



For immediate release
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YMCA of Hamilton Burlington applauds report by the federal advisor on Healthy Children & Youth

(Hamilton, ON) – The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington, a charity that supports the healthy development of children and youth, applauds the emphasis and direction of the newly released report by Dr. Kellie Leitch, federal advisor on Healthy Children and Youth.

“We value the extensive community consultations with parents and experts nationwide that formed the basis for the report’s recommendation,” said Jim Commerford, President & CEO. “The health and wellness of children and youth is a prime concern of ours, especially as we work to engage more young people in fun and healthy activities that may become a lifelong habit,” said Mr. Commerford.

“This report outlines a viable and needed national strategy to enhance the health of children and youth and leverages the expertise and capacity of children and youth serving organizations such as the YMCA,” said Michael Weil, President and CEO of YMCA Canada. “The YMCA would be pleased to participate in future conversations with the federal government about implementing the recommendations in this report or to share our longstanding expertise in working with children and youth,” said Mr. Weil.

Dr. Leitch’s report lists three fundamental child and health pillars based on feedback from parents and experts across the country. The report’s entire recommendations stem from concerns related to injury prevention and safety, obesity and healthy lifestyles, and mental health and chronic illness.

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington serves more than 50,000 children and youth up to age 16. It supports their physical activity through child care, after-school and weekend programs, sports leagues, recreation instruction programs, day and summer residential camps, family memberships, youth groups (that typically include a recreation/sport component), and leadership programs. Water safety and teaching young people swimming and lifesaving skills has been a fundamental YMCA program for more than 100 years.

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The myriad of YMCA programs for young people, including YMCA after-school programs, help lay the foundation for their future health habits and emotional wellbeing. After-school initiatives were one of the recommendations in Dr. Leitch's report. The YMCA has long been aware of the higher incidence of risky behaviours by kids who are unsupervised during the time immediately after school. YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington programs provide children and youth with fun physical activities, build self-esteem, leadership skills and stress the importance of positive relationships and a strong support network. These essential factors serve young people well throughout their lifetime.

Nationally, the YMCA is one of the largest providers of children's programs serving 511,500 Canadian children and 201,500 youth in more than 250 communities. Dr. Leitch's report will influence the current development of a national YMCA Healthy Children and Youth Strategy that will leverage the YMCA's children and youth programming, expertise, community ties and vast knowledge-base. The goal of this strategy is to engage many more children, youth and families in an active lifestyle.

As a values-based charity dedicated to healthy living and community building, the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington serves 107,589 people of all backgrounds, abilities and stages of life. The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington is a charitable organization helping people achieve personal growth in spirit, mind and body through participation and service to the community. The YMCA offers many diverse programs including: health, fitness and recreation; licensed child care; day and resident camping; academic assistance; employment counselling; community outreach; residence; leadership development and more.

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