



Dr Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer
Government of Alberta/Alberta Health Services,
24th Floor 10025 Jasper Ave
Edmonton, AB

Minister of Jobs, Economy, and Innovation, Honourable Doug Schweitzer

Minister of Health, Honourable Tyler Shandro

Re: EXEMPTION REQUEST – The Tennis Academy
Jan 5th, 2020

Dear Dr Hinshaw, Minister Schweitzer, Minister Shandro,
On behalf of The Tennis Academy, we are writing to request further clarification and to seek confirmation that indoor tennis-specific activities will be permitted to reopen on Jan 11th.

We would like to thank the Provincial Government and Alberta Health services for your hard work in guiding the province through this pandemic. My partners and I continue to support the efforts that will help keep the people of Alberta safe. It is difficult, however, to understand why a tennis club such as ours must close its doors, yet malls and retail stores can stay open. We often see 15-20 people standing inline in an area that is half the size of a tennis court, yet two people cannot play on a tennis court that keeps them 70 feet apart.

These shutdowns are having a tremendous financial impact on us and the 20+ full-time staff that we have had to lay off. We wonder why someone can get a massage that involves touching and being in close contact with someone for an hour or more, but a coach cannot teach someone tennis, which involves no touching, in a space of 70 feet. Our members who no longer can use tennis as a physical outlet have also been voicing their concerns. One member asked, “why should tennis have to shutdown just because other sport organizations can’t stop their participants from socializing afterward”.

Tennis is a great activity that provides a much-needed physical release in an environment that offers natural physical distancing: When two people play singles, they are separated by a net and 70 feet. When people participate in doubles, there are two people on each side of the net who are then separated by 20 feet (one up at net and one at the back). It is also important to point out that the ceilings in an indoor tennis club are 35 feet high.

Tennis is considered by doctors, who have been cited in many studies, to be the safest sport that you can play with regards to Covid-19. According to the Covid-19 risk levels study conducted by Dr Mathew Sims, Dr Dennis Cunningham, Dr Mimi Emig and Dr Nasir Husain, tennis is as safe or safer than many activities that are permitted to do business or have been exempt from the latest restrictions in Alberta. To our knowledge, there have been no cases of Covid-19 transmission linked to the participation of tennis.

Many people are suffering from anxiety and other mental health problems. Physical activity is known to be effective in helping people to deal with stress and mental health issues. Allowing us to open our



doors would provide a warm and safe place for people to relieve stress by engaging in physical activity during the winter months.

The Tennis Academy has gone above and beyond in implementing Covid-safe practices since re-opening in June. Our protocols have been strictly adhered to and we constantly re-evaluate to ensure that our patrons and staff have the safest environment possible. The Tennis Academy operates on an appointment or reservation basis. All court bookings, private, semi-private and small group training sessions are by appointment and therefore contact traceable.

The following is a list of our Covid-19 protocols and procedures:

- Daily professional cleaners using Health Canada approved cleaning products.
- Twice daily scheduled fogging throughout the facility with organic safe disinfectant. (Ultralyte DIN 02362546 - same chemical used by the Edmonton and Pearson International airports). Ultralyte is on Health Canada's list of approved disinfectants
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting throughout the day on high-touch areas such as door handles, faucets, and counter tops.
- Locker rooms are closed
- Access to seating in the waiting area has been removed
- Sanitizing stations are located throughout the club including one on each court
- Ball safety management: we do not allow lesson participants to touch the teaching balls during lessons
- Players must bring their own tin of balls marked with their initial or symbol, players are only allowed to touch their own balls.
- Equipment is sanitized after each lesson/use.
- We have a policy of play and leave; clients arrive 5 minutes ahead of their scheduled court time and must leave within 5 minutes after playing.
- Reinforced education on hand washing.
- Players sanitize hands before, during, and after play using the sanitizer provided on-court and throughout the club.
- We have implemented our own international travel and return to play policies, including a mandatory 14-day quarantine period for anyone who has travelled outside of Canada.
- Supervised safe play: A certified coach providing instruction monitors and enforces our COVID-safe procedures.
- Our coaches are trained to manage groups of players from 1 - 8 per court in a way that ensures consistent and effective distancing during training.
- Wellness Screening –Alberta Health Services wellness screening protocols for staff, members, and program participants.
- Staff have been trained to efficiently and safely deal with any person who is exhibiting any sign of poor health.
- Program participants have a staggered entry/exit. All available entrances are utilized to eliminate congestion during class turnovers.
- Coaches always wear masks, even during instruction (the only exception is when a coach is performing physical activity by hitting with a client during a private lesson and they are maintaining a distance of at least 30 feet).



- Employee protocols include eliminating in-person meetings, wearing masks and other PPE, and always maintaining physical distancing. Front desk staff operate behind a physical barrier (sneeze guard).
- We are constantly monitoring, re-evaluating, and sending out communications regarding Covid-safe practices at our facility.

Because of our efforts, there has not been one case of Covid-19 transmission in our facility. I would like to reiterate that we are seeking an exemption from any further restrictions or closures. We are in a unique situation in that the only activity we provide at our club happens to be the safest indoor physical activity that a person can engage in. We need to be looked at differently than multi-sport clubs or rec facilities that potentially have thousands of people walk through their doors every day as opposed to our club which sees approximately 25 people in an hour on a regular business day.

When reviewing our request, we ask that you also consider the following points:

- Tennis provides natural physical distancing: Singles players are separated by a net and 70 feet. Doubles players (2 people on each side of the net) are separated by 20-30 feet
- Retail stores with the same square footage of a tennis court and much lower ceilings are currently authorised to have 15-20 people in their establishment
- Our indoor tennis courts provide a playing area of up to 1800 ft² per player for doubles and 3600 ft² of playing area per player for singles (per court).
- The sheer size of our facility naturally allows for excellent ventilation with air space of up to 288,000 ft³ per court (144,000 ft³ per player in singles; 72,000 ft³ per player in doubles).
- There have been no cases of transmissions from Tennis in Alberta or Canada.
- during a private lesson, people maintaining a distance of at least 30 feet.

When comparing indoor tennis to any other activities, it is reasonable to conclude that tennis is the safest physical activity to perform indoors. Additionally, because physical activity is so important to help relieve stress and anxiety, in conjunction with all the points mentioned earlier in this letter, we hope we will be exempt from any further restrictions after January 11, 2021.

Sincerely,

Karen Spiers
Director of Operations, The Tennis Academy