

May 25, 2020

Update on COVID-19: Alberta Relaunch Strategy and Return to Sport/Swimming

Dear Club Presidents and Head Coaches,

(please share this with board members and coaching staff, and as needed with club membership)

As a follow-up to the May 7th update on the Alberta Relaunch Strategy and Return to Sport, I wanted to provide some additional information to clubs.

I appreciate that our membership and swimming community is anxious to return to some of our normal routines and activities that were both an important and large part of our daily lives prior to COVID-19. Myself, the staff and board of Swim Alberta are also looking forward to supporting our membership in many of the routines and activities that involved the sport of swimming in the water and with your club in-person activities.

The priority of Swim Alberta has always been and will always be the safety of our membership, specifically our athletes, as well as our coaches, volunteers, staff and families involved in the sport.

I know this is the priority of our clubs as well. As a collective group and community, this was demonstrated through how we significantly adapted and changed our routines and how we worked together over the last several months to flatten the curve of the COVID-19 pandemic. As important as our actions were over the last several months in supporting the health and safety of not only the swimming community but the community as a whole, our actions over the upcoming several months will be equally important. With the important relaunch of our economy through the leadership of our provincial government, it will remain vital that a continued effort to “return to sport” will need to be done in the safest way possible and to continue to follow all guidelines and restrictions that have been put in place through our provincial authorities. I, the board and staff of Swim Alberta are thankful and grateful of the leadership of Dr. Hinshaw and our provincial government through this pandemic.

Returning to sport will require your patience and support.

As the swimming community begins to slowly relaunch some of the activities of our sport, including dryland training (outdoors) and our eventual return to facilities and pools, I ask for both your patience and support, including your feedback and ideas, to ensure all of our actions are inline and support our provincial health orders and local municipal orders and regulations. I know together the swimming community can all work together to ensure the safety of our athletes and entire membership as we return to the sport of swimming. A sport that ignites the passion in all of us.

I want to share with you some of what is currently happening and also some next steps you can expect to see in the coming days and weeks:

What is happening behind the scenes and what is Swim Alberta working on to support a return to sport:

- **Swimming Canada Return to Swimming Resource:** Swim Alberta has committed two staff, Kevin Dennis and Stephen Norris to the national *return to swimming* working group. This group has been working with a strong focus and quick speed to develop and generate the first version of a resource document that will outline the parameters, considerations and guidelines for a national return to sport framework. This document is key to provincial sections developing aligned guidelines with both our national governing body and our provincial health authority. This resource document is scheduled for release by the end of May.

- **Input into provincial government guidelines:** Swim Alberta, through myself, is one of a number, but not all, sports that is working with the provincial government through the Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation (SPAR) division of the ministry to provide input in the documents being produced by Alberta Health that are providing “Guidance for Organized Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation” through the various phases of the provincial relaunch.
- **Swim Alberta Return to Swimming Guidelines/Resource:** Swim Alberta staff are currently working on any additional guidelines to support the Swimming Canada’s Return to Swimming Resource Document that will ensure alignment and adherence to all provincial health regulations and orders in Alberta. I am hopeful that we can release initial drafts with the Swimming Canada resource document by the end of May.
- **Insurance Coverage:** Discussions and requirements with our insurance provider to ensure that activities that clubs begin to resume, outside of the virtual training environments that we have been operating in over the last couple of months, are being implemented and approved to ensure insurance coverage remains in place for all club programs.

Next Steps and what clubs can expect in the coming days/weeks:

- **Town Hall Meeting** with Club Presidents and Head Coaches on May 27th at 5 pm.
- **Webinar Series for Club Presidents and Coaches** geared toward adjusting to new realities during the COVID-19 Pandemic, including facilitating preparedness for returning to training/swimming. Details and further information to be shared at the Town Hall Meeting next week.
- **Return to Swimming Resources**, both the Swimming Canada and Swim Alberta supplementary guidelines will be available for clubs by the end of May. These are expected to be living resources, that will be updated as we work through the relaunch phases permitted by the provincial government. Swim Alberta will consult and work with our partners, including clubs, coaches, officials and facilities over the next few weeks on finalizing strategies on return to swimming at the provincial level.
- **Information on Club Outdoor Training activities** will be available by the end of May that ensure both compliance with the Health Orders issued by Alberta Health, guidelines of the provincial government (currently being finalized) and any additional requirements of local municipalities and Swim Alberta to ensure insurance requirements are met. *I would ask that clubs hold off on any group training in parks and outdoor spaces until this information is available for clubs.*
- **Competitions and Officiating Structure** will need to be adapted and changed as return to sport allows us to safely compete in the future. What competitions looks like and how they are officiated is being reviewed to support athletes returning to competition when provincial health authorities allow this activity, to ensure the safety of our athletes, coaches, officials and volunteers; while also providing meaningful competition.
- **Open Water Training and Resources** are being developed by Swimming Canada and will be available by the end of May. Open Water training conducted by a club is currently not an activity supported or recommended by Swim Alberta.

I look forward to hosting you at the Town Hall Meeting on May 27th at 5 pm. Details on access to the meeting will be shared shortly. During the meeting, additional and more detailed information can be shared with clubs as it relates to Return to Swimming and Return to Training.

As always, please reach out with any questions you may have by email or phone. Much information will be shared on the town hall meeting, so I would ask that specific questions related to items shared in this update wait till after the meeting.

Stay well and be safe.

Kind regards,
Cheryl Humphrey, Executive Director