



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Private Bills

Tuesday, May 27, 2008
8:31 a.m.

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Standing Committee on Private Bills

Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Nose Hill (PC), Chair
Woo-Paw, Teresa, Calgary-Mackay (PC), Deputy Chair

Allred, Ken, St. Albert (PC)
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie-Chestermere (PC)
Benito, Carl, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Boutilier, Guy C., Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Campbell, Robin, West Yellowhead (PC)
Doerksen, Arno, Strathmore-Brooks (PC)
Elniski, Doug, Edmonton-Calder (PC)
Fawcett, Kyle, Calgary-North Hill (PC)
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Jacobs, Broyce, Cardston-Taber-Warner (PC)
MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (L)
McQueen, Diana, Drayton Valley-Calmar (PC)
Olson, Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC)
Quest, Dave, Strathcona (PC)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (L)

Bill Pr. 1 Sponsor

Lukaszuk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)

Bill Pr. 1 Participants

Ron Coulombe	Vice-president, YMCA, Edmonton
Ron Cust	Director of Legislative Projects, Municipal Affairs
Bret Dykstra	Director of Taxation, City of Edmonton
Anne Kaplan	Law Branch, City of Edmonton
Franco Savoia	President and CEO, YMCA, Edmonton
Shayna Staniloff	Associate, Fraser Milner Casgrain
Steve White	Executive Director, Assessment Services, Municipal Affairs

Support Staff

Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Sarah Dafoe	Sessional Parliamentary Counsel
Florence Marston	Administrative Assistant
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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[Dr. Brown in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We'll call the meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills to order.

I would like a motion to approve the agenda as circulated. Moved by Diana McQueen. All in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

The committee minutes from the last meeting have been circulated in draft. Are there any comments, errors, or omissions regarding those minutes? Seeing none, could I have a motion to approve the agenda as circulated? Mr. Allred. All in favour? Anyone opposed? That's carried.

The next order of business is the discussion of Bill Pr. 1, so I think we can call in the petitioners at this time.

[Mr. Coulombe, Mr. Cust, Mr. Savoia, Ms Staniloff, and Mr. White were sworn in]

The Chair: Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen, guests. I would like to welcome you to this meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. I would invite you to introduce yourselves, starting with Ms Kaplan on my left-hand side, and then we'll just go around here and have the members introduce themselves at the same time.

Ms Kaplan: I'm Anne Kaplan with the city of Edmonton law branch.

Mr. Dykstra: Good morning. I'm Bret Dykstra, director of taxation for the city of Edmonton.

Mr. Coulombe: Ron Coulombe, vice-president with the YMCA of Edmonton.

Mr. Savoia: Franco Savoia, president and CEO of the Edmonton YMCA.

Ms Staniloff: Shayna Staniloff, associate at Fraser Milner Casgrain and lawyer for the petitioners.

Mr. White: Steve White, executive director, assessment services with Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Cust: Ron Cust, director of legislative projects, Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Quest: Dave Quest, MLA for Strathcona.

Mr. Anderson: Rob Anderson, MLA for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. MacDonald: Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar. Good morning.

Mr. Allred: Ken Allred, MLA for St. Albert.

Mr. Campbell: Robin Campbell, MLA, West Yellowhead.

Mr. Amery: Moe Amery, Calgary-East.

Mr. Elniski: Doug Elniski, Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Jacobs: Bryce Jacobs, Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Ms Woo-Paw: Teresa Woo-Paw, Calgary-Mackay.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Fawcett: Kyle Fawcett, Calgary-North Hill.

The Chair: Neil Brown, Calgary-Nose Hill, and I'm the chair of the committee.

Ms Dean: Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

Ms Dafoe: Sarah Dafoe, Parliamentary Counsel.

Mrs. Forsyth: Hi. I'm Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Sandhu: Good morning. Peter Sandhu, MLA, Edmonton-Manning.

Mrs. McQueen: Welcome. Diana McQueen, MLA, Drayton Valley-Calmar.

Mr. Doerksen: Good morning. Arno Doerksen, Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Olson: Good morning. Verlyn Olson, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mrs. Sarich: Good morning. Janice Sarich, Edmonton-Decore.

Dr. Swann: Good morning. David Swann, Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Boutilier: Good morning. Guy Boutilier, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Chair: Now I would invite the petitioners to make the presentation. Who is going to make the presentation on behalf of the petitioners?

Mr. Savoia: Mr. Chair and members of the committee, thank you for allowing us, the YMCA of Edmonton, to briefly present this morning and to answer any questions you may have.

As you probably know from the materials you've received, we were incorporated by an act of the Legislature in 1907. I wasn't there at the time. Over time the act was amended to list each YMCA facility which was exempted from property taxes. The original 1907 act was amended in 1956, in 1964, and in 1990 as we evolved in response to our community in terms of our facilities.

In the private member's bill before you we are petitioning the Legislature with an amendment that will grant property tax exemption for all real property owned by the YMCA of Edmonton and used for its purposes. This amendment will bring our act into line with the act respecting the YMCA of Calgary, for example. So this is in other jurisdictions as well.

You have a handout of our 2007 YMCA impact statement that we have as an organization in our community and as a charitable organization in terms of the impact we feel we have on the 73,000 men, women, and children we serve at this time, on our plan, in fact, to serve 90,000 by the year 2010. We're on a very aggressive plan to impact our community. I think that when you look at those statements, we have health and wellness, certainly education, employment, housing, and child care. We didn't do all of that in 1907, but we've evolved in terms of the emerging needs across our city and across our community.

I think that when you look at some key points – I'm a lifer with the Y. I grew up out here, but I got involved in the Y when I was in

graduate school, and it's had a phenomenal impact on me. I've had nearly 40 years of staff leadership, beginning at the very bottom as a part-time staffer in the downtown streets of Toronto working with the Italian community. I just see, as an immigrant child to Canada, the impact that this organization has in terms of truly bringing together the rich and poor, old and young, people of all abilities.

In a sense why I've stayed around this organization for all this time is that for me, growing up in the situation of being one of the sole Italian kids in Calgary and just having that experience, the organization truly helped me to appreciate my background because we really value that. That's fundamental to what we do and fundamental to the growth and development of spirit, mind, and body. These values have so resonated in my life, and I've seen it resonate in so many people. Yesterday Bill Rees was here, I think, in the Legislature being recognized in terms of 50 consecutive years. These are the kinds of people in the Y as volunteers and the kinds of things that have moved our communities to be a better place and a better country.

8:40

When you look at it – and there have been extensive studies on this – particularly in terms of how you build a civic society, the YMCA in my experience is one of those things that truly does that, and we have, really, from the very, very beginnings of our organization. We've been around in Edmonton since 1907 but, in fact, in Canada since 1851, and it was founded back in 1844. It's evolved over time, and it continues to evolve. With the notion that no one gets turned away because of inability to pay, the notion that regardless of ability you're welcome to come, there aren't too many places in our communities like that, and I think that's why Legislatures and governments over the years have seen that it truly brings about and strengthens community life in municipalities of all types.

Like I say, we think that from the notion here of granting a property tax exemption as a charity, there truly is a return to the community in terms of the impact it has on community life. I think people often think of the Y as the gym and swim, but we do a heck of a lot more. Certainly, in our child care programs we're serving in our city alone, in this community, probably in excess of 1,500 families with licensed child care and are committed to do more. In response last year to the Grande Prairie community we now have two child care centres up in Grande Prairie. So that's one of the programs.

Our housing programs in the downtown facility. We've been in housing since 1907, helping young people and now, in fact, a whole host of different people to integrate and to give them a hand up so that they can move on in terms of their lives. We're now serving about 130 people with housing issues in our city.

I think that as we're here before you, we'll certainly take any questions. The impact statement kind of says what we're doing, and we hope that you would see through to giving us full tax exemption because truly every dollar we make doesn't go to the Cayman Islands. It goes right back into the community to further the work and strengthen community life across our city.

We'll take any questions. I'm not sure what the process is here, but those would be some opening comments.

The Chair: Are there any further comments from the petitioners?

The city of Edmonton is here. Would you have any comments that you'd care to add, Ms Kaplan?

Ms Kaplan: None at this time.

The Chair: That being the case, then I'll invite members of the committee to ask any questions they may have. Dr. Swann.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much. Thank you for that presentation. I have a history with the YMCA as well, in Calgary, dating back to childhood and fond memories thereof. Can you give us an indication of how many of your centres are tax exempt, if any, and what this would mean if it was universally applied across the province in terms of financial benefit to the organization?

Mr. Savoia: Thank you, Dr. Swann. I think that for us right now our downtown – that's the site that our predecessors bought in 1906-07, when we built – is tax exempt. Our Jamie Platz, which was done by an amendment back in 1990, when we built it, is tax exempt. In terms of all the other facilities: we're asking for tax exemption for another four facilities. Of course, there are five independent Ys in this province, and we're only asking for the YMCA of Edmonton, so this only applies to us, to the YMCA in Edmonton. The Calgary YMCA, in fact, already has it from the original incorporation back in 1907, just the way the wording was done and the legislation at the time, as do the other Ys. This private member's bill is specific to the Edmonton YMCA.

Dr. Swann: The financial implications?

Mr. Savoia: I'm trying to think. I mean, it certainly would mean that we'd be taking money that we now use for programs. In terms of the taxation I'm not sure what the total amount would be.

The Chair: Mr. Elniski, please.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you. A quick question, Mr. Savoia, on your point with regard to the five independent YMCAs in Alberta. Do you know off the top of your head the taxation statuses of I guess it would be the other three?

Mr. Savoia: Yeah. Calgary is probably totally tax exempt. I believe Medicine Hat and Lethbridge are also exempt. I'm not totally sure.

Mr. Elniski: Okay.
Shannon, do you know?

Ms Dean: No, I don't have that information.

Mr. Elniski: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Amery, please.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your presentation, sir. You mentioned that you were incorporated in 1907 in Edmonton and that other organizations were incorporated in 1851 or something like that. You realize that our society has changed since then. The demographic has changed. We live in a multicultural society, a multifaith society. Your name is Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton. Have you thought about changing the name to reflect the makeup of our Canadian society? Do you sense or notice that because you have – and I'm not anti-Christian – that Christian title here, other faiths don't come to your organizations, not because it is named a Christian association but because they think this may not be for them?

Mr. Savoia: It's a very, very good question. Some people call me an old rethead because I've been around a long time. This conversation happens a great deal within our organization. I'm a very strong Roman Catholic, and there was a time when Roman Catholics, I'm told, weren't allowed to go to the Y. So even among Christians.

The thing that's happened for us in North America particularly – I would say Canada for sure. I mean, I've just come back from a national council meeting, and as we go forward, there's truly an acknowledgement of the diversity you refer to and a total acceptance and celebration, in fact, of the diversity.

For most people in North America we're seen as the Y. There would have been a time when it was just men, young men. Then we became young men and young women, and now it's families. I would say, for example, that if you went to our Castle Downs Y, a good chunk – I don't know. We don't ask the question: what religion are you? But I can tell you that from the street as we work with people, in terms of Muslims, we have Muslim families. We have change rooms specifically, you know, because of the modesty issues. In fact, our experience would be that it truly is welcoming. Can we do it better? Absolutely. If you look at our mission statement, there's no reference now to that kind of thing. The other thing is the way we now describe ourselves by our values. We call it the values that we share in the community with other faiths, be they Muslim, Hindu, Christian, or none. We're really, really committed to that.

That's a very, very good question, and we need that more than ever now as we go into the future. We're unequivocally committed to do it even better than we've done in the past. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Amery: I wonder if you could tell me how many other organizations such as yours are doing the same thing? Is this going to set a precedent for other organizations to come and ask for a tax exemption?

8:50

Mr. Savoia: I don't know. The YMCA is historically capital intensive because our centres are very important tools to reach out and to serve and bring people together. There aren't too many organizations like ours as charities doing this. There really are not. There just aren't. I think that if we go back historically – the other thing would be that we're finding more and more from a research perspective, and there's extensive research being done – recreation and that kind of stuff is an important vehicle to bring people together as well. It really is an enhancer. If you look in our city, there aren't very many organizations, in fact, charities, doing what we do.

Mr. Amery: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Mr. MacDonald, please.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps Mr. Coulombe can answer this: does the Y in Edmonton hold any additional properties that are undeveloped?

Mr. Coulombe: The YMCA as an organization does not. The YMCA here in Edmonton also has the Edmonton YMCA Foundation. The Edmonton YMCA Foundation was left a piece of property in southwest Edmonton in the will of Mr. William Lutsky, so we have 5.5 acres of undeveloped land that's held by the Edmonton YMCA Foundation, a separate registered charity, separate from the YMCA of Edmonton.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. McQueen, please.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I just want to

commend you on the work that the YMCA does and the volunteer hours. It's just unbelievable, and it's a great, great asset for our province and the communities that you serve.

In our background information we've got, a question I have is for the city of Edmonton and for Municipal Affairs. The city of Edmonton, it's my understanding, is in support of this, and if that's the case, certainly I commend you for that. A question just to the city: are you in support of this? Then to Municipal Affairs: are there any issues or concerns that we would need to know about?

Mr. Dykstra: No. Council gave their unanimous support for this. Just a question on the tax. It would be \$400,000 forgiven from the municipality and about \$130,000 for education for 2008 if we use 2008 figures.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you.

Mr. White: The department has no objection to this bill moving forward.

Mrs. McQueen: Great. Thank you.

Mr. Quest: Just for clarification. It might be in here. There's a charitable umbrella, and then there's the YMCA itself. Okay. So there's a foundation.

Mr. Savoia: Could I just clarify it?

Mr. Quest: Please. Yes.

Mr. Savoia: We have two charities, in fact. There's the Edmonton YMCA, which was incorporated in 1907. That's what we're here for. For planned giving or endowment planning – this happens in an awful lot of other organizations from time to time – we have the Edmonton YMCA Foundation. That's another charity, arm's-length but connected to the Y. Those are two different organizations. Basically, we're only here for the Edmonton YMCA.

Mr. Quest: Okay. So it's different than not-for-profit. You can't accumulate surpluses year after year and so on.

Mr. Savoia: Absolutely. No.

Mr. Quest: Every dollar really does go back in.

Mr. Savoia: Absolutely.

Mr. Quest: That was the question.

The Chair: Ms Woo-Paw, please.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, the YMCA is an iconic organization that has been extremely successful in providing services in Canada. I would like to know approximately what percentage of your services or your spending goes to support individuals and families in need. My husband, who is a professional, at one point was a member of the Y, and my children have benefited from the tremendous programs at the Y, but certainly we are not a family in need of charitable support. So I'd like to know what percentage.

Mr. Savoia: Yes. Absolutely. We very much tend to reflect the mix

of the community. In our city we've ranged anywhere from straight participation to begin with in terms of where we're charging fees, because we have programs where there are no fees. But for the programs that we charge fees for, it could be anywhere from 15 to 30 per cent of participants if you look over the last eight years. Currently – I was looking at the data this morning – we're sitting just under 15 per cent, but it ranges depending on, you know, the kind of thing that it is. That's one area, and that translates into about a million dollars a year. That includes everything from day camps, some support for child care, in terms of memberships, just the whole broad range. Nobody gets turned away regardless of the program.

Then we really have a whole other section of programs, often in contract. We are member agencies of the United Way. Certainly, we have contracts with government and so on like that. Working with Families First, for example, is a major project in our city, really looking at serving some 1,200 families: marginalized and so on. We do get some monies from elsewhere in terms of the other kinds of things that we do, in terms of our working with youth that have dropped out of school, and so on. They're fully subsidized.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Allred, please.

Mr. Allred: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Savoia, thank you for the presentation. A number of years ago – I come from St. Albert, and I know a lot of our members are members of the Y – there were some deliberations between the Y and the city of St. Albert. I'm not sure if it was to take over an existing facility or to, I think, build a new facility. Now, in the event that that was to happen again, would you need a separate incorporation to do that outside of the city limits, or could the YMCA of Edmonton expand into the capital region?

Mr. Savoia: A very good question. In our current legislation it really is not so specific that it's just the city of Edmonton. It's Edmonton and area, so depending on how you want to define "area." But we don't, certainly within the capital region, see that as an issue at all. We'd be able to do that. The current legislation would do that.

Mr. Allred: Thank you.

The Chair: Mrs. Sarich, please.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much. I want to say thank you so much for the presentation this morning as well as background information on how the YMCA has served many individuals, community groups, families, and others within the Edmonton community. I really appreciate that long-standing history and contribution.

Just a couple of points for clarification. I'm wondering if there could be some clarification, once again, on just what exactly would be exempt in the proposal and, I guess, both perspectives of the implications: one from the YMCA and then the impact from the city. I heard what that value was. According to the information that we have, there isn't really any implication. There's a sense of comfort by city council to support this direction. I was just wondering if there's any other insight to share with us on the exemption from that perspective. I want it clarified: is there any personal property involved in this proposal, or is it just the real property? Just a clarification.

Mr. Savoia: It's all real property only. I mean, as an organization that's all we have, so it's just real property.

Mrs. Sarich: Okay. If there should be anything coming forward in the future vis-à-vis the foundation, purchase of real property, then that, too, would be exempt? Financially could the Y be in that position sometime in the future?

Mr. Savoia: No. I think this is the real property held by the Edmonton YMCA only.

Mrs. Sarich: Only. Okay. All right. I'm satisfied with that, then.

Then I guess, just going back to the city, I'd like to hear anything else that you may want to add regarding the position of the city on this.

Mr. Dykstra: Just to point out that council would be looking, if this isn't passed, to bring a motion forward under 364 to suggest eliminating or exempting the YMCA for the municipal portion, which would be \$400,000. We'd have to do that on an annual basis, and the YMCA would have to apply for it.

Mrs. Sarich: Okay.

9:00

The Chair: Anything further, Mrs. Sarich?

Mrs. Sarich: No, unless they have something further.

Mr. Dykstra: Just one other point: it's based on use as well. So if the YMCA were to purchase property for investment purposes or something outside of their main objectives, that would still be taxable.

Mrs. Sarich: Oh. Okay.

Mr. Savoia: Clearly, for us as a charity we're not – you know, it's really when we're actually carrying out our work, so we're not asking for properties. I mean, we would expect to pay taxes.

Mrs. Sarich: Right. Okay. Thank you very much for that clarification.

The Chair: Mr. Boutilier, please.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is directed to Municipal Affairs. Municipal Affairs indicated this morning that they have no objection. My question is: based on what do you have no objection? Number two, does that no objection also apply to the other YMCAs across the province of Alberta? A final note would be: as much as this is a private member's bill in this hearing today, to avoid something like this of listening to three or four YMCAs – and I thank you for the presentation – wouldn't it seem more something that would be led by the Municipal Affairs ministry?

Mr. White: Okay. To answer the first question, the discussion on the current bill and the department's position, we view any exemption to a property tax as, in effect, a subsidy by the rest of the taxpayers. You're exempting these people from paying, so the shortfall in your revenues is paid by the local taxpayers. The department's position is based on the position taken by Edmonton city council, that it has no objection, and we view that the city council of Edmonton is in the best position to determine the impact

and the value to the taxpayers of the city of Edmonton of something such as the YMCA.

As far as the situation province-wide, we didn't give thought to address that. We know that the Y in the city of Calgary is already dealt with, and the information we have from the people from the Y is that it looks like the other Ys are already exempt, so we just need to address this issue here.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you.

The Chair: Anything further, Mr. Boutilier?

Mr. Boutilier: No, thank you.

The Chair: Ms Calahasen, please.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you very much. First of all, thanks for the presentation. I think you as a YMCA have really served Albertans very well. In Edmonton alone we have 44,000 aboriginal people presently here. We have them coming in I think at a rate – I can't even remember what it is, what percentage it is. My question is regarding what percentage of aboriginal people use your facilities. We have native friendship centres. We only have one in the city, and it's at its max. The second question to that is: what kind of a relationship have you formed with the friendship centres to be able to accommodate the needs of the people who are in need of services that you provide?

Mr. Savoia: We don't gather information specifically. An awful lot of it becomes anecdotal because we just don't collect it. When we look at, certainly, the work that we're doing at our Bill Rees YMCA, formerly known as the Enterprise Centre, which is really a lot of particularly young people who are dealing with all kinds of issues, often with living on the street and so on like that, trying to get back into school or to work: about 40 per cent. There it's about a couple of thousand youth at any time, so it's ever present, and we have a very good sense because it's a lot of 1 to 1 relationships and so on like that. So there it's about 40 per cent.

Edmonton's family first initiative is about 40 per cent as well. That's about 1,200 families, so about 400 or 500 families in that program.

In terms of our housing programs about 50 per cent are aboriginal, Métis, you know, in terms of First Nations peoples.

When we look, then, in terms of child care, day camps, and so on like that, we just don't gather the information. Certainly, in our new Don Wheaton Y downtown, opened just five months ago, where you have literally a gym right downtown on the pedway, we're seeing lots of young people just coming in to shoot baskets and that kind of stuff, and there is a real mix. Again, we have not been tracking.

In terms of working, we work very, very closely, particularly in our downtown area, with community agencies. I chair the executive directors council of charitable agencies in our inner city, and I certainly have been to the native centre. We have had conversations there, and we're trying to get better at that among all the agencies, in fact, to see how we can work closer together and become more call it client centred and so on because we all do different things. That's where it's at. To be very direct, we need a lot more work to be done in that area. But it's a very good point and a very good suggestion.

Thank you.

Ms Calahasen: Thanks.

The Chair: Anyone else?

Mr. Savoia: I'd like to ask you a couple of questions. The very good work that you do is much appreciated in the community, and we've heard many of the members comment on it. But you also provide executive-style health facilities to many people in the community, which are in direct competition with private enterprise, some of which is in very close proximity to your branches. I'd like you to comment on that. Can you advise: what's your top rate for executive health services?

Mr. Savoia: Yes. I would be happy to do that, Mr. Chairman. First of all, philosophically I want to just make a statement because as an immigrant child, let me tell you, I kind of over time understand what we're trying to say and we're trying to get at, that the community is made up of many people, I mean, a whole cross-section of people, and we're committed to serving the entire continuum. I can tell you that many people that belong to the Y who are the executive group could join anywhere, but they join the Y. The reason they do that is they want to be part of the mix of the community. They really do that, so there really is that notion.

Let me give you a little story, and then I will comment on the fees. One of our young people from the Bill Rees YMCA – we know how important recreation is in terms of your own self-development – was having a tough time, so we bring him over. This is still in the old building. Eventually one of our staff finally gets him over there, and he goes into the room and sees his judge and his lawyer and says: geez, if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for me.

I'm saying that that is who we are as an organization. We really, really are committed. Even if we had the option to – you really want to bring it all together, so you bring the whole cross-section of people.

The Chair: Are you saying everybody can join the executive health club for nothing if they want to?

Mr. Savoia: Basically the only difference in the health club is that you do get a whirlpool and steam, but you get access to all the other facilities.

The Chair: How much does it cost per month, the top end of the executive?

Mr. Savoia: Sorry, \$95 a month for the executive; \$55 for the general membership.

The Chair: Okay. Then in addition to that you said that you never turn anybody away.

Mr. Savoia: That's right.

The Chair: How many individuals would be participating, as a percentage, for free in those programs?

Mr. Savoia: Very few people. We encourage putting something towards their membership because there's more value than getting it for free. There are a few people that get it totally for free, but right now, as of this morning, we're at just 15.2 per cent. Of our membership, out of about 26,000 people that we're now serving in our recreation, 15.2 per cent are subsidized or helped with fees.

The Chair: So that's subsidized off the \$55 per month?

Mr. Savoia: Fifty-five.

The Chair: Is that for an individual?

Mr. Savoia: For an individual, yes. That's an adult.

The Chair: Of the 15.2 per cent that are subsidized, what's the average that they would pay on a monthly basis to belong?

Mr. Savoia: It ranges anywhere from about 10 per cent to 40 per cent, and some are free. I mean, I'm just giving you the total range. It really varies in there.

The Chair: Now, in the old days the YMCA was known as a place where somebody could come to town and stay for a night or have a place to shower. Do you still offer free showers to homeless people?

Mr. Savoia: We do have people showering. Yes, we do. Our current facility at the old downtown Y is transitional housing, and we're serving anywhere up to about 130 people – it's been full now for years – on any one night. That's a cross-section. In our city right now, of course, I'm on the Committee to End Homelessness. There are also all the other housing initiatives. We really have a plan, a vision, in fact, to build a new YMCA village for families in transition because it's such a huge need. We have some families right now. Our place was built 70 years ago, so it's a little room about 9 by 8, and we have a mother and two kids. We try to encourage them, move them on as quickly as we can, but there's nowhere else for them. So we are a cross-section.

9:10

The Chair: The \$130 per night, is that only at your downtown facility?

Mr. Savoia: That's right.

The Chair: None of the other ones have residential?

Mr. Savoia: No, they don't have that. Our housing facility is only at the downtown.

The Chair: Those people that are housed there are living there for three months?

Mr. Savoia: Anywhere from three months to five years, depending on their issues – some of them have a lot of issues: addictions, problems with the law, and so on like that – to get them moving on. But we do have people coming into town, you know, to go up to the oil sands and so on that might stay. We have one individual who rents at our place every time he's back in town from the oil sands. It's a real cross-section.

The Chair: Of your programs other than the health club facilities, how many individuals would be provided with those services free? You mentioned, I think, some of the camp participants and whatnot.

Mr. Savoia: That's right. All of our programs at the Bill Rees YMCA, or formerly the Enterprise Centre, are a hundred per cent – I mean, they don't pay any fees. That translates to between 3,000 and 5,000 people there. This is with the whole host family programs and so on like that. An awful lot of these folks are dealing with all kinds of issues, so we give them support and so on like that. I think I did mention when you look at day camps that about 25 per cent of our day camps and the summer camps are subsidized with 1 in 4, so the kids can get a bit of a camping experience. Day camp experience

is all we have up here. So we work hard at this within our means to do everything possible to get people to participate and be part of the community.

The Chair: Any other questions by committee members? Mr. Elniski.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you. I just have a couple of real quick points here. We're talking about the YMCA, and it's unclear in my mind as to the relationship between the YMCA and the YWCA. Could you clarify that for me, please?

Mr. Savoia: Absolutely. In this community – and it varies from community to community – the YWCA is a totally separate, independent organization. The YMCA is a totally separate independent organization. In this city it's ever been thus; in other communities they became YMCAs/YWCAs. But they are totally separate organizations.

Mr. Elniski: Okay. Thank you. A supplemental question to Bret. Could you tell me, please: does the YWCA, which I know does own some residential property here in the city, a couple of multifamily buildings, I think, have the same taxation status?

Mr. Dykstra: No, they don't. I'm not a hundred per cent sure on which buildings are taxable and which would be exempt, but for each one, based on their use, they would apply under COPTER. We'd do the analysis of their application and grant them exemption for municipal taxes under COPTER.

Mr. Elniski: Okay. But up to this point in time, though, you guys haven't had any real dealings with them on this issue, then?

Mr. Dykstra: No.

Mr. Elniski: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Anything further?

Well, thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen.

Ms Dean: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question?

The Chair: Yeah. You have a question?

Ms Dean: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Department of Municipal Affairs has recommended a minor amendment to the bill that would delete the reference to personal property. Can I just have for the record the views of the petitioner with respect to that recommendation, if you have any objections to that?

Mr. Savoia: None whatsoever. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, Mr. Cust or Mr. White, would you care to make any further comments regarding that recommendation?

Mr. White: The department's recommendation to remove the reference to personal property is based on the fact that personal property is not subject to taxation under the Municipal Government Act.

The Chair: Right. Okay.

Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen. You can retire, and the committee will continue here for a few minutes.

Okay. The issue before us is whether we want to recommend to the Legislature that this proceed or proceed with amendments or not proceed. I think Mr. Fawcett has a motion to make in that regard.

Ms Calahasen: Before he does that, can I ask a question just for my own clarity?

The Chair: Yes.

Ms Calahasen: Can the city allow them to go and be tax free without our having to go through this, or does it need this?

The Chair: Only on their portion of the taxes.

Ms Calahasen: Ah, okay. Thank you.

The Chair: The education portion still would be within the ambit of this committee.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you.

Mr. Fawcett: I'd move that the Standing Committee on Private Bills recommend to the Legislative Assembly that

Bill Pr. 1, Young Men's Christian Association of Edmonton Statutes Amendment Act, 2008, proceed with the following amendments: (a) the preamble is amended in the third recital by striking out "and personal"; and (b) section 1 is amended in the proposed section 11 by striking out "and personal."

Mr. Elniski: Well, I do have a concern that we are not looking at this from a sort of global perspective. I agree that it's good that the local YMCA came forward to us. However, as he referenced, we have a YMCA in Medicine Hat, we have a YMCA in Lethbridge, we have a YWCA, and we need to understand, I think, before we can move forward with this what the implications are. You know, as simple as it is to pass this particular piece with this group here for these folks, if we're going to do it, let's do it for everybody. I mean, why would we want to go through this again?

The Chair: Well, it's private legislation, and it's really up to the petitioners if they want to change it. I guess one of the comforting things for me in this thing, because they are in competition to a

certain extent with free enterprise out there, is that there are some restrictions within the Edmonton YMCA, the original legislation, which says that, you know, they have certain purposes for which they exist, and if they were to step outside that – for example, to be a condominium development corporation – they wouldn't retain their exempt status, presumably. I don't know what's in the legislation for each of the other YMCAs, but if there were some sort of restriction in there, I think you'd want to make sure that that was in there before you gave them a blanket tax-free status.

Mrs. Forsyth: I don't want to argue with my hon. colleague, but I think we have to as a committee appreciate what nonprofit agencies like the Y do. For example, we've heard during question period all the questions in regard to child care. These people do a tremendous amount of what we consider nonprofit organizational work, and I think that any tax break that they can get – and we're talking about, I think, \$530,000 – will deliver a lot of services on behalf of the government. So I think we should support this. If Medicine Hat and Lethbridge come forward, great.

The Chair: Right.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you.

The Chair: Any further discussion?
Are we ready for the vote? All in favour?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Anyone opposed? That's carried. Thank you very much.

Being as how there was only one bill before the committee and that we've dealt with that now summarily, there'll be no necessity for a further meeting of this committee, right?

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Chair, who let's the Y know?

The Chair: Parliamentary Counsel will take care of that.
Motion to adjourn? Mr. Campbell. All in favour? Carried.
Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:20 a.m.]

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Tuesday, May 27, 2008

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