

# A Lifecycle Look at Recreation Infrastructure





Building Community Since 1947

**A How We Got Here:  
A Lifecycle Look at Recreation Infrastructure  
(Development)**

# Presenters

The session is divided into two presentations:

- First Presenter: Terry Piche, Director, Training, Research and Development, ORFA
  - Terry is going to look back and forward at the challenges associated with the issue of aging recreation infrastructure
- Second Presenter: Steve Hardie, Project Manager, Town of Saugeen Shores and past Director, Municipality of North Perth (retired), and ORFA Past-President
  - Steve will provide a real time perspective on managing retrofits and/or new builds

# Presentation 1

Looking Back and Forward at the Challenges Associated with the  
Issue of Aging Recreation Infrastructure

# About the ORFA

- The Ontario Recreation Facilities Association (ORFA) is a not-for-profit Association that was created in 1947 as the Ontario Arenas Association.
- **Mission:** To provide leadership in the development and delivery of innovative professional development and education programs, value-added services, and quality products for the benefit of the recreation facilities profession.
- **Vision:** To be the leader in the recreation facilities profession.

# Wintario Turns 50-Years of Age

- Ontario's first lottery was Wintario which was launched to generate revenues to assist municipalities in building recreation infrastructure.
- Funding guidelines for Wintario had lots of latitude. With an end result that communities who really couldn't afford recreation infrastructure still did as they did not want to miss out!

# No Business Plan Attached

- Communities did not develop any long-term plans with regards to how they would maintain (afford) the investments.
- Federal and provincial transfer payments were generous.
- The taxpayer was still receptive to contribute to such luxury.
- Government regulatory compliance oversight was relaxed.
- And everything was being ran on alcohol...the good old days!

# But It's For The Kids

- User fees were set to encourage children's recreational activities - first correction, it was for SOME kids.
- User fees were often set based on surrounding community rates, regardless of the investment.
- User fees rarely covered basic operating costs, yet alone capital upkeep costs.



## But Think of The Economic Spin-offs

- Elected officials were often sold the concept that filling up the local hotels and restaurants (tourism multiplier) was the right thing to do.
- Larger centres soon learned how to attract economic windfalls from smaller communities by hosting large competitions syphoning off local dollars.
- Facility managers were then challenged to generate more revenue with what was leftover.

# The Winds of Change Began To Arrive

- Buildings started to age.
- Transfer payments shrank and downloading of service costs from higher levels of government started.
- Taxpayer revolt began.
- Regulatory compliance requirement expectation in health and safety, industrial refrigeration, and aquatic operational responsibilities increased.
- Occupiers Liability removed alcohol revenue (insurance costs increased).

# The Current State of the Union

- The industry has an aging infrastructure crisis that will soon force hard conversations.
- We have spent millions making recreation facilities accessible but little in ensuring we can get them out in an emergency.
- The demand by females for equal access will continue to pressure facility owners for use and design.
- In 100-years we have yet to build a recreation facility 100% functional.

# Recreation Infrastructure Case Study: New Build

SUNNY LIFE  RECREATION  
& WELLNESS  
CENTRE

YMCA NORTHUMBERLAND &  
MUNICIPALITY OF TRENT HILLS

# Presentation Outline

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## Background

- Organization Overviews
- Sunny Life Recreation & Wellness Centre

## The Partnership

- YMCA Northumberland – Municipality of Trent Hills Partnership
- Benefits of Partnering with the YMCA

## The Project

- Project Background
- Project Evolution
- Timeline
- Funding Model

## Lessons Learned



Come for a visit. Stay for a lifestyle.

# Municipality of Trent Hills

- Rural municipality in Northumberland County, population 13,000 with 3 urban centres
- Recreation facilities:
  - Campbellford Arena (1967)
  - Warkworth Arena (1977, reno 2023)
  - Campbellford Outdoor Pool (1973)
  - Hastings Field House (2015)
  - 11 soccer fields, 2 baseball diamonds
- Facilities at capacity and in demand
- 47% of population over age of 55

# YMCA Northumberland

- Long history in Northumberland County, established in 1870
- Operates two Health, Fitness Aquatics facilities (soon to be a 3<sup>rd</sup>)
- Largest provider of licensed childcare and EarlyON program largest employer of youth
- Works in partnership with all municipalities and Alderville First Nation to support the delivery of programs and services
- Federated model with support from YMCA Ontario, YMCA Canada and the YMCA Global community

Shine On



YMCA  
Northumberland

# Sunny Life Recreation & Wellness Centre

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- 64,000 square foot fully accessible multi-use recreation facility:
  - lane pool and warming pool
  - conditioning centre and studios
  - multi-purpose space
  - ice pad
- Operating partnership between YMCA Northumberland and Municipality of Trent Hills
- Supported by Government of Ontario, the Government of Canada (ICIP- Community Culture and Recreation stream)





# The Partnership

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- Turning point in 2019 with solidified partnership and MOU with YMCA Northumberland to operate aquatics and fitness centre
- YMCA Northumberland operated programs in Trent Hills for 20+ years: outdoor pool, summer day camps, licensed childcare, EarlyON, afterschool programs
- Established, trusted relationship between YMCA Northumberland and Municipality of Trent Hills
- Operating model is membership based to support tax base; YMCA is a charity and provides financial assistance through the annual Strong Communities Campaign to ensure that no-one is turned away



# Benefits of Partnering with YMCA

- The YMCA is recognizable and trusted brand for newcomers to the community and provides a touchstone for support and service referrals
- Convenient and affordable access for local residents
- Provides programs and services that reflect the community needs
- Opportunities to access Federal and Provincial Funding
- Expands services without a significant burden to the tax base
- Raises funds so no-one is ever turned away due to inability to pay
- Access to many networks and resources, as a provincial national and global organization
- Economic development spin-offs and incentive for medical professionals to relocate to community

# Project Background

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Multi-use Recreation Centre project began in 2003 with Recreation Master Plan and Feasibility Study to address:

1. Aging and obsolete infrastructure, not accessible
2. Rural access to recreation programming and amenities
3. Shifting demographic needs and supports
4. Duplication of services and facilities as a result of amalgamation
5. Recreation program delivery

# Project Evolution

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- Changed program delivery model and facility design from 2013 plan to current project
- In 2013 capital campaign launched for a \$30 million facility that included “wish lists” of stakeholders, facility to be fully operated by Municipality
- Several setbacks and feedback resulted in re-evaluating project scope, design and operating model in 2019.
- Final design is functional and sustainable, operated in partnership with YMCA Northumberland delivering all fitness and aquatics programming

# Sunny Life Recreation & Wellness Centre Timeline



2003

- Recreation Master Plan

2004

- YMCA  Northumberland Partnership Begins

2007

- Feasibility Study

2013

- Redevelopment Plan
- Capital Fundraising Campaign

2016

- Schematic Design Feasibility Study

2021

- ICIP Funding Announcement \$7.58 Million
- Project Manager Contract Awarded

2020

- COVID-19 Pandemic

2019

- New Design Brief and Cost Estimate
- MOU with YMCA Northumberland
- ICIP, Community Culture and Recreation Stream Application
- Delegation Meeting with Ministry of Infrastructure at AMO

2017

- Delegation Meeting with Ministry of Infrastructure at ROMA

2022

- Design/Build Contract Awarded
- Delegation Meeting with Ministry of Infrastructure at AMO

2023

- Construction Begins
- Naming Rights Campaign

2024

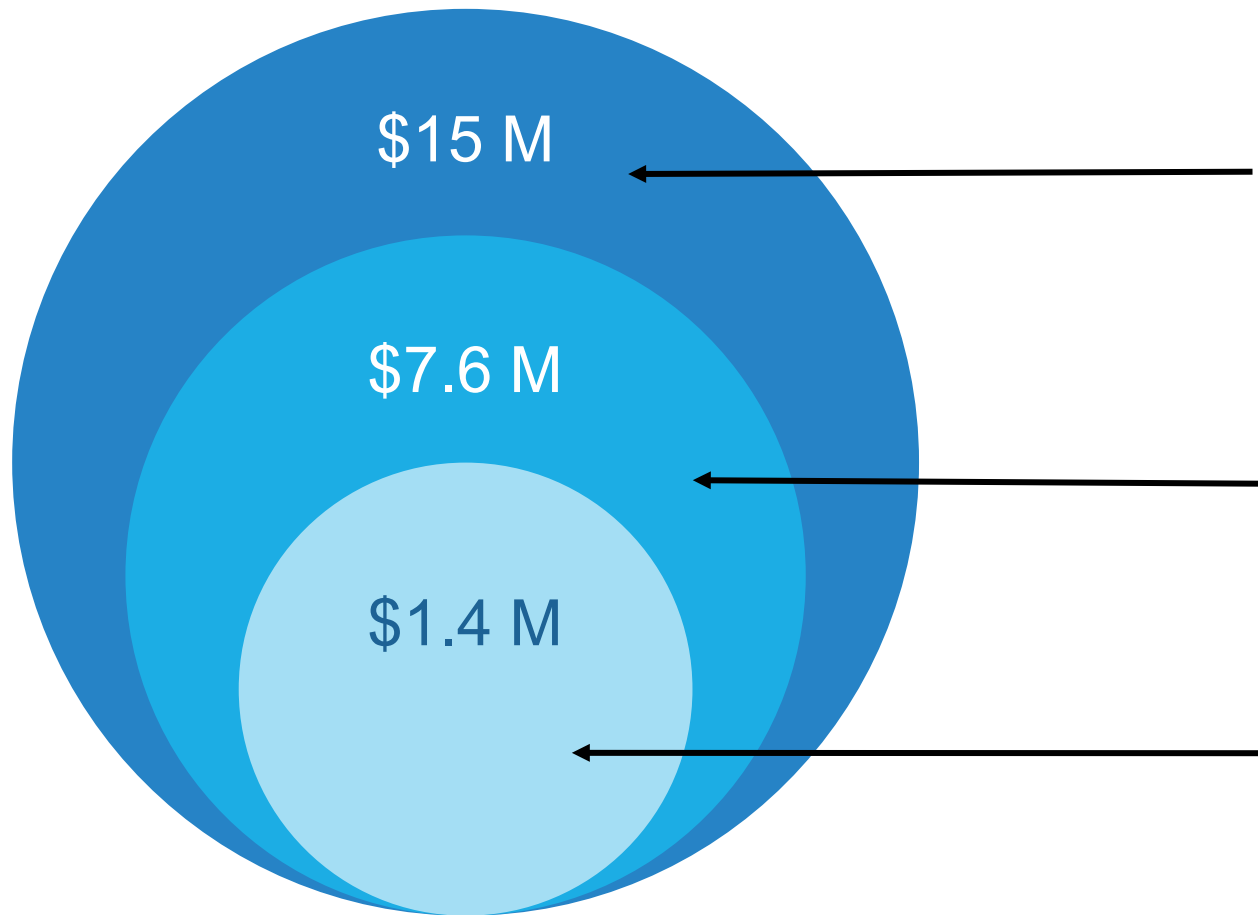
**SUNNY LIFE**  **RECREATION & WELLNESS CENTRE**

# New Build 2024

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# Funding Model



Come for a visit. Stay for a lifestyle.



Financing, Reserves and Development Charges

Investing in Canada Infrastructure Fund (ICIP)

Naming Rights / Corporate Sponsorships

**af** Ashley Tinney-Fischer  
PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

*Bennett's*  
FURNITURE and MATTRESSES  
SINCE 1926

**Dooher's**  
FRESH BAKED GOODNESS SINCE 1949

**SUBWAY**



**Min-Tech**  
MARKETING INC  
Plastic Recycling & Machinery



**D&K**  
HOME SERVICES by ENERCARE

**C**  **W**

**SUNNY LIFE**  

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**HOMES**



**VILLAGE**  
*Paint + Paper*  
EST 1986

**Chicken Kingdom & seafood**



MacLaren **IDA** Pharmacy  
Your Friendly Neighbourhood Pharmacy.

Since 1870  
**EMPIRE**  
CHEESE  
A Tasteful Tradition of Quality  
KEEP REFRIGERATED  
GARDER AU RÉFRIGÉRATEUR



# Lessons Learned

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- YMCA Northumberland – Municipality of Trent Hills partnership is key to success and catalyst for advancing project:
  - Effective and proven operating model
  - Strengthened support of government and the community
- New build projects take time and support of changing Councils; must have solid case and community support
- Facility should address community needs (not wants) to be sustainable and affordable
- Support of local MPP and funding Ministry critical throughout the process
- Consider selling Naming Rights to local businesses

# Thank you

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Shine On



Come for a visit. Stay for a lifestyle.

# Presentation 2

A Real Time Perspective on Managing Retrofits and/or New Builds

# Major Challenges with Facility Refurbishment/Renovation

- Understanding (Managing) Needs vs Wants.
- Financial limitations.
- Cost of Construction.
- Staff Resources and expertise.
- Understanding public needs.

# Importance of Life Cycle Planning for Recreation Facilities

- Applies to all facilities:
  - Pools
  - Passive Parks
  - Sports Parks
  - Skateparks
  - Playgrounds
  - Arenas
  - Community Centres
  - Trail Systems
- Helps ensure that equipment and systems are scheduled for replacement prior to end of life-cycle.
- Reduces risk of mechanical and/or structure failure.
- Reduces risk of costly emergency repair.
- Reduces risk of down time.

# The Importance of Regular Infrastructure Review

- A complete review of facility from the ground up.
  - Foundations
  - Structure
  - Mechanical and Electrical Systems
  - Interior Condition
- Identifies:
  - When to dispose of building
  - When to Renovate
  - When to Replace

# Determining if it is Best to Refurbish or Replace

- Funds being spent to keep facilities operational vs renovate or replace.
- Needs assessments:
  - Changing Community needs
  - Other potential uses
- Feasibility Study.
- Financing Plan.
- Business Plan:
  - Facility Uses
  - Rates & Fees
  - Anticipated Revenues & Expenditure
  - Capital Equipment Replacement
  - Asset Management Plan
  - Operational Model

# Important Steps of Refurbishment/Renovation

- Is the facility meeting the current needs of the community.
- Time to investigate other programming options.
- Consultation with:
  - Existing user groups
  - Potential new user Groups
  - Program staff
  - Front line facility operators
  - Other communities



# Common Methods of Construction/Renovation

- Traditional Stipulated Sum Tender – Design/Bid/Build.
- Design Build.
- Construction Management.

# Lessons Learned

- Who Does What
  - Rely on existing staff to manage the project
  - Hired Project Management
- Scope Creep in Design
  - Size and costs can quickly escalate based on “wants”
  - Quantity (size) – Quality – Low Price
- Consult with other communities / tour recently constructed or renovated facilities – talk to operational staff – they will know the issues and how it could have been better designed/constructed.

# Special Consideration

- Recreation facilities are often used as part of a community emergency evacuation response plan or as heating/cooling centres.
- If there is any potential that this will be part of the “use” of the final construction - then include this use in the planning process.
  - Food services design
  - Technology needs (wi-fi, television, etc.)
  - Back-up generator

# Moving Forward

- The Municipal Act requires every incorporated municipality to offer recreation as part of its mandate.
- It does not require the building of recreation facilities...a bird feeder and a bench down by the waterfront meets the requirement.
- The benefits of having state-of-the-art recreation facilities is a cornerstone of most economic growth business plans.
- However, designing, operating and staffing these investments as a business will be critical moving forward.

# Available ORFA Resources

Just a few sample resources available in the ORFA Resource Centre and available as a benefit of membership:

- [Scheduled Facility Structural Inspections Are Key Asset and Management Tools](#)
- [Converting a Recreation Centre to an Emergency Rescue Centre \(Shelter\)](#)
- [Why Ice Arenas Can Be Costly to Construct](#)
- [Analyzing and Calculating Recreational User Fees](#)
- [Recreation Facility Asset Management \(RFAM\) Software](#)
- [Guidelines For Recreation Facility Planning, Design & Construction](#)

# What ORFA is Doing To Assist

- We have a variety of resources created by practitioners on what to consider when building or retrofitting a recreation facility.
- We have partnered with MARMAK to develop industry leading Recreation Facility Asset Management (RFAM) software to assist in managing these investments.
- We offer industry leading certification pathways developed and delivered by practitioners to assist all levels of facility staff.
- We offer an operational auditing service to assist in identifying gaps in current services.
- Consider joining us in Markham at the *Aging Recreation Infrastructure Symposium* October 6-8, 2025.

# Wrap-up

- Questions
- Final Comments
- Contact the ORFA at [info@orfa.com](mailto:info@orfa.com) or 416-426-7062