

Good morning,

I am a resident of the Town of Yarmouth; and former resident of both the municipalities of Yarmouth and Argyle. I moved here when I was 11 years old with my RCMP dad & family, and after nearly 15 years away, returned 7 years ago to stay.

**The YMCA Yarmouth has always been a part of my life in this region, no matter what municipality I lived in.**

As a MODY resident in middle school & high school I swam, played ball and worked out at the YMCA. I volunteered and was employed there as a student in high school and university. The YMCA was a second home of sorts in my youth. As it continues to be for residents from all 3 municipal units.

Both of my girls spent countless hours at the YMCA as well. They took swim lessons, one was on the swim team (like me) and both danced with the not-for-profit dance group KIDZACT (that has now found themselves homeless with the Y closing).

We were at the YMCA five days/week even before I had accepted the role of Centre Manager.

I served the YMCA through 3+ difficult years and found my health deteriorating due to stress, when it was time to move on. It is because of my history with the YMCA and my continued role in the community serving some of the most vulnerable, that I know the loss to Yarmouth County to be far greater than the loss of a pool, a gym, or even a home to other essential organizations in Yarmouth.

The YMCA has been an anchor in the lives of so many of us when we have found ourselves drifting.

**I could share countless stories about the lives we touched in the short time I was Centre Manager.**

But what I want to focus on instead is what Yarmouth County does not have. And how this loss takes some significant gaps in our community and turns them into giant VOIDS.

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 NS 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 & 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.

I implore all levels of government and its representatives of the entire Yarmouth County to step up and help make this right. Make an investment in the health and wellbeing of your residents by investing in the YMCA.

Yes, the YMCA needs an injection of funds to keep its doors open. But in a rural region with precious few other options, our community needs a commitment to our health and well-being, in the form of continued financial support. This is an organization that has given, and would continue to give, priceless gifts to generations.

Please help the community save one of the true rocks it has been built on in the 162+ years the YMCA has served us. And then let's all work together to ensure it has a sustainable future to continue doing good works.

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Trish McCourt, BSW, ECE