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May 18, 2021

SENT VIA EMAIL:

Re: Tennis Activities - Summer 2021

Dear: Hon. Tyler Shandro, Minister of Health, Calgary-Acadia MLA

Cc: Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer

Dr. Marcia Johnson, Deputy, Chief Medical Officer

Hon. Jason Kenney, Premier of Alberta

Hon. Minister Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women (CMSW)

Hon. Doug Schweitzer, Minister of Jobs, Economy and Innovation

Hon. Rick McIver, Minister of Transportation, Interim Minister of Municipal Affairs, Deputy House Leader

Mandi Johnson, Chief of Staff - Office of the Minister of CMSW

Christopher Thresher, Chief of Staff – Officer of the Minister of Health

We are writing to express our gratitude to you, the Province of Alberta, and to Alberta Health Services for your leadership and guidance throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

For the past 14-months tennis facilities in the province have patiently supported the Government of Alberta's restrictions to limit the spread and transmission of COVID-19. While tennis facility operators, their members and players across the province have remained patient, it has caused considerable damage to the tennis industry, its clubs and coaches. Additionally, these restrictions have severely impacted the mental and physical well-being of Albertans, particularly youth and older age groups.

Recently, the Government of Alberta announced new stronger measures to stop the third wave of the pandemic. These measures include:

- Limiting participation to “outdoor-only” tennis with members of the same household (only)
- Closing all indoor tennis clubs in the province for a minimum of 3-weeks
- Cancellation of all forms of instruction, including 1-on-1 training and group training
- Allowing outdoor gatherings of up to 5 people, provided they can maintain physical distancing

The government has allowed up to 5 members of *any* household to socially gather outdoors but at the same time has restricted outdoor recreation to 2-persons in the *same* household. As well, tennis club operators in the province understand that enforcement of the current restrictions around play at city amenities/facilities is not being upheld. In fact, we have been informed municipal authorities are simply using the “honor system”. Through being shutdown, tennis club operators are penalized and risking their businesses and the livelihood of their personnel, only to have players play tennis on public-city courts. At present, the restrictions are illogical and unreasonable. We therefore ask the province to consider revising their restrictions with immediate effect.

We ask the Government of Alberta to take a sensible approach and allow the immediate relaxation of tennis activities. Our requests include:

1. *That tennis participation be aligned with the current outdoor gathering limit of 5 persons.* This would allow instruction to take place, tennis players to play singles or doubles and programs to resume with a maximum of 4-players per court whilst maintaining a minimum of 2 to 3 meters distance at all times.
2. All tennis players be permitted to play outdoor and indoor tennis (currently indoor tennis is prohibited).
3. For those sports that can continue to maintain physical distancing, the province adopt outdoor sport guidance documentation that will permit these activities to operate safely.

These small but necessary changes are critical to the continued viability and operation of tennis club operators in the province. The restrictions put in place by the government have been catastrophic for the tennis industry in our province and the science has been ignored:

- It has been demonstrated that tennis is one of the [safest sports](#) to play during the pandemic (indoors or outdoors). A study conducted by 500 epidemiologists and health professionals rank tennis as one of the safest activities during the COVID-19 pandemic ([see report](#) here).
- Current [scientific data](#) suggests that there is no justification for restrictions in an overwhelming majority of sports, especially where those [sports are played outdoors](#) and with good spacing requirements (like tennis and golf).

Tennis **provides natural physical and social distancing**. Prior to the most recent and inconsistent restrictions, tennis had rewarded tennis players with endless hours of **physical and mental health and enjoyment** during the pandemic. To our knowledge, there have been no COVID case transmissions linked directly to the participation of tennis activities in our province nor across Canada.

All tennis clubs in the province operate by individual appointment or reservation only. All *court bookings, private, semi-private and small group training sessions are scheduled in advance and are contact-traceable* through any tennis club court reservation software. Tennis clubs have consistently met all *public health guidance and physical distancing requirements*. They have also operated as 'park and play' facilities, meaning there is **no social interaction before or after play**.

Tennis is one of the most popular and safe sports in Canada, with over 6.5 million Canadians participating in tennis on an annual basis. The tennis industry in Canada is supported by 738 facilities and 3,589 registered tennis courts. There are over 50,000 registered tournament competitors and 5,000 tennis coaches employed across Canada and thousands of other jobs in other tennis related businesses, events and services. There are also nearly 10,000 volunteers supporting the tennis industry in Canada on an annual basis. Overall, the tennis industry in Canada is estimated to be worth over \$500 million to the Canadian economy.

Tennis Alberta and its member clubs are requesting a phased-in approach to reopening tennis. We articulate our reopening plan below:

Stage 1: With immediate effect

- Allow outdoor play with up to a maximum of 5 people per court (including coaches)
- Allow outdoor 1-on-1 instruction, group lessons with up to (5 people total) per court
- Allow indoor or outdoor play for all participants.

Stage 2: By no later than June 15th

- Allow indoor or outdoor play with a limit of 10 persons per court
- Allow indoor or outdoor 1-on-1 instruction, group lessons with up to (10 people total) per court
- Allow indoor or outdoor play for all participants.

Stage 3: By no later than July 1st

- All tennis activities to resume indoor and outdoor
- Junior Tennis Camps to begin
- Competitions and leagues to begin

Stage 4: By no later than August 1st

- Out of province competitions allowed
- Out of province camps allowed
- All restrictions relating to tennis lifted

NOTES: All tennis facilities have and continue to ensure that proper physical distancing and public health guidelines are maintained including but not limited to wellness screening, ball/equipment use protocols, mask wearing on court (while providing instruction), mask wearing in all public/common areas, use of hand sanitization prior-to, during and after-play. Tennis activities have been modified to ensure a minimum of 2 or 3-metres distance is maintained at all times. Each tennis court behaves as its own facility, with its own individual entrance and a barrier between each adjacent court.

In all cases, each program or individual participant can be **verified and contact-traced through club court reservation software**. Every club in the province operates on **advanced registration and does not allow drop-in registration or play**. Every interaction with a customer can be **verified and contract traced**. As well, all of the aforementioned can be done in a **controlled environment** under the presence and supervision of a certified tennis professional or staff member.

We fully understand and support actions that are required to combat the spread of COVID-19, however, the tennis industry is being unfairly penalized given its successful safety record. Recently, the parent company of *one of only nine indoor tennis facilities in the province filed for bankruptcy*. If the parent company cannot find a buyer or restructure its business operations, losing this facility will be detrimental to the growth of tennis as well as to the mental and physical well-being of Albertans. Should these restrictions continue, more facilities may follow suit.

Our sport is unique and should receive due consideration, given our successful safety record thus far. The current inconsistent restrictions come with a **significant financial cost** to all recreational tennis facilities in the province and must be rectified to ensure the future viability of the tennis industry in Alberta.

As we have offered before, we continue to make ourselves available to discuss how to follow the science and safely reopen tennis.

Respectfully,



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On Behalf of the following Tennis Facilities/organisations in Alberta:

The Derrick Golf and Winter Club (Edmonton)
The Calgary Winter Club
Greenfield Tennis Club
Leduc Tennis Association
Edmonton Junior Tennis Society
Mount Pleasant Tennis Club
Aforza (Formerly The Tennis Academy) Calgary
Athabasca Community Tennis Association
Tennis Edmonton
Canmore Tennis Association
The Royal Glenora Club (Edmonton)
The Osten and Victor Alberta Tennis Centre (Calgary)
Garneau Tennis and Beach Volleyball Club (Edmonton)
West Hillhurst Community Association (Calgary)
Saville Community Tennis Centre (Edmonton)
GYMVMT (Calgary)
Grand Prairie Tennis Club
Okotoks Tennis Club
Calgary Tennis Club