April 21, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee
Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1A1

Subject: Additional Medical Health Advice to Re-Open Outdoor Recreation including GOLF Immediately

Dear Premier Ford,

At the beginning of your daily COVID press announcements, you have consistently indicated that you "have been, and will continue to rely on the advice of the medical health professionals" to help you and your team make your decisions. We know that you and your government are continuing to have to make some very challenging decisions. The numbers are alarming, and we support all measures that will help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Golf is Safe. We have been saying that all along in our regular communications to you and your team. There continues to be more and more **overwhelming evidence from the medical community that outdoor activities – including golf**, conducted with proper protocols, are not only very safe, but also **critically important right now** for the physical and mental well-being of Ontarians.

Following our previous correspondence with you on Monday, April 19th, multiple medical health professionals have reached out to us to share their knowledge and expertise on this important issue. Here is what they are saying:

"More than one year into the COVID-19 pandemic, we know the following will reduce transmission, protect our health care system, and allow us to re-open safely as soon as possible:

What will work:

- **Keeping people safely connected:** Maintaining social connections and **outdoor activity are important to our overall physical and mental health**. It means … clearly encouraging safe outdoor activities.

What will not work:

- **Policies that discourage safe outdoor activity will not control COVID-19** and will disproportionately harm children and those who do not have access to their own greenspace, especially those living in crowded conditions.
- As noted in repeated studies from around the world, **inconsistent policies with no clear link to scientific evidence are ineffective in fighting COVID-19**."

The Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table
"Fighting COVID-19 in Ontario: The Way Forward" (published April 20, 2021; for complete article please click here - https://covid19-sciencetable.ca/sciencebrief/fighting-covid-19-in-ontario-the-way-forward/)

"Outdoors is safe, indoors is not safe … **nobody is getting this infection from golfing**!"

Isaac Bogoch MD SM
Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, University of Toronto
Diseases consultant, Divisions of General Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Toronto General Hospital
(Quoted on April 19th edition of Golf Talk Canada with Mark Zecchino & Bob Weeks, click here)

"Dear Premier Ford,
I'm an Infectious disease and Infection control specialist working at one of the hardest hit hospitals in the GTA with COVID-19 and have been in practice for over 20 years at this multi site facility. Wave 3 has been a difficult time for all of us.

No doubt the decisions regarding the new restrictions with the third wave were difficult to make, however the restrictions on outdoors activities are not based on good scientific evidence. The outdoors would be one of the safest environments for Ontarians at this time. **I am taken aback as to why golf courses would be closed as the sport would be considered a very safe sport which would allow appropriate physical distancing and simultaneously offer physical activity and mental stimulation.** There is no sharing of equipment, players are well distanced and there have been no documentation cases of transmission during this outdoor activity. Facilities set tee times to control the number of golfers playing on a vast space during a round.

Golf is proven to be a safe haven in 2020 with over 20 million rounds played by almost 2,000,000 golfers in Ontario with zero known cases of COVID transmission in any Ontario golf course.

The industry has gone above and beyond over the past year to make the sport even safer with numerous safety protocols now in place. I would suggest that golf is the safest outdoor group sport and has maximum health benefits needed for Ontarians during the pandemic. **On behalf of Ontarians, I would request that the golf course is re-open immediately.**"

Mahin Baqi, MD FRCPC
Infection Control and Infectious Diseases

"Dear Premier Ford,
The evidence to date overwhelmingly points to COVID-19 transmission occurring only indoors with prolonged unprotected close proximity exposure to virus-laden respiratory aerosols in inadequately ventilated spaces.

It is clear that when outdoors the combined effects of airflow and solar radiation create conditions that preclude inhalation of an infectious dose of SARS-CoV-2. **There is simply no evidence that outdoor transmission is occurring** - even in the absence of respiratory protection and conventional social distancing. On a population basis, restricting outdoor activities simply increases the risk of indoor transmission.

The current Ontario restrictions on outdoor sports and recreation are unscientific, unfounded, counterproductive, and bad public health policy."

John H. Murphy BSc MHSc MBA PhD ROH CIH MACE
President - Resource Environmental Associates Limited
Adjunct Professor - Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto

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"Dear Premier Ford,
The increasingly lengthy, though essential, restrictions on our lives that COVID has brought about, have taken a toll on the mental wellbeing of many of us. The longer that people are unable to engage in pleasurable aspects of their lives, the more feelings of being trapped will occur and frustrations rise. In some, this can contribute to dysfunctional interpersonal behaviour, such as family violence. In others, feelings of powerlessness can lead to what has been termed 'learned helplessness', which can be a precursor of clinical depression. **The opportunity to re-engage in previously enjoyed activities would definitely have a positive impact on people's mental / emotional wellbeing.**

Golf definitely qualifies as an enjoyed activity for thousands. Being able to spend several hours outdoors doing something active and pleasurable helps to moderate the trapped feelings noted above.

I am not qualified to comment on the safety of reopening golf, although from what I understand, the transmission of COVID is much less likely outside if physical distancing measures are taken.

While reopening golf would by no means be a magical panacea, it is hopefully one of a number of measures that could be taken to alleviate the impact of continuing necessary restrictions on the lives of Ontarians. If we do not facilitate such measures, **the impact on the mental health of Ontarians could become a detrimental effect of COVID** which could last beyond the attainment of herd immunity from vaccination."

G.A. Wilson MD FRCP (C)

The medical community has clearly indicated that safe, outdoor activities are crucial. Golf proved in 2020, and in early 2021, that it is well-positioned to provide Ontarians with some much-needed outdoor exercise, mental stimulation and safe social time with family or friends. As the #1 participation sport in Ontario, in 2020 alone **there were well over 20 Million rounds of golf played by over 1.8 Million golfers in Ontario with ZERO known cases of COVID transmission at a golf course**. The data is clear:

- Golf is safe.
- Golf is naturally aligned to physical distancing.
- Golf has a clear set of well established, very safe protocols.
- Golf has important health benefits – the studies are clear about golf – it is good for your heart, it relieves stress, and it can improve your mental health.
- And many recent articles from doctors across the province indicate that the science is clear … outdoor transmission is extremely rare.

We have been in regular communication with your team over the last few months, consistently reminding your government how safe the sport of golf is. We reiterated in those messages our commitment as a golf industry to continue to be a LEADER in Ontario by providing a safe recreational activity for your constituents. We remain committed to that goal. We will continue to hold ourselves to very high standards to ensure that golf remains the safe recreational option that it has proven to be.

On behalf of the 800 courses, 110,000 workers and over 1.8 Million golfers in Ontario, we again implore you to allow golf and other safe outdoor recreational amenities to be available to Ontarians. Right now, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North America where you are not allowed to golf. Other regions understand how safe

golf is, and how important it is to the physical and mental well-being of their constituents. In Ontario, we have proven without a shadow of a doubt we can operate safely, and we know how critical it is to the physical and mental well-being of Ontarians.

We are happy to engage in direct discussions with your team, if there are additional protocols that are needed for golf and other amenities to be open during this stay-at-home order. We look forward to hearing back from you.

Respectfully,

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CC: All members of the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee, including:

- Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
- Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy, Chair, Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board
- Honourable Vic Fedeli, Vice Chair, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
- Honourable Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
- Honourable Jeff Yurek, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Honourable Caroline Mulroney, Minister of Transportation
- Honourable Ernie Hardeman, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- Honourable Greg Rickford, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Minister of Indigenous Affairs
- Honourable John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry
- Honourable Laurie Scott, Minister of Infrastructure
- Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- Honourable Lisa Thompson, Minister of Government and Consumer Services
- Honourable Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- Honourable Prabmeet Sarkaria, Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction