



11759 Groat Road, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5M 3K6
(780) 415-1661 www.tennisalberta.com

Dr. Deena Hinshaw

Chief Medical Officer of Health
Office of Chief Medical Officer of Health
24th Floor 10025 Jasper Ave
Edmonton, AB

Honourable Tyler Shandro

Minister of Health
423 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

November 24, 2020

Dear Dr. Hinshaw & Minister Shandro;

On behalf of the tennis community in Alberta, 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.

I am writing on behalf of all indoor tennis facilities in our province to request further clarification and seek an exemption to allow 'sport-specific tennis activities' to continue to occur.

It has been demonstrated that tennis is one of the [safest sports](#) to play during the pandemic (indoors or outdoors). To our knowledge, there has been no COVID case transmissions linked directly to the participation of tennis activities in our province and across Canada.

Tennis provides natural physical and social distancing which has rewarded tennis players with endless hours of physical and mental health and enjoyment during the pandemic. Once the Government of Alberta permitted sport facilities to reopen, tennis club operators worked diligently to ensure a safe and seamless return to sport.

Yesterday (November 24th), the Government of Alberta announced further restrictions to help stop the spread of COVID-19 in our province. Based on the information communicated during the press-conference and supported by the enhanced measures on the Government of Alberta [website](#), our understanding is that the operation of tennis facilities can continue given that:

- Operation of Indoor fitness, recreation, sports and physical activity centres, including dance and yoga studios, martial arts, gymnastics and private or public swimming pools.
 - Facilities can be open for individual studio time, training or exercise only.
 - There can be no group fitness, group classes, group training, team practices or games.
 - Instructors can use facility to broadcast virtual fitness classes from, but there can be no group class.
- All public health guidance and physical distancing requirements must be followed.
- Private one-on-one lessons (no private group lessons permitted)
- All levels of sport (professional, semi-professional, junior, collegiate/universities and amateur) are closed for in-person service. Exemptions may be considered.

All Tennis Clubs in the province operate on an individual appointment or reservation only basis. All *court bookings, private, semi-private and small group training sessions are scheduled and contact traceable* through any tennis club court reservation software. All Tennis clubs are currently *operating under restricted capacity* and all *public health guidance and physical distancing requirements* are being followed.

Our understanding from the Government of Alberta's restrictions announced on November 24th, 2020 is that some tennis specific activities can continue effective November 27, 2020. Based on our interpretation we believe the following sport-specific activities can occur at this time:

1. **Individual lessons** (1-on-1 private lessons)
2. **Singles play from members of any household**
3. **Use of ball machine for practice**
4. **Serve practice**

In all cases, each reservation can be verified and contact-traced through club court reservation software. All of the aforementioned can be done in a controlled environment under the presence of a certified tennis professional or staff member.

We are seeking an exemption to permit the continuation of the following 'tennis specific activities':

TENNIS IS SEEKING AN EXEMPTION REQUEST FOR THE FOLLOWING SPORT SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-private lessons with individuals from the same household or family. • Semi-Private lessons (where one player is playing per side) on a court with a certified tennis coach who is maintaining at least two meters physical distance and all-other public health requirements are in place. • Doubles play • Small group training (up to 4 players per court) while maintaining physical distancing (2-meters) and public health guidelines in place

NOTE: All tennis facilities will 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 can be modified to ensure a minimum of 2-meters distance is maintained at all times.

At this time, all of our clubs will undertake to shut down the following activities for the next three weeks:

SPORT SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES THAT WILL REMAIN SUSPENDED AT THIS TIME
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group training sessions and programs with more than 4 players or more • All competitions/ tournaments and events • Socials • No walk-in reservations • No spectators

KEY FACTS THAT SUPPORT OUR EXEMPTION REQUEST

- **Tennis provides natural physical distancing.** Our indoor Tennis courts can allow 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).
- **Singles (2 players) and Doubles play (4 players)** has also been demonstrated to be incredibly safe. With no direct COVID case transmissions in Alberta or Canada.
- Clubs have **developed educational pieces including safety videos** for singles and doubles play.
- The use of tennis equipment is safe. Our clubs have introduced two protocols that have proven to be extremely effective. Firstly, players **bring and use their own can of ‘marked’ tennis balls**. As well, clubs have introduced **‘shared ball management’** and reinforced education on **frequent hand washing as a deterrent to the transmission of COVID-19**. Players **are sanitizing before, during and after play** using hand sanitizer provided on-court to players. All **equipment is sanitized after each lesson/use**.
- Group lessons and instruction is safe. A certified coach providing instruction has a better chance of keeping players safe than casual play in a public court. All of our **coaches are trained to keep people safe and manage groups of players from 1 - 8 players per court in a physically distanced and safe manner**.
- Each club has developed **employee protocols** for its staff members including eliminating in-person meetings, wearing masks and other PPE, and maintaining physical distancing at all times. All front desk staff operate behind a physical barrier (sneeze guard) to limit interaction.
- All **club coaches are wearing masks while on-court** to minimize the transmission risk of COVID. Mask wearing protects our staff members and participants. **Coaches have been trained to maximize social distancing practices and class organization in order to keep participants safe**.
- **Wellness Screening** – Clubs are using Alberta Health Services wellness screening protocols with staff, members and program participants on a daily basis.
- **Clubs have developed international travel and return to play policies, including a mandatory 14-day quarantine period** for players who have returned to Canada and/or who were previously sick (without COVID). These policies align with the guidelines and recommendations of Alberta Health Services.
- **Hand sanitizers** are available at all court entrances, on-court and throughout each tennis facility.
- Clubs have limited class sizes and ensure all instruction is done in a safe manner, respecting physical distancing.

- Clubs have **restricted and/or eliminated access to club restaurants, fitness areas and spectator areas**. Clubs have created one-way traffic in and out of the building during and do not permit use of shower facilities.
- Clubs have invested in new **cleaning products and technology**. Clubs have developed **rigorous cleaning protocols and have created facility touch maps for focused cleaning in high-traffic areas**.
- Clubs have moved to a **cashless operation**. All bookings occur online or via telephone.

We are attaching our **reopening plan and leverage documents** which provide further information for your consideration. As well, we are attaching safety videos from the OSTEN & VICTOR Alberta Tennis Centre which have been widely circulated around Canada.

At this time, we reference information from a study conducted by 500 epidemiologists and health professionals who rank tennis as the safest activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tennis is ranked along with (takeout food and outdoor exercise) as the safest activities. The link can be found here: <https://informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/covid-19-coronavirus-infographic-datapack/>

The video links can be found here:

1. [Singles and Private Lesson Safety Video](#)
2. [Doubles Safety Video](#)
3. [Physical Space Consideration Video](#)

We submit that tennis activities are a safe and acceptable activity that can be structured to ensure that play will be respectful of Government and Public Health guidelines for re-opening.

Tennis provides significant benefits to the citizens of Alberta including ***improving physical and mental health, as well as contributing significantly to the Canadian and Provincial economy***. We understand that Government is considering all options in order to keep our citizens safe at this time. The new three-week restrictions come with a significant financial cost to all recreational tennis facilities in the Province. While we support keeping players and staff safe, we also feel that our sport should be exempt at this time, given our successful safety record thus far.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Ogilvie
Executive Director, Tennis Alberta

On behalf of all Indoor Tennis Facilities in Alberta:
Danny Da Costa, OSTEN & VICTOR Alberta Tennis Centre (Calgary)
Jeff Spiers, The Tennis Academy (Calgary)

Dietmar Rautenbach, The Glencoe Club (Calgary)
Rick Johnston, The Calgary Winter Club (Calgary)
Ryan Schroffel, The Royal Glenora Club (Edmonton)
Russ Sluchinski, The Saville Community Sport Centre (Edmonton)
Lyle Jacobson, The Red Deer Tennis Club (Red Deer)
Jonathan Hill, Gym Movement – Edgemont (Calgary)

Cc:

Hon. Leela Aheer, Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, Government of Alberta
John Barbour, Manager, Operations and Sector Coordination, Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation
Branch
Tom MacInnis, President, Tennis Alberta