

May 29, 2020

Skate Canada: Alberta / NWT-Nunavut is a strong proponent of health and wellness and is the leading provider of skating programs both in Canada and within each province and territory. The organization makes every decision by assessing the health and safety of participants and the communities in which we operate. This holds true at all times, but even more prominently as we look to relaunch figure skating post-pandemic break.

As our organization makes decisions on HOW to Return to Skate we do so with care and proactive planning. **We are requesting that Alberta Health Services re-consider WHEN *Return to Training [Modified]* for the sport of figure skating may begin.** We would like to demonstrate that by implementing a phased return to figure skating, combined with a structured and phased opening of partner facilities in Alberta, any health risk can be effectively managed for an earlier relaunch in Stage 1 or 2.

Figure Skating is a low-risk, primarily individual and non-contact sport that maintains physical distance naturally, allowing athletes to move around the ice surface safely, while practicing. Unfortunately, due to the reliance on indoor facilities figure skating currently falls under Stage 3 of the Provincial Relaunch Strategy. There are many benefits to providing earlier access to both recreational competitive and competitive programming earlier than Stage 3 and Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut is well positioned to provide this programming in a safe and consistent manner.

- **Skate Canada is an industry leader in the delivery of safe and successful sport.** The National Sport Organization has led the provinces by providing detailed Return to Skating Guidelines. The Skate Canada sections, in turn, worked collaboratively to develop detailed Protocols, waivers and templates which align with the individual Provincial and Territorial Health authorities. Each club and skating school must be compliant at all times.
- **Figure Skating, while indoors, is easily executed maintaining physical distance;** with careful planning of entry and exit strategies, and a limit of 15 participants per training session the physical space of an ice surface (26m x 61m) provides skaters with a shared 1,586m<sup>2</sup> (105m<sup>2</sup> per skater) in a well ventilated, high ceiling environment.
- **Physical activity and youth participation in sport** is reported to increase self-esteem, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction. A prolonged absence from sport, and the accompanying structure that sport demands, during the teenage years may result in an early withdrawal from physical activity; negatively impacting a teen's sense of belonging and drive.

- **Financial Stability of Figure Skating for the future.** The sport of figure skating in Alberta provides employment to over 700 Professional Coaches, 158 Skate Canada Clubs (not-for-profit organizations many who in turn employ between 1 and 5 individuals), and 3 Skating Schools (for profit organizations). The financial viability of these clubs and skating schools are currently at risk. Without sanctioned clubs and skating schools; it would be impossible to provide a consistent, safe and positive environment to young athletes wishing to skate.
- **International representation of Alberta athletes.** Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut has developed many athletes who train with the goal of representing Canada, and Alberta on the international stage. Athletes around the world have experienced an unprecedented break in training, we would like to ensure our provincial athletes have the opportunity to train in a safe and low-risk environment in order to maintain competitiveness both domestically and internationally.

*Return to Skating* will play an important role in our community as the province of Alberta recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and refocuses on the future. As members of Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut gradually return to the sport they love I am confident that providing a safe environment to once again push their physical limits, socialize and interact with others, learn new skills and find a new balance in their lives will result in a community of healing in health and wellness.

We would like to thank you for your time and look forward to a discussion supporting the early relaunch of figure skating at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



*Bobbi-Jo Martin*  
Chair

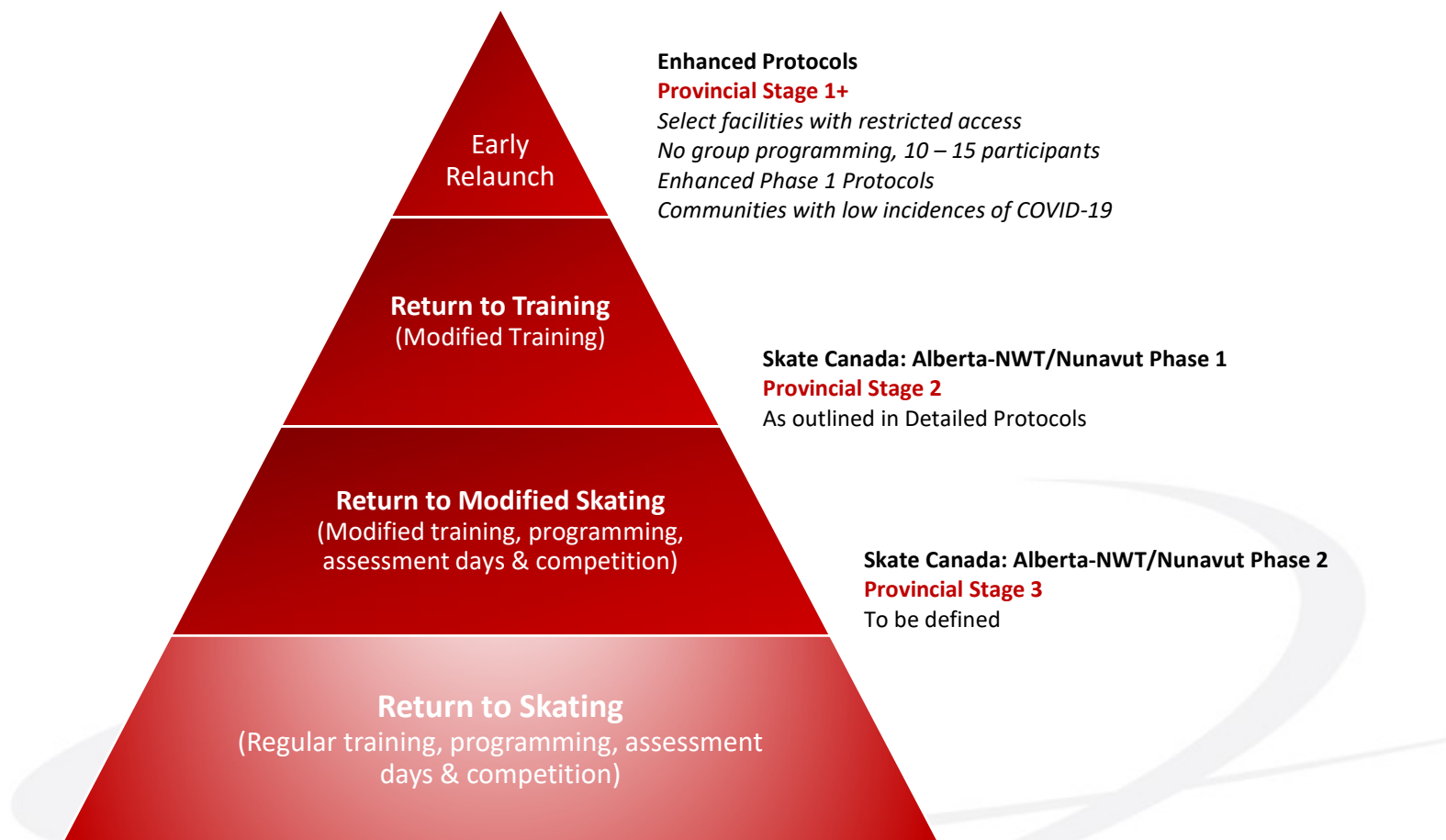
C: 403-308-2342  
[bjirwin@shaw.ca](mailto:bjirwin@shaw.ca)  
[www.skateabnwtun.ca](http://www.skateabnwtun.ca)



*Lisa Hardy*  
Executive Director

C: 780-803-0562  
D: 780-415-0562  
[lisahardy@skateabnwtun.ca](mailto:lisahardy@skateabnwtun.ca)

### Skate Canada: Alberta / NWT-Nunavut Early Relaunch Overview



Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut wishes to introduce a graduated relaunch of the Skate Canada programs and events detailed on the following pages.

- Summary of Early relaunch Phases 1 – 3
- Overview of the practicalities of re-introducing figure skaters to the sport of figure skating after an extended break
- The benefits skating brings to athletes, coaches, communities and the economy
- Skate Canada is a Nationally-regulated organization with a deep history in Canadian sport
- Overview of AHS Zone and Skate Canada Region alignment

### Skate Canada: Alberta / NWT-Nunavut Return to Skating Overview

#### EARLY RELAUNCH: Restricted Programming

*Get In, Train, Get Out*

**Providing Serious Athletes with an opportunity to train in a safe environment with significant restrictions  
Timing (ASAP)**

Low Risk Facilities (Select dedicated Ice Arenas only (with single or twin ice) controlled entry and exits, private clubs)

*Low risk geographies*

- Maximum of 15 individuals including coaches and staff
- Masks mandatory for all coaches, optional for athletes, gloves required for all
- Allotted cleaning between sessions
- Skaters able to maintain physical distance while training
- Regular hand sanitizing (after touching surfaces AND between sessions)
- Daily, verbal screening of all participants prior to entering ice surface (recorded temperature checks can be implemented if required)
- Dressing Rooms closed
- No spectators
- Arrive ready-to-train ***Get In, Train, Get Out***
- No training aids

#### Phase 1: Return to Training (Modified)

**Providing Figure Skaters with an opportunity to train in a familiar but limited, safe environment  
Timing: Aligned with STAGE 2 provided by Alberta Health**

Expanded Low Risk Facilities (All dedicated Ice Arenas), private clubs

*No restriction on location unless deemed necessary by Alberta Health*

- Number of participants commensurate with the lesser of provincial health requirements or facility restrictions. Includes coaches, skaters, volunteers
- Masks mandatory for coaches, optional for athletes, gloves recommended for all
- Allotted cleaning between sessions
- Skaters able to understand concept of physical distance
- Regular hand sanitizing (after touching surfaces AND between sessions)
- Recorded health questionnaire prior to entering ice surface
- One spectator per athlete; maintaining physical distance
- Arrive ready-to-train, when possible

## **Skate Canada: Alberta / NWT-Nunavut Return to Skating Overview (Cont'd)**

<p><b>Phase 2: Return to Modified Skating</b>  <b>Skaters of all levels enjoying Learn to Skate, Figure Skating lessons, Assessment Days while maintaining physical distance and increased scheduling.</b>  <b>Timing: Aligned with STAGE 3 provided by Alberta Health</b></p>	
<p>All multi-plex Fitness Centres, municipal arenas and privately-owned facilities in Alberta</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Addition of group programming based on learning from previous phases, other Provincial and National Sport Organizations and in keeping with government guidelines, this phase is yet to be defined</li> <li>➤ Addition of modified Assessment Days and Competitions in alignment with Alberta Public Health orders and mass gathering restrictions</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Phase 3: Return to Skating</b>  <b>Return to Skate Canada Programming: Training, Events and Competitions</b>  <b>Timing: TBD</b></p>	
<p>No geographic or facility restrictions</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Social distancing restrictions have been lifted</li> </ul>	

#### **We must employ a practical approach to supporting athletes in Alberta**

Providing Alberta's athletes with earlier access to training will ensure they are able to remain competitive with skaters training in other provinces and around the world. The extended break has universally had a toll on the mental health of our young athletes and as *Return to Skating* is introduced addressing the health of our young community must be the #1 priority.

- Youth across Canada have adjusted to many changes over the past three months due to the COVID-19 pandemic; online school from home, restrictions on movement and new ways of thinking of the spread of viruses. It is vital for their mental and physical health to have the opportunity to resume sport and physical activity
- Figure skating involves executing highly technical and physically demanding elements which are achieved by a combination of high repetition and physical strength resulting in the development of muscle memory. Balance, muscle tone, even the way skates fit can only be maintained by being on the ice and not replicated by dryland training
- Competitive figure skaters have a regimented training schedule of 3-4 hours per day, 5-6 days / week. Scheduled rest periods are normally only one to two weeks at a time. Time off to this extent, excluding injury recovery in some, is unprecedented and must require gradual re-entry to elite level sport
- Skate Canada has determined it will take a minimum of 8-10 weeks of training and conditioning to get athletes ready for competition, without injury
- Introduction of figure skating in Stage 3 for Alberta would represent an approximately 8-week delay over other provinces (For example; Ontario included Figure Skating in Stage 1 of their relaunch and British Columbia currently has a number of facilities open, allowing for skaters in both Provinces to resume training)
- Mental wellness needs to be addressed as skaters witness other competitors around the world and within Canada returning to sport, all whilst their bodies change, and their mental toughness begins to erode

### Figure Skating and Physical Distance: An easy match!

The sport of figure skating is predominantly an individual sport, with minimal reliance on shared training tools. With a skating surface of approximately 1,580 m<sup>2</sup> maintaining a distance between skaters is easily achievable with 15 participants this provides EACH skater with approximately 105m<sup>2</sup>. The sport has a strong athletic component with athletes of all levels requiring significant levels of cardio fitness and strength. While Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut is proposing a phased re-entry, beginning with our most serious, self-directed athletes we believe that participating in Skating on Ice is beneficial to many during these unprecedented times, regardless of skill level.

### Physical and Mental Health: It's safe and it's good for Mental Health

Approximately 24,000 people, comprised of coaches, officials, board members, and skaters aged 3 – 80, are currently registered to offer or take part in various programming offered by Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut member clubs and skating schools through-out the year. As of May 30, 2020, skaters will have been away from the rink, from their friends, and from the sport they love for eleven weeks. This is nearly three times the rest our year-round athletes take in a year. With proper protocols Skate Canada programming can be delivered safely and efficiently to athletes in both the competitive and the competitive recreational stream.

### Financial: A Skating Community for the long – term

#### Financial Viability of Skating Clubs

Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut represents clubs and skating schools which operate under the Section as the Provincial Sports Organization, and the majority of clubs and skating schools are also incorporated under the Alberta Societies Act. These Clubs and Skating Schools have been responsible for providing structured, Learn to Skate and Figure Skating lessons to Albertans for almost 75 years and operate on budgets that rely on government funding, Casino proceeds and a portion of Skater Registration Fees. Skate Canada's Learn to Skate program – CanSkate, accounts for between 40 – 60% of a club's revenues. Registrations for CanSkate programming for many of our clubs and skating schools normally begins in late September and runs through the end of April. While the introduction to group programming is not detailed in this proposal, we look forward to discussions in Stage 3 when we can **Return to Modified Skating**.



### Financial Impact to Registered Professional Coaches

Figure Skating Coaches are Registered Professional Coaches, certified in partnership with Skate Canada and the National Coaches Certification Program. Coaches spend many years attaining increasing levels of aptitude through practice and theoretical training. Mandatory Professional Development Courses, ethics and Safe Sport courses, and annual first aid training are required to maintain “In Good Standing” status. Coaches primarily are self-employed and are not compensated by the Clubs. Their income (and in many cases sole income) comes from individual and small group lessons, charged directly to the skater(s).

- Figure Skating Coaches often coach over 25 hours per week
- There are over 700 Registered Professional Coaches (of varying levels) active in the Alberta-NWT/Nunavut section
- A recent survey indicated that 85% of coaches are ineligible for Employment Insurance
- Many of Canada’s top Coaches are based out of Alberta, with a leading International, World Champion coach teaching students from around the world, out of Edmonton Alberta.
- Extended break in training results in increase pre-mature retirement of athletes, having a negative impact on Coach revenues

**Skate Canada is the oldest and largest figure skating association in the world** and is recognized by the Government of Canada, the Canadian Olympic Committee and the International Skating Union as the governing body for the sport of figure skating. They have developed National “Return to Skating” guidelines for the safety of athletes, and have supported each Provincial Sports Organization, to further develop protocols, guidelines, resources and templates that align with Provincial Public Health Orders and guidelines. These documents have been developed for a multi-phased approach to relaunching skating and can adapt or evolve in tandem with the Provincial Relaunch Strategy. They will provide guidance and resources for our member clubs, skating schools, athletes, coaches, and volunteers to follow as part of our Return to Skating strategy.

### Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut: Existing Region and Club Communication network and protocols ensures excellence in the delivery of the New Normal.

Skate Canada is a National Sports Organization which governs the sport of figure skating federally but delivers programming through partnering with provincially-led Sections and not-for-profit Skate Canada Clubs and Skating Schools.

**The Mission of Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut is to lead / enable and promote excellence in the delivery of safe and inclusive skating programs for lifelong fun, fitness and achievement.** The Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut Clubs and Skating schools are further segmented into eight regions. This provides an excellent opportunity for a phased re-entry to sport, if necessary. A long-standing communications infrastructure including Region Reps and Region Coaching Representatives results in timely and consistent communication and training.



### Alignment of Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut Clubs and AHS Zones

The structure of Skate Canada: Alberta-NWT/Nunavut and its clubs and skating schools is ideally suited for a gradual roll out, if required by Alberta Health Services. Made up of eight Regions, the Section has clubs in both rural and urban locations. The Regions line up very well with Alberta Health Services zones with AHS North Zone encompassing three Skate Canada Regions. This alignment will be beneficial should an area or areas experience an outbreak and zone-specific actions are required.

As we enter into the summer months, programming will primarily exist within more urban centres.

Skate Canada Region	Alberta Health Zone	# of Clubs / Skating Schools
Calgary	Calgary	29
Central	Central	30
Peace	North	16
North West	North	12
North East	North	23
Edmonton	Edmonton	23
South	South	24
NWT / Nunavut		

### Status of Skate Canada Provincial Return to Skate Implementations

For reference purposes only, the Provincial Sport Organizations within Skate Canada are at various stages of approval with Ontario taking the lead and including the sport of figure skating in Stage 1.

Skate Canada Section	Current Status
BC-Yukon	Some facilities currently operating
Manitoba	Stage 3 inclusion under review
Nova Scotia	
New Brunswick	Programming resumes June 22, 2020
Ontario	Some facilities currently operating
PEI	Programming resumes June 1, 2020
Quebec	
Saskatchewan	