

Biathlon Ontario members:

I hope this message finds you well: healthy, happy, and managing to make the most out of the challenging situation which faces us all in light of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

As most of you have likely heard, Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced the first stage of the sequence of easements to the restrictions related to the COVID-19 State of Emergency. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/framework-reopening-our-province-stage-1>

These most recent adjustments (see attached detailed list of these “Stage 1 Openings”) come into effect starting today.

Knowing that many of our clubs, coaches, officials, and athletes are already embarking upon their training for the new 2020-21 season, the BiON Board of Directors wanted to reach out to the membership to provide as much amplifying direction and guidance as possible to support your individual efforts and decisions on how best – and safest – your return to play ought to be.

As an individual sport, biathlon (and cross-country skiing) is included as resuming activities in this first stage of the province’s planned return to “normal”, and as such may offer opportunity for training and/or competitions to resume, provided that several criteria are satisfied. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/framework-reopening-our-province-stage-1#section-3>

- ) Training / competition must be conducted by a recognized Provincial Sport Organization (i.e. registered BiON/BiCAN coaches in good standing)
- ) Physical distancing measures must still be achievable and enforced
- ) Usage of communal training facilities (eg. gyms, change rooms, clubhouses, sports centres) must be avoided
- ) No spectators are permitted (except for an accompanying parent/guardian for a person under the age of 18 years)
- ) Return to Play protocol is followed.

Return to Play planning involves three key components: 1) Public Health Guidelines, 2) Technical Considerations & Guidelines, and 3) Medical Considerations & Guidelines. These three areas of consideration must interact in the planning process for an eventual safe and effective return to training, bearing in mind that Public Health guidelines are updated routinely and therefore must be continually referenced. When planning for return to sport, it will be key that any decisions are based on a risk assessment.

Accordingly, the Canadian Sport Medicine Advisory Committee has produced a *COVID-19 Risk Assessment Tool for Sport* that has been endorsed by Biathlon Canada and Biathlon Ontario. This helpful tool includes all factors from the general WHO Risk Assessment and Mitigation Checklist for Mass Gatherings as well as additional factors relating to sporting events and training. The tool has been adapted specifically for return to sport planning in the Canadian context and enable organizers (clubs, coaches, administrators) to determine a more accurate overall risk score to aid in making

informed decisions and mitigating risk when returning to group training. This is **not** a legally binding document and it cannot be used to override what local/regional/federal health authorities are mandating.

In the end, it remains the discretion of the individual club and individual coach, and each individual athlete/family whether they wish to be involved with any form of in-person activity. The choices we each make every day and in the days ahead will impact how our sport community endures this unique, history-making period of time, as well as our global community as a whole. We all must do our part to stay safe, avoid becoming a vector for the transmission of this virus, and balancing that against our individual pursuits. We encourage everyone to do what they feel is right, is safe, and satisfies your own risk tolerance.

On behalf of your PSO Board of Directors, I thank you for your patience and support as we navigate this situation together!

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