

An Open Letter to the Members of the YMCA of Cambridge



I am writing to you today because I understand that some people are wondering what my thoughts are about the YMCA of Cambridge's collaboration with the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA. I hear that there are serious concerns about this arrangement. People are wondering if it is in the best interests of our YMCA and our community.

We have built ourselves a strong, successful YMCA. We are proud of what we have achieved and are reluctant to risk losing it, so I understand why there are concerns about collaboration. But I also remember a time—not so long ago—when the YMCA of Cambridge was facing bankruptcy.

Our pride today is because we made the difficult decision to move out of our long time home on Queen's Square to Hespeler Road. Our current success is a result of responding to our community's needs by changing how the YMCA serves it. We succeeded because we chose to build for the future of the YMCA in Cambridge.

Unfortunately, I also recall the resistance that I faced in making this move—despite the fact that we really had little choice if we were to continue to exist. Today, our strength means that we do have a choice and I recommend that we choose again to respond now for the future needs of Cambridge.

I have researched the collaboration with the Kitchener-Waterloo YMCA and I believe it is in our best interests to pursue this relationship. I am convinced that together, we are in a better position to meet the needs of our fast-growing area, that together, we can make an impact by touching more lives. Now is the time to move beyond our base on Hespeler Road and to take the YMCA out into the community. Perhaps we'll even be able to establish a second Family YMCA.

I would never make this recommendation if the YMCA of Cambridge was to disappear. I can accept the two YMCAs being operated as one, because our Association will continue to be protected by having its own governance, finances and property. I have also been assured that members will be consulted before any proposal to amalgamate the two YMCAs into one. Another significant factor that comforts me is that there will be a comprehensive review in three years to determine if this venture is achieving its objective of doing more and doing it better. If the results do not match the intention, the YMCA of Cambridge should abandon this experiment and take its own path.

Based upon my research, my lifelong knowledge of our community and my gut instinct, I am confident that our YMCAs will thrive by working together, that our members will continue to benefit from their involvement and that indeed, even more people will be healthier in spirit, mind and body through their participation in YMCA programs.

Our last bold move proved to be the right one. We should choose again to respond to our community's future. It makes sense to me that we give collaboration a try.

Sincerely,



Jim Chaplin