



COVID-19 Provincial Re-launch and Return to Sport Update

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From: Lisa Hardy, Executive Director Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut

As we have seen over the past two months the COVID-19 virus continues to remain fluid and provide more questions than answers for all of us as to what the information we receive means and when are we able to get back on the ice. The challenge in finding answers to these questions are amplified by the fact that each Provincial jurisdiction across Canada has their own restrictions in place as well as their own individualized re-launch strategy and process.

During the last 2 months, we have been actively engaged with our Government Sports Consultant and managers, participated in several meetings with our Minister, weekly meetings with other Provincial Sport Organizations (PSO's) in Alberta, in addition to our meetings with Skate Canada and other Sections concerning the pandemic and our return to play.

Alberta recently announced their [relaunch strategy](#) for the Province. **Currently all indoor sports are categorized into Stage 3 of the relaunch plan, primarily due to all recreation centres and arenas listed as being not permitted to re-open until Stage 3.** There is no indication yet as to when Stage 3 will be launched, and it will be dependent on factors such as the number of new cases of COVID-19 that are seen during the relaxation of regulations in Stage 1 and 2. They have also indicated that movement through the stages may be implemented by location/community depending on the level of risk and number of active cases in an area, as opposed to Alberta Health Regions or the entire Province at one time. These means we may see some facilities and clubs eligible to open in some municipalities earlier than others.

Unfortunately, the Province has not yet created a collaborative process engaging the PSO's or Municipalities nor have any overarching guidelines been developed or shared with or regarding return to play/sport protocols or guidelines. There also is no formal process developed for individual sports to have sport specific protocols reviewed and approved in Alberta other than to send our ideas into our Minister. As a result, the PSO's have taken our own initiative to engage with municipalities to work collaboratively on this and we have a meeting this afternoon to start that work.

The Section's sport specific recommended guidelines and protocols that are needed to comply with our Provincial and Territorial restrictions are currently in development. We know that our sport is unique to others being primarily an individual, non-contact sport, and as a result has social distancing measures already in place in some areas. We need to be reminded however that without any restrictions lifted on facilities we will still not be able to resume our on-ice activities.

Finally, many of you will have seen today Skate Canada's announcement that they have "lifted the suspension of Skate Canada activities with limitations". **Please note: Activities are still only permitted if they are allowed in the jurisdiction that they are located in,** which means in Alberta off-ice training and activities with social distancing measures in place at permitted open green-spaces and parks (By the Province or Municipality) are now allowed (effective today).

We hope to have additional clarity and information to share over the next few weeks with our members that will assist your club or skating school in conversations with your local municipality, and to implement into your planning process so you are prepared to re-open as soon as restrictions are lifted. We will be reviewing the new Skate Canada information along with other jurisdictional and other sport protocols with the intent to best understand how these can be applied to our programs and events as we prepare for a return to activity.

Additional information, and online resources

May 11, 2020 Skate Canada Sanction Suspensions lifted <https://skatecanada.ca/2020/05/return-to-skating/>

Skate Canada FAQ: <https://skatecanada.ca/covid-19-response/>

Alberta Relaunch Strategy <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-relaunch-strategy.aspx>

Supports for Albertans: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-supports-for-albertans.aspx>

Supports for Businesses: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-financial-support-for-businesses-and-organizations.aspx>

Sincerely,

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