child development and lower costs of welfare and social services.

**WORK / LIFE BALANCE  
& FAMILY FRIENDLY WORKPLACE**

At the YWCA, we understand that work/life conflict is a societal issue, requiring a systemic response. Most families today need two incomes to manage, and frequently both partners are under pressure to work increasingly long hours.

We know that both women and men are affected by role overload, but research shows that it is women who are affected to a greater degree. Although some men may be playing a more active role at home, women still carry a disproportionate share of responsibility for unpaid work – housework, child and elder care. Surveys show that half of female executives would change jobs to achieve better balance and that flexibility is valued over salary. Flexibility is also emerging as a major concern for students and young graduates.

We will continue to encourage broader acceptance of family friendly workplace practices, offering expertise to organizations seeking to improve productivity, retention and the working environment. As well, we will advocate for changes that address the imbalance in unpaid care – such as universal child care and pension or parental leave reforms that encourage men to play a stronger role in the domestic sphere.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women is a systemic social problem that transcends class, culture and socio-economic conditions. In the absence of supports that enable women to live autonomously – child care, housing, training and legal aide – many women return repeatedly to abusive partners.

We know that domestic violence is a key factor that drives women into welfare dependency. It also has long-term, inter-generational implications and children who witness abuse are much more likely to be overtly aggressive.

The YWCA will continue to raise awareness of the implications of violence in society and to educate youth about the behaviours and attitudes that are fundamental to healthy relationships. We will advocate for reforms and supports that enable women to make a successful transition to economic independence.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Vancouver is now identified Canada’s least affordable city for housing. With limited rental stock suitable for families – and virtually no new rental construction – the need for affordable family housing has never been greater. This problem is particularly acute for single moms. At the YWCA, we are seeing lengthy waiting lists and longer crisis stays at the YWCA Hotel/Residence. New investment in social housing has been geared primarily to assisted living for seniors and to people living with addictions and mental illnesses. While these are worthy initiatives, they do not address the challenges faced by single moms and their children. We will work to build understanding of the importance of housing to creating a healthy society and supporting the autonomy and independence of women.

**SINGLE MOMS**

In BC today, 20% of families are headed by single moms – half of whom live in poverty. They have great difficulty obtaining affordable housing and are among the most likely citizens to go hungry. These are common experiences for many YWCA clients.

Recent work by Dr. Paul Kershaw, UBC Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), documents what single moms and the YWCA have known for some time – the poverty in which many single moms and their children live is not a result of poor personal choices, but rather a combination of factors, including lack of child care and housing, low minimum wage rates, reductions to funding for education, as well as the challenge of balancing parental and work responsibilities. The YWCA has a special role to play in advocating on behalf of single mothers to reduce the barriers to their full participation in education, employment and economic independence.

**LEGAL ADVOCATE**

Many of our clients need support in addressing a range of legal issues, such as restraining orders, child custody and access, eligibility for income assistance or social housing, and many others. YWCA Vancouver provides such assistance on an individual basis, and also seeks to educate employees, volunteers and clients through ongoing workshops on a range of relevant topics.



2007 / 2008 ADVOCACY STRATEGIES	RANGE
Targeted engagement of business leaders to support public investment in child care	Short to mid-term
Promote family friendly workplace practices to Lower Mainland employers	Ongoing
Integrate advocacy messages (housing, anti-violence, work/life balance & single moms) in YWCA materials & CEO speaking opportunities	Ongoing

## Core Service Areas

This strategic plan gives direction to our external and internal Core Services in working towards their respective objectives, as they relate to the ongoing mission-based work of the organization.

### CHILD CARE OPERATIONS

#### *Profile and Strategies*

The YWCA knows that quality affordable child care is a top priority for parents, and that a national child care system is essential to maintaining a healthy society. Our advocacy in this area is well documented and we will continue this work into 2008 and beyond.

We operate four licensed child care centres which meet the diverse needs of families with children under six: Emma’s Child Care for teen moms; Citygate Child Care, specializing in children with special needs; Crabtree Corner Child Care Centre, the only short-term/emergency child care in BC, located in Vancouver’s downtown eastside; and Leslie Diamond Child Care, located at the YWCA Program Centre in downtown Vancouver. Our staff represent a range of cultural, ethnic, language and age groups, a distinct advantage in serving families where English is not spoken in the home.

Historically, the YWCA has specialized in infant/toddler care because the first three years represent the most critical period for child development; however, this is also the most expensive child care to operate. We remain committed to quality care, delivered by qualified, professional employees who are compensated appropriately, but parent fees and government funding do not cover the full cost. The shortfall that must be funded by the YWCA is currently about \$400,000 annually. It is important that we continue to evaluate our ability to provide these services on an ongoing basis. We are also committed to educating government officials, parents and the YWCA network about the true cost of child care.

In the past year, we have invested in improvements to our outdoor play spaces with support from BC’s Safe Play Space program.

Sadly, our waiting lists for child care range from 20 to 24 months and we see the challenges faced by parents from all walks of life as they struggle to work, study and contribute to their communities, while raising the next generation. Our interest in expanding child care operations to better meet this demand is constrained by the costs noted above, further evidence of the critical importance of public investment in a quality child care system.



2007 / 2008 CHILD CARE OPERATIONS STRATEGIES	RANGE
Assess opportunities to expand child care operations without increasing YWCA child care deficit.	Ongoing
Educate parents, YWCA supporters, and government officials about the true cost of quality care.	Short to mid-term



**CRABTREE CORNER**

*Profile and Strategies*

Crabtree Corner provides a healthy and secure environment for women and families in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, one of Canada’s most impoverished neighbourhoods.

At YWCA Crabtree Corner, we serve a diverse and challenging population, with about 90% of clients identifying as aboriginal. In addition, we serve participants from Chinese, Vietnamese, Iranian, Latin American, Afro-Canadian, Korean and European backgrounds.

Since moving to our new location in November 2003, Crabtree Corner has seen a four-fold increase in service, with client numbers up to 1,700 women and children each week. Annually, we serve more than 52,000 meals to these clients.

Crabtree Corner offers a rich array of services to help improve quality of life for our clients, including emergency child care, transition housing, and a range of food, nutrition, parenting, family recreation, and support programs. Our Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Prevention Project is designed to provide support to parents and inter-generational caregivers who are raising children with FASD. An Aboriginal Infant Development Consultant supports families with infants who may have developmental delays.

Our facility also houses the Sheway Program, a pregnancy outreach initiative sponsored by the YWCA, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and Vancouver Native Health. Sheway provides health and social service supports to pregnant and parenting women who have substance use issues.

YWCA Crabtree Corner employs a peer support model of service delivery. Most Crabtree Corner employees are women who have overcome challenges similar to those faced by our clients. Our employees are outstanding role models for the women they serve, and their personal example helps to reduce barriers to women accessing services at Crabtree Corner. As well, parents are actively involved in all aspects of Crabtree programs from planning and implementation to evaluation.

We anticipate demand for Crabtree Corner services will remain strong, but we are limited by a lack of space for community and child care programs. There is the potential to build an additional 1,450 square feet on the third floor of the building. We will explore the feasibility of capital and child care expansion to increase service capacity and to ensure we meet the needs of this community.

2007 / 2008 CRABTREE CORNER STRATEGIES	RANGE
Assess feasibility of capital expansion	Mid to long-term
Expand community programs as funding & child care becomes available	Mid to long-term

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES**

*Profile and Strategies*

YWCA Vancouver is one of the largest and most respected employment service providers in the Lower Mainland. Our innovative programs encourage youth, job seekers and professionals to secure meaningful employment.

Consistent with other YWCA programs, we are seeing an increasingly diverse client population, which we are proud to serve with an equally diverse staff team. Many of our clients also face additional barriers to successful integration in the labour force. Because our approach to service delivery is inclusive of all, we believe we are particularly successful in helping clients integrate in the Lower Mainland community.

Most YWCA employment programs are currently funded through Service Canada. However, there are plans to devolve authority for employment services to BC, through the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA). This could result in significant changes to program design, delivery and funding. We will seek opportunities to participate in discussions about the future of BC's employment services and work to ensure that the needs of YWCA clients are considered when key decisions are made.

With unemployment at historically low rates, YWCA clients with multiple barriers are benefiting from new opportunities to access meaningful employment. However, these clients require more intensive supports to make a successful and sustained connection with the labour market. Our

expertise in working with youth, marginalized women, aboriginal women and immigrants equips us well to link employers with these less traditional sources of labour. We will continue to build on this area of strength, as we position YWCA services in the context of the changing federal/provincial landscape.

Any period of change may also open new doors and we will continue to seek opportunities to support our clients in achieving economic independence. Priorities for new employment programs include: services for women and youth, and initiatives that link employers with non-traditional sources of labour, such as multi-barriered clients or retirees. New initiatives will be assessed in terms of alignment with our mission and existing programs and impact on the proportion of government funding in the organization's operating budget.

2007 / 2008 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES STRATEGIES	RANGE
Contribute to discussion on the Canada/BC Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA)	Short-term
Assess opportunities to expand employment services for women, youth, multi-barriered clients or retirees	Mid-term

**HEALTH + FITNESS**



**Profile and Strategies**

The Health + Fitness Centre is a revenue generating, co-ed fitness facility that provides members with services that are consistent with the YWCA's core beliefs. Our 30,000 square foot facility provides innovative personalized and group fitness programming, an ozone pool and the latest in cardio & weight equipment.

In 2007, we developed a comprehensive fitness instructor program, ensuring that high quality fitness programming continues to be provided by our team of volunteer fitness leaders. We also invested in new cardio and weight equipment, and implemented strategies to improve member service. Our successful operation enables us to serve 2,700 members, including subsidized access for YWCA clients and others in financial need.

Last year, we were also pleased to sponsor the First Nations Snowboard Team by holding three weekend training camps for 24 aboriginal athletes who are committed to developing their potential towards the ultimate goal of participating in future Olympics. Athletes were hosted at the YWCA Hotel/Residence and the camps engaged YWCA trainers and contractors to provide expert advice on nutrition and training. As well, a special mentorship program has been established to support these promising young athletes.

We are currently developing a business plan for further capital improvements, including a possible locker room expansion. A stable membership base is fundamental to our ongoing successful operations. We will build on strategies currently in place to engender loyalty among current members, despite increasing competition in the marketplace. We will also build our group/corporate business clientele, linking our Health + Fitness service with our advocacy on workplace wellness and work/life balance.



2007 / 2008 HEALTH + FITNESS STRATEGIES	RANGE
Focus on member growth & retention to build a loyal & stable membership (emphasis on workplace wellness)	Short-term
Develop business plan for capital improvements & possible locker room expansion	Short to mid-term
Provide training & development for volunteer instructors & coaches	Ongoing

**HOTEL AND HOUSING**

*Profile and Strategies*

At the YWCA, we work to ensure that women and families in need have shelter. Support for single moms is a key focus for us, as they have the lowest incomes, the highest poverty rates, and the greatest difficulty accessing secure, affordable housing and child care. These women and their families are at great risk of living in unsafe and unhealthy environments. In Greater Vancouver, we address the hardships faced by single moms through a range of integrated services that includes affordable housing. We operate Munroe House, a second-stage transition house for women who have experienced abuse, and three housing communities for single moms: Semlin Gardens, Fraser Gardens and Crabtree Housing.

YWCA Crabtree Corner Housing is a unique program, providing supportive housing for pregnant and parenting women with substance use issues. Work continues on a long-term study with the BC Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health to determine the impact of supportive housing on these mothers and children in the perinatal period, and on key life domains related to longer-term health and well-being.

Vancouver is now identified as the least affordable location for housing in the country, and there has been virtually no new construction of rental accommodation suitable for families in recent years. Consequently, we are seeing longer waiting lists for our housing, and longer crisis and residential stays at the Hotel/Residence.

In 2007, we advanced plans to develop a 30-unit housing project for single mothers in Coquitlam. The City of Coquitlam will contribute the land through a 60-year lease at nominal rent; the YWCA will contribute \$1 million towards construction; and BC Housing will contribute

capital funding and will subsidize rents so that residents pay no more than 30% of their household incomes. The project will incorporate “green” building features and will meet Silver LEED environmental standards. Project completion is scheduled for Fall 2009.

As the need for housing for our clients has never been greater, our longer-term strategy involves developing more social housing for women in locations throughout the Lower Mainland. We are actively engaged in discussions with various governments, donors and community partners to realize this vision.

The YWCA Hotel/Residence is an excellent example of a fully-integrated social enterprise, providing affordable accommodation for travellers and generating revenue that sustains our community service work. It is also an important source of emergency and temporary housing for people in need. In the past year, the YWCA Hotel/Residence provided close to 24,000 room nights of subsidized accommodation to women in crisis, families in transition, students, seniors and refugees.

Consistent with our commitment to social, economic and environmental sustainability, we are planning capital improvements that will significantly improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The YWCA Hotel/Residence is located on land owned by the YWCA and current zoning will allow for a 70-room addition to be constructed above the existing main-floor platform. In 2005/06 we assessed the feasibility of developing Phase II of the Hotel/Residence. Due to current high construction costs and market volatility, we have determined not to proceed at this time. We will continue to monitor the market and, when conditions are right, hotel expansion could provide a valuable source of emergency and short-term housing for our community.

2007 / 2008 HOTEL AND HOUSING STRATEGIES	RANGE
Build partnerships with housing providers to improve access for single moms & at-risk women	Ongoing
Open Coquitlam single moms housing project in Fall 2009	Mid-term
Explore new opportunities to develop housing for single moms and marginalized women	Mid to long-term
Undertake hotel expansion as market conditions or funding opportunities warrant	Mid to long-term

**INTERNATIONAL SERVICES**

*Profile and Strategies*

Work continues on a four-year project in Russia, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and in partnership with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). The YWCA Employment and International Services Director is serving as the youth advisor for this project which is aimed at developing program models and services for youth-at-risk.

We continue to host senior delegates from various countries, including China and Korea who are interested in developing their own employment programs. As these opportunities unfold, we will determine how best to participate.

YWCA Vancouver was proud to support the Russian Association of Christian Women in forming the first ever YWCA of Russia, which was officially inaugurated at YWCA World Council in July 2007. Plans are underway to host a training/internship opportunity for the newly appointed President of the YWCA of Russia. YWCA Vancouver will also extend support to projects in Romania and Guyana, in partnership with other member agencies of YWCA Canada.

In conjunction with the World YWCA, we are exploring a possible program to integrate internationally trained individuals into the Canadian labour market. Support would be provided to workers who are in the process of immigrating, through YWCAs in their home countries. As well, we are in discussions with the Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, to bring YWCA best practices in mentorship and employment services to women facing multiple barriers in Pakistan.

2007 / 2008 INTERNATIONAL STRATEGIES	RANGE
Implement youth-at-risk project in Russia	Short-term
Provide support to the newly formed YWCA of Russia	Ongoing
Explore opportunities to share YWCA Vancouver best practices in other countries	Ongoing

**MENTORSHIP**

*Profile and Strategies*

Since 1991, the YWCA High School Mentorship Program has served over 1,000 young women from 15 to 18 by matching them with professional women in one-to-one mentoring relationships. This program is currently offered in select schools in the Lower Mainland – including Coquitlam, Langley and Vancouver – and is recognized as one of the pre-eminent school-to-career mentoring programs in Canada.

Our *Welcome To My Life* and *Boyz* Programs provide a school-based, inter-generational mentorship experience for Grade 7 girls and boys (see page 20).

Recently, we developed a new partnership with the Women in Leadership Foundation to support Grade 11 and 12 girls who are interested in science and technology. Last year, 15 young women participated in this program.

In addition to programs geared to young women, the YWCA operates mentorship programs to help men and women in their search for work. For more than four years, Career Links has been connecting YWCA employment clients with professionals and potential employers in their fields.

In 2006, we launched YWCA Connect to Success, a program that assists women to enter or re-enter the workforce with the help of a mentor. Last year this program served 114 women, including many single mothers and immigrants. We also provided mentors for members of the First Nations Snowboard Team, which is being sponsored by the YWCA Health + Fitness Centre.

In October 2007, we will host People Power – Building Capacity through Mentorship, a one-day conference that will bring the Lower Mainland mentorship community together to share best practices and experiences.

2007 / 2008 MENTORSHIP STRATEGIES	RANGE
Implement new mentorship initiatives as funding & partnership opportunities arise	Ongoing



**SINGLE MOTHERS' SERVICES**

*Profile and Strategies*

In partnership with community agencies across Vancouver, Single Mothers' Services provides single moms with group support, information, and referral to community services. In 2007, Single Mothers' Services continued to support our clients' goals related to enhancing their economic independence – an approach that is yielding tangible results like new jobs, new plans, and new training opportunities.

In 2007/2008, Single Mothers' Services will launch a new partnership with Langara College and the Langara Student Union, to provide lunch-hour meetings for students who are single mothers. As well, a new partnership with Burnaby Family Life will bring our program to Burnaby for the first time. Our single mothers' self-employment group, Passion Works, will continue to explore small business opportunities and build on our relationship with the EMBERS small business training program. We also continue to work with the Partners Task Group – a coalition of organizations working to better coordinate and expand services for young parents.

As well, we have an important role to play in advocating for public policy reforms that address the social inequalities that limit opportunity for so many single moms.

2007 / 2008 SINGLE MOTHERS' SERVICES STRATEGIES	RANGE
Expand Single Mothers' Services as opportunities arise & funding is available	Short to mid-term

**YOUTH**

**WELCOME TO MY LIFE AND BOYZ**

*Profile and Strategies*

YWCA Vancouver has long been committed to supporting youth as they make the difficult transition from childhood to adulthood. Our new work in this area builds on our long history and solid reputation for providing innovative and supportive programs.

In 2006, YWCA Vancouver partnered with the Vancouver School Board and the University of British Columbia’s Learning Exchange TREK Program to develop *Welcome to My Life* – an interactive program designed to help Grade 7 girls make a successful transition to high school. The goals of the program are to:

- promote healthier and more confident girls;
- foster mutual respect and equality between boys and girls; and
- encourage youth to assume responsibility for social and community issues.

*Welcome to My Life* engages girls in seven after-school sessions, and their parents in one evening session, and builds on work with adolescent girls previously undertaken by our Health + Fitness department.

It is facilitated by UBC Learning Exchange TREK students who receive 25 hours of facilitation training from YWCA staff, and earn academic credits towards the completion of their undergraduate degrees. The UBC facilitators are supported by mature, female volunteers and by Grade 10 and 11 girls who serve as mentors and role models for the Grade 7 girls, creating a unique, inter-generational mentoring framework.

Since inception, 13 schools have participated in *Welcome to My Life*. Notably, the majority of participants were

drawn from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Accordingly, our training program has been enhanced through workshops provided by Vancouver School Board consultants in Anti-Racism, Cultural Diversity and Special Needs.

In 2008, we aim to offer *Welcome to My Life* in additional school districts and expand service to as many as 16 schools.

The YWCA has recently embarked upon a parallel program for Grade 7 boys, notionally entitled *Boyz*. It will address boys’ concerns about entering the complex world of high school, examine issues of gender and the prevention of violence against women, and help define attitudes and behaviours that are fundamental to healthy relationships. *Boyz* will be piloted in Spring 2008.

A major impediment to the expansion of both initiatives is the limited supply of volunteer facilitators from UBC. In the time ahead, we will explore options for engaging volunteers from other post-secondary institutions and the general public.

Over the long-term, we will continue to assess opportunities for new programs that reflect the themes of social responsibility and equality that are fundamental to YWCA values and youth programming.

2007 / 2008 YOUTH STRATEGIES	RANGE
Expand <i>Welcome to My Life</i> to two new school districts in 2008	Short to mid-term
Research & develop <i>Boyz</i> program, pilot in 2008	Short-term
Explore additional sources for volunteer facilitators	Short to mid-term





**BALANCED SCORECARD**

*Profile and Strategies*

The Balanced Scorecard is a tool for the YWCA to communicate with employees and external stakeholders about the program outcomes and performance drivers through which we achieve our mission and strategic objectives.

The Balanced Scorecard strikes a balance among four financial and non-financial perspectives: Serve the Client, Run the Business, Learn and Grow and Be Financially Healthy. The Balanced Scorecard recognizes the importance of balancing these components to effectively implement organizational strategy.

Through the Balanced Scorecard, the YWCA monitors both its current performance including finances, client satisfaction, and business process results, as well as its efforts to improve processes, motivate and educate employees, and enhance information systems – its ability to learn and grow.

The Balanced Scorecard system is now fully implemented across the organization, with scorecards in place for all departments and programs. Program scorecards are used to report to donors and funders to demonstrate the success that clients achieve through the support of YWCA services.

We have aligned departmental and program scorecards to reflect the objectives in our strategic plan, allowing us to focus on those measures that are most critical to achieving success and our mission-based goals.

2007 / 2008 BALANCED SCORECARD STRATEGIES	RANGE
Develop new scorecards as new programs are undertaken	Ongoing

**FINANCE**

*Profile and Strategies*

The Finance department continues to focus on streamlining workflow processes and updating reporting systems to comply with evolving requirements from funders and regulatory agencies.

In 2007, the Finance and IT department expanded the availability and use of electronic systems and electronic transaction processing. This expanded capacity will support the organization’s family friendly workplace practices by facilitating telecommuting, when appropriate.

Because long-term reserves are critical to ensuring the stability and sustainability of the organization, the YWCA continues to focus on growing its reserves while diversifying its funding and programs to build a strong financial base. This diversification ensures that the YWCA is not dependent on any one source of funding, the loss of which could seriously impact the organization.

The YWCA has assets in land and buildings appraised at close to \$54 million. The annual contribution target to our capital reserve is reviewed every year. This contribution is required to maintain and appropriately replace our physical infrastructure. We will build our capital reserve primarily through annual contributions from operating surpluses and, to a lesser extent, through a portion of undesignated bequests and planned gifts, within the parameters established by Board policy.

2007 / 2008 FINANCE STRATEGIES	RANGE
Build capital reserve through operating surpluses and undesignated bequests	Ongoing
Ensure revenue producing areas of the organization are 50% or more of revenue generation	Ongoing
Ensure annual balanced budgets	Ongoing

**FUND DEVELOPMENT**

*Profile and Strategies*

To ensure long-term financial viability, the YWCA's Fund Development strategy is a diversified one that includes monthly giving, direct mail, major gifts, planned giving, special events and a thrift shop. The department exceeded its fundraising goal in 2006, and continues to work to increase community financial commitment to our mission by facilitating gifts in kind, legacy gifts, and membership in the YWCA Inner Circle.

In 2006/2007, significant funding was secured for the expansion of *Welcome To My Life*, our after school program for Grade 7 girls transitioning to Grade 8, as well as to develop a parallel program for Grade 7 boys.

In the coming year, we will continue with our capital campaign to raise \$1.0 million for our new single mothers' housing project in Coquitlam; a lead gift of \$500,000 from an anonymous individual donor has already been secured. The balance of funding for the project will be provided by BC Housing, with land contributed by the City of Coquitlam.

Over the past five years, we have increased emphasis on planned giving, allocating additional staffing resources in this area, with the knowledge that results will be realized over the long term. This approach is starting to produce results and remains appropriate.

The major proportion of undesignated planned gifts are allocated to the YWCA Endowment Fund, and this currently constitutes the primary method of building this Fund. In the longer term, we are interested in undertaking an endowment campaign, provided appropriate volunteer leadership can be recruited.

New Federal tax exemptions for gifts of publicly listed securities have resulted in the YWCA seeing an increase in gifts of stocks and we will continue to promote this opportunity to save capital gains tax to our individual donors and prospects.

The Fund Development Department also manages the YWCA Thrift Shop and oversees the YWCA's special events, including the Women of Distinction Awards, an event that celebrates and recognizes the achievements of inspirational women, and the Real Story competition, which invites high school students to write stories about women who inspire them. We are planning for the 25th Anniversary celebration of Women of Distinction in 2008.



2007 / 2008 FUND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES	RANGE
Build endowment through planned gifts	Ongoing
Increase major gifts from individuals & corporations	Ongoing
Conduct capital campaign for Coquitlam housing project	Short-term
Assess feasibility of endowment campaign and conduct campaign if volunteer leadership can be recruited	Mid to long-term

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

*Profile and Strategies*

Our employees mean everything to the YWCA; their skill and commitment is fundamental to achieving our mission and delivering excellent service to our 46,000 clients each year. Clearly, the creation of a dynamic, collaborative, highly skilled and diverse workforce must remain a top priority for YWCA Vancouver.

We are proud to employ a highly diverse workforce; 43% of our employees identify as being from visible minorities and 4% identify as aboriginal. This compares favourably with 2001 Census Canada data, which records a national average of 13.4% visible minorities and 3.3% aboriginal peoples. This diversity ensures that we are able to provide a superior level of service to clients from a range of cultures and backgrounds.

Despite today’s highly competitive labour market, YWCA Vancouver can boast an employee retention rate of 93% for 2006. We believe our success in attracting and retaining the best employees is due to our exceptional culture and workplace practices, which:

- ensure respect for employees as whole people;
- create a family friendly workplace; and
- facilitate work/life balance and workplace wellness for employees.

Our human resources practices are grounded in employee needs and reflect employee input. Our workplace wellness initiatives ensure that employees are physically and mentally fit, and focus on individual, community and environmental wellness.

In 2007, feedback from employee focus groups reinforced the critical importance of our culture and workplace practices to our success in maintaining a skilled workforce.

In 2008, we will continue to monitor our recruitment and retention results – as well as the results and practices of other leading employers – to ensure we remain competitive.

Women comprise the majority of our workforce and we are proud of our success in facilitating their participation, especially when so many employers are struggling to engage female employees. We will continue to encourage broader acceptance of family friendly workplace practices, offering expertise to organizations seeking to improve productivity, retention and the working environment. We are also keenly aware that women in Canadian society continue to manage a disproportionate share of unpaid care and we will continue to advocate for reforms that encourage men to play a stronger role in the domestic sphere.

The YWCA is committed to professional development to ensure that employees can effectively meet current and future challenges. Employees also understand the need to manage their own continuous learning and growth. In 2007, our emphasis has been on assisting staff to better serve clients with dual diagnoses – mental health and addictions.

YWCA Vancouver’s organizational structure is relatively flat and opportunities for advancement are therefore limited. However, we are able to provide employees with opportunities to gain new skills and experience through cross-functional teams and staff mentorship programs.

A tremendous source of pride are those employees who began their involvement with the organization as clients, successfully completed our programs, further developed their skills and education, and ultimately were hired by the YWCA. These employees are key contributors to our work and serve as role models for our client

2007 / 2008 HUMAN RESOURCES STRATEGIES	RANGE
Update Intranet to enhance interactivity	Short to mid-term
Monitor recruitment & retention strategies to ensure we remain competitive	Ongoing
Implement & assess employee workplace wellness program	Short to mid-term

**MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS**

*Profile and Strategies*

The Marketing and Communications department is responsible for internal and external marketing and communications strategies and initiatives. Our goals are to raise awareness of YWCA programs and services and increase donor support. The department also assists with advocacy and public education to support the achievement of the YWCA mission and vision.

In 2007, we launched a new YWCA brand to build stronger awareness of the YWCA that reflects our mission and activities, and resonates with donors, volunteers, employees, and the general public. Key elements include a new visual identity, a print and broadcast campaign that illustrates the range of YWCA services through the lens of the single moms, and a re-designed website.

We also continued to market the YWCA Hotel and Health + Fitness facilities and our diverse services through the

distribution of our newsletter Contact, print materials and media relations' exposure. Internally, we kept our employees informed through our internal e-newsletter, personal messages from the CEO, Communications Council meetings for all managers, Information and Referral Roundtables for front line staff, and Staff Breakfasts. We conducted the third annual Management Team on the Road, through which groups of senior managers visit all program staff at their work-sites. Feedback indicates that the visits are informative and provide employees with a closer connection to senior managers and the YWCA as a whole.

In the coming year, we will fully implement our new brand and begin to monitor and evaluate its impact and continue to assess our internal and external communications to ensure we are addressing diversity in our workplace and service delivery.

2007 / 2008 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES	RANGE
Increase print & broadcast coverage to support organizational objectives	Ongoing
Fully implement new brand & monitor/evaluate impact	Short to mid-term
Fully implement new website & monitor/evaluate impact	Short to mid-term
Monitor internal/external communications to address diversity in program delivery & build/retain a skilled workforce.	Short to mid-term



**SUSTAINABILITY**

*Profile and Strategies*

At the YWCA, we know that creating a healthy society requires an integrated vision, linking our social, economic and physical environment. We are committed to innovation that supports sustainability.

In 2007, we implemented various capital improvements at the YWCA Program Centre and Hotel/Residence to reduce energy and water consumption. We also commissioned an environmental audit of the Hotel/Residence. Based on this audit, capital improvements will be made to the Hotel/Residence to save energy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and achieve significant operating savings over time.

Also in 2007, we initiated a review of our purchasing policies to adopt practices which are aligned with our commitment to social, economic and environmental sustainability.

The value we place on sustainability is reflected in the conversion of our ornamental rooftop garden, located at the Hornby Street Program Centre, to a productive farm garden, providing fresh fruits and vegetables for women and children in YWCA programs.

We are committed to ensuring that any new YWCA development or redevelopment is “green” and we are pleased that our new housing project for single moms in Coquitlam will meet Silver LEED environmental standards.

2007 / 2008 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES	RANGE
Implement Hotel/Residence environmental program	Short-term
Complete review of purchasing practices	Short-term
Ensure sustainable features in Coquitlam housing project	Mid-term
Ensure reserve funds are invested through socially responsible investment screens	Ongoing

**VOLUNTEER SERVICES**

*Profile and Strategies*

In 2007, Volunteer Services continued to work with program managers to develop meaningful volunteer opportunities that support our mission and programs and provide leadership and skill development opportunities for our volunteers. We will continue to create group volunteer opportunities to meet the needs of the YWCA and provide opportunities for outside organizations to facilitate team building and staff development. We will place additional emphasis on opportunities for practicum students and youth volunteers to gain skills and knowledge while working alongside our professional and experienced staff.

As we move forward in 2008, we will review our volunteer recognition program to ensure it recognizes volunteer contributions in a manner that is meaningful to YWCA volunteers. We will also seek feedback on the quality of the volunteer experience provided by the YWCA, as well as suggestions for improvements and new approaches.

2007 / 2008 VOLUNTEER SERVICES STRATEGIES	RANGE
Utilize group volunteer opportunities	Ongoing
Develop new volunteer appreciation events/materials	Short to mid-term
Develop volunteer feedback mechanism	Short to mid-term
Engage more youth volunteers	Mid to long-term



## YWCA Canada and World YWCA

This document is a strategic plan for YWCA Vancouver. However, it is important to mention our considerable work with the YWCA of Canada. In our role as one of its larger members, we have consistently taken leadership in a variety of important areas.

Our goals and objectives for YWCA Canada are to:

- support the leadership development objectives of the YWCA of Canada through the Emerging Leaders Program, a program initiated by YWCA Vancouver that has now been adopted by YWCA Calgary and YWCA Toronto;
- support the International Cooperation Committee of YWCA Canada by providing expertise and advice to projects in Romania and Guyana; and
- play a leadership role in the Western Region by providing support to Member Associations.

We are also strong supporters of the World YWCA and member countries around the world. Our ongoing work with Russia is highlighted in the International Services section of this plan. The immigrant orientation program, which is also referenced there, could provide a valuable opportunity to build new linkages with the World YWCA and member countries such as China, India, the Philippines and Korea.

### CONCLUSION

YWCA Vancouver's annual strategic planning process provides an excellent framework for planning and implementing major new initiatives for our organization. The strategies defined in this plan for internal and external core services and advocacy initiatives position us to help our clients build better futures for themselves and their families, and create a more open and equal society. Combined with the Balanced Scorecard, we have a comprehensive planning and performance measurement system to guide the organization in achieving its desired future.



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