



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **CITY OF CHILLIWACK ANNOUNCES NEW OPERATOR FOR CHEAM CENTRE**

(CHILLIWACK, B.C.) November 24, 2009 – The City of Chilliwack announced today that Leisure Recreation Group (LRG) is the chosen proponent to operate the Cheam Centre effective April 2010. The YMCA has operated the Cheam Centre with the assistance of the City of Chilliwack since 2001.

The Chilliwack Family YMCA is guided by the YMCA's mission to develop people in spirit, mind and body—and has done so for the past 40 years. The YMCA serves the community through 17 sites, including two membership centres (Cheam and Hocking), ten child care centres and seven program locations for youth, seniors and vulnerable members of the community.

In August 2009, the City of Chilliwack released a *Request for Proposal* to select an operating organization to provide services at Cheam Centre starting in April 2010. “The YMCA was interested in continuing to serve the City of Chilliwack through both, the Cheam and Hocking facilities,” states John Woolgar, Vice President—Fraser Region of the YMCA of Greater Vancouver. “However, the *Request for Proposal* from the City of Chilliwack outlined plans for a new centre that would not allow Cheam Centre to remain a YMCA that delivers on our mission to develop people in spirit, mind and body,” says Woolgar.

The YMCA's mission is reinforced by its values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, and it is these principles that direct the YMCA's work towards broader social goals. “The YMCA's goal is to *bring people together, build bridges, promote social responsibility and volunteerism, develop leaders and foster a safe and caring community,*” says Woolgar. The programs and services the YMCA provides are the tools the YMCA uses to achieve these broader community imperatives.

The City's RFP outline for the centre also made it operationally not feasible for the YMCA to respond to the RFP's criteria. More specifically:

- The YMCA has a membership model designed for individuals and families to belong, from infancy to senior, not the drop-in recreation model proposed by the City.
- The pricing structure proposed for Cheam Centre is different from the YMCA Hocking Centre—forcing YMCA into direct competition within its own organization.
- The YMCA currently has the ability to respond directly and quickly to emerging community needs. A fixed city contract with prescribed services and programs would restrict this, and inhibit YMCA's service to community.
- The YMCA's ability to help communities become stronger is enhanced by a strong brand. The proposed RFP would limit the YMCA's ability to build its brand and reputation in the community by requiring only city-specific signage.

Rather than choosing to submit a proposal, the YMCA requested that the City of Chilliwack consider an alternative so that YMCA can continue to operate at Cheam Centre. While supportive of the YMCA, the City could not legally stop the RFP process.

The YMCA of Greater Vancouver and the City of Chilliwack have initiated the process of working together to ensure a seamless transition for the operation of the Cheam Centre. “The YMCA is disappointed that we will not be able to have a YMCA membership centre in Sardis, but now that the new operator has been selected by the City of Chilliwack, it is our desire that all parties work together to ensure the least amount of service disruption possible,” states Woolgar.

The City of Chilliwack and the YMCA share many common objectives for community services for children, youth and families and the YMCA will seek additional opportunities for partnership in the future. “The YMCA is committed to continue serving Chilliwack with programs and services to keep the community strong,” says Woolgar. “We believe that Chilliwack is stronger because of a strong YMCA.”

”We have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with the YMCA over the years and regret that they chose not to respond the City’s Request for Proposals to operate the Cheam Centre,” declares Mayor Sharon Gaetz. “However, we understand their decision based on the philosophical and practical differences that the YMCA has with their approach to programs and services in relation to the City’s need to provide a public recreation model,” says Mayor Gaetz. “We look forward to working with the YMCA on their Hocking Avenue operations.”

Over the next several weeks, the YMCA leadership will assess what service delivery model is best for the future of the YMCA in Chilliwack. The YMCA’s immediate plan is to focus on its Hocking YMCA programs as well as those offered in the community. The YMCA plans to engage its members, volunteers, staff and the community in a dialogue that will assist the YMCA in the development of a sustainable operation model.

In the coming weeks, the YMCA leadership will also assess the YMCA’s human resource needs and create a plan to realign its staff with the YMCA’s new delivery model in Chilliwack. “We will make every effort to work closely with the new operator and the City of Chilliwack to create a transition plan that helps as many affected parties as possible,” says Woolgar. “It is our goal to communicate with all YMCA staff in a transparent and open manner as soon as any new information becomes available.”

#### **About the YMCA of Greater Vancouver**

The YMCA of Greater Vancouver’s mission is to support the growth of people in spirit, mind and body and to foster a sense of responsibility to each other and the global community. As a values-based charity dedicated to building strong kids, strong families and strong communities, the YMCA of Greater Vancouver served over 97,000 people of all ages, cultural backgrounds and economic circumstances at 136 locations across the Lower Mainland in 2008. At the YMCA, the largest provider of child care in the province, parents find caring support and resources to help them in their most important job – raising a healthy family. The YMCA also offers diverse programs in health and wellness, camps, employment, and international and community development. To learn more, visit [www.vanymca.org](http://www.vanymca.org).

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