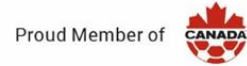




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**April 19, 2021**

Attn: Premier Doug Ford  
Cc: Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Ontario  
Cc: Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries  
Cc: Christine Elliot, Minister of Health

### **Allow Ontario's Youth to Return to Play to enhance Provincial Health**

Dear Premier Ford,

Ontario Soccer applauds your courage in reversing the April 16 decision to close all playgrounds across Ontario for our children; given the tremendously negative impact such restriction would have had on our most vulnerable youngsters.

However, stopping at simply not closing playgrounds would still fall woefully short of recognizing and providing the support our Ontario Youth so desperately need at this time.

Therefore, we are writing you today to request that you take another prudent step forward by reversing the decision to stop all outdoor organized and controlled sports, as they provide an essential avenue for our youth and adult participants to stay healthy and fit, with a demonstrated minimal risk of community transmission.

This is not just our opinion.

Immediately following your announcement of April 16, numerous doctors and scientists spoke out against the restriction, including through the Canadian Pediatric Society of Canada [open letter by Kimberly Dow and Eddy Lau](#) dated today April 17, 2021.

In their letter, they state what as a Provincial Sports Organization, we had already sounded the alarm on:

- There is an unprecedented surge of mental health problems among children and youth attributed to recurring uncertainties, lockdowns, restrictions, and school disruptions;
- Outdoor and physical activities in a fresh air environment are critical elements of health preservation and development;
- The Mental Health support infrastructure in Ontario is not ready to handle this present surge, let alone any additional rise in cases;
- Closing or severely limiting outdoor sports for our Youth is not an evidence-based measure that will help curb COVID-19 community spread.


In fact, in our letter sent to Dr. Williams on March 25, Ontario Soccer clearly outlined [how organized outdoor sports is one of the safest places for our children](#) to be right now.



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Since launching our Return to Play Guide and Safety Protocols to our membership on June 11, 2020, only 29 cases of Covid-19 have been reported across our entire soccer community to date – 17 of the 29 were youth cases, all with an identifiable origin of transmission from outside of soccer activities. Ontario Soccer’s membership consists of 500,000 participants organized through 550 community Clubs and Academies. We also have 21 District Soccer Associations supporting and assisting with the management of our Return to Play health and safety protocols.

Any further spread was contained thanks to the use of our Emergency Response Plan integrated into our Return to Play Guide, which requires reporting infections or suspected infections to multiple levels of sport and health authorities, as well an action protocol to be followed at the Club/Academy and community level.

The case rate of 3.4 per 100,000 witnessed across the population of active soccer players in Ontario is much lower than the case rate in the overall population in Ontario, even when comparing to the case rate for youth.

In addition to this letter, other doctors and infectious disease specialists such as [Dr. Andrew Morris](#), [Dr. Zac Feilchenfeld](#), [Dr. Isaac Bogoch](#), and [Dr. Peter Juni](#) have also stated that outdoor activities and sports should stay open, as they are vital for mental and physical health – particularly now with school closures and stay-at-home orders.

In closing, if given the opportunity, Ontario Soccer will continue to implement a holistic solution to dealing with the insidiously damaging effects Covid-19 has had on Ontarians – in particular our vulnerable Youth - and will rally our grassroots community to overcome this challenge through the kind of resolve and resilience only sport can offer.

We hope that you will consider these and many other recommendations and reverse the decision on outdoor sports immediately.

Thank you in advance.

Yours in Community Sports,

Johnny R. Misley  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ontario Soccer

Peter Augruso  
President and Chair of the Board of Directors  
Ontario Soccer