

MARCH 2026



turning points

IMPACT
REPORT

FROM SUPPORT TO SERVICE:
STORIES OF COMING FULL CIRCLE



NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.



United Way
Greater Toronto
FUNDED AGENCY



A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

It is hard to believe that, after more than 30 years as Chief Executive Officer of YWCA Toronto, this will be my last time introducing an issue of *Turning Points*. I have always appreciated this opportunity to connect with you, our valued partners, and highlight the incredible work we accomplish together.

My goal for YWCA Toronto has always been to create lasting change, and your support and collaboration have been such a key part of our ability to have long-term impact. I am eternally grateful for such profound community support. Throughout my time with the Association, I have seen our community's commitment to creating an equitable world for women, girls and gender diverse people firsthand, and I must admit, my pride has never wavered.

As the Association moves forward, I look forward to seeing all of the incredible successes you accomplish together. While I am leaving my role as CEO, I will always count myself as a member of YWCA Toronto's community and remain committed to supporting work that reduces poverty, supports safe and affordable housing and empowers people to thrive.

Words cannot express how incredibly honoured I am to have served as the CEO of YWCA Toronto for more than three decades. Thank you for helping to make those years ones of meaning, growth and impact.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather M. McGregor".

Heather M. McGregor

TURNING POINTS NEWSLETTER

Charitable Business #10822 9865 RROOO1 • Publication Mail Agreement #40932523



From Support to Service: Stories of Coming Full Circle

“Having experienced the impact of these programs firsthand, I wanted to contribute to an organization that supports women through empowerment, access and opportunity.”

Klementina Fejzulla, who began as a YWCA Toronto Employment and Training participant before becoming a volunteer and then staff member, is far from unique in her perspective. Over the years, many past program participants have returned to the Association as a part of the staff team, driven by the desire to support others on journeys similar to their own. They describe positive experiences in YWCA Toronto programs and often cite the staff as playing a significant role in creating such a supportive and empowering environment.

“The warmth, genuine concern and appreciation shown by the facilitators and staff—from the administrative team to the frontline workers and the manager—deeply motivated me to want to work for

YWCA Toronto,” says Tsering Tsomo, also a past participant in our Employment and Training programs and then a director at YWCA Toronto.

The presence of employees who were once participants spans multiple departments and ranges from frontline workers all the way to senior decision makers. Many, like Klementina and Tsering, have been involved with YWCA Toronto in one capacity or another for over a decade, providing an exceptional look at participants’ individual growth as well as Association and donor impact.

While Tsering and Klementina credit the YWCA Toronto programs they attended as critical to their career success—both describing compassionate supports, welcoming environments and practical skills development—they also articulate how fundamental their experiences as participants are to the way they now support those currently accessing services.

“Moving from participant to volunteer and then to staff has been incredibly meaningful,” expresses Klementina. “It has given me a unique perspective on how programs can be shaped to truly meet women where they are.”

Tsering echoes this sentiment, emphasizing how she draws on her experiences as a participant when designing and delivering programs. She even considers the small details,

like having access to an on-site microwave and hot tea station, that can make a real difference for participants.

We are proud and incredibly grateful to count Klementina and Tsering, along with every other participant turned staff member, as colleagues. Their abundant insight, dedication and expertise are integral threads in the fabric of YWCA Toronto.



 YWCA Toronto
DISTINCTION AWARDS

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**AN EVENING OF CELEBRATION, INSPIRATION AND IMPACT.
DO NOT MISS YWCA TORONTO'S 2026 DISTINCTION AWARDS!**

**Thursday, May 28, 2026
5:30p.m. @ The Carlu**

EARLY BIRD TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE!

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Anna Borges at 647.616.1528
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for more information on how
to get involved!



YWCA
TORONTO

NATIONAL ADVOCACY.
COMMUNITY ACTION.



United Way
Greater Toronto
FUNDED AGENCY

A lot has changed since retiring Chief Executive Officer Heather McGregor began her time with YWCA Toronto in 1995.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

1995
149 units

NOW
824 units



1995

A group of committed volunteers under the Social Action Committee led advocacy campaigns and other systems change work.

NOW

A dedicated Advocacy and Communications department that has helped advance legislation supporting more accessible childcare, intimate partner violence prevention, affordable housing and more at all levels of government.



ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

1995
7,300 participants

NOW
13,000 participants



1995

4 unique programs

NOW

13 unique programs



EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

DONOR LOVE



Photo of Lorrie King

As YWCA Toronto's Board Co-Treasurer, a Distinction Awards Committee member, and a dedicated donor, Lorrie King is committed to creating change for women, girls and gender diverse people in our city. We recently spoke with her about Heather McGregor's legacy, our retiring Chief Executive Officer, and her \$10,000 matching gift to the Heather M. McGregor Fund.

When you think about Heather's legacy, what comes to mind?

I think about everything that Heather has been able to achieve over her more than 30 years with YWCA Toronto: the large-scale expansion of affordable housing, the growth of the employment and training programs and the advocacy efforts—among many other accomplishments. She is not afraid to think big and do what needs to be done. I see a leader who is deeply passionate about feminist issues and about the challenges that face our community.

What inspired you to give to the Heather M. McGregor Fund?

Heather is an inspiration, and any time that women can support other women who inspire them, I believe that it is not only an honour to do so, but an obligation. I view the Fund as an opportunity for us to continue the amazing work that Heather has done and to build on it for the future.

What do you hope the fund accomplishes?

I hope the Heather M. McGregor Fund gives YWCA Toronto the ability to be flexible and adaptable but also proactive. Needs change in the community, and opportunities arise. As I mentioned, Heather is the kind of leader who is not afraid to do what the moment demands—to me, this is what she has always stood for—and I want YWCA Toronto to be able to continue on with this boldness well into the future.

EMPOWERING PARTICIPANTS WITH SKILLS AND TRAINING

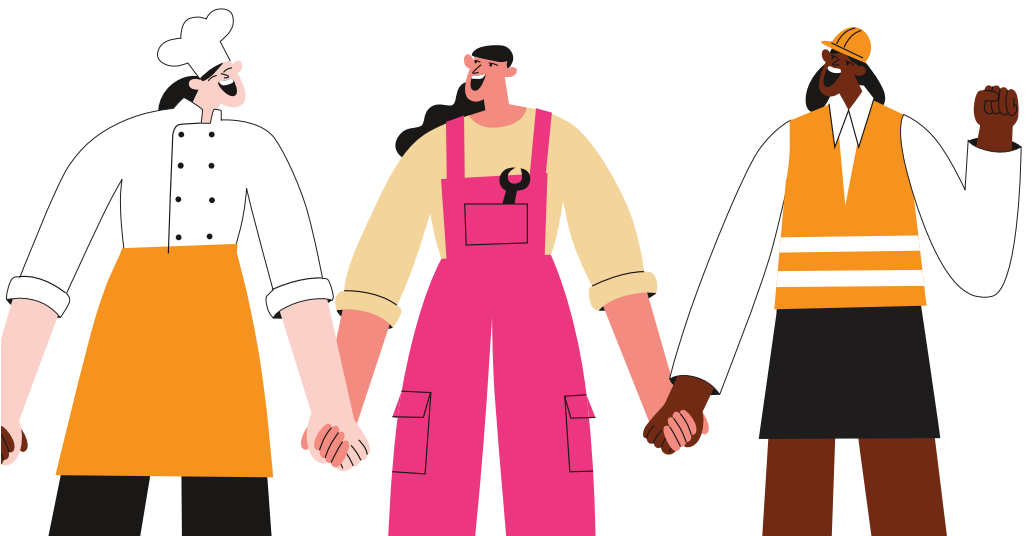


The first residents to live in YWCA Toronto housing in 1873 were intrepid young women from rural communities seeking employment and independence in the city. Providing these women with employment and training programs to bolster them on this mission was a natural next step for the Association.

Our early training programs defied societal norms of the time, empowering participants with skills in phonography (shorthand transcription of speech), stenography and typing—all trades considered too physically demanding for women by 19th century standards. In the late 1880s, the Association added both the Employment Bureau, which supported women to find jobs that complemented their skills, and the Girls' Industrial Institute. The latter program not only taught women valuable, employable skills but also initiated the construction of in-house laundry facilities, which both served and employed YWCA Toronto program participants.

During the Great Depression, the Association responded strongly to high unemployment with the formation of the strategic Unemployment Committee, as well as the Progressive Business Girls' Club and the Blue Triangle Club, which both supported participants to network with other professional women and receive job search support.

Our employment programs continued throughout the mid 20th century, and as more women entered the workforce, evolved to meet



the changing trends of the labour market. By the early 2000s, programs incorporated a variety of computer and software training to equip women with the skills necessary to thrive in an evolving digital workplace. We added settlement services and English language skills programs soon after to meet the unique needs of newcomers looking to find their footing in the Canadian job market.

Today, almost 150 years after their inception, YWCA Toronto's Employment and Training programs support more than 7,000 participants across 13 programs annually. Donor support has been vital since their inception, creating opportunities for participants to grow their skills, build valuable connections and find economic stability.

