



May 7, 2021

## Recent Government Advocacy Efforts to Reopen Golf

Dear Golf Industry Partners / Key Stakeholders,

Recent weeks have been extremely difficult for all Ontarians, but especially for you, your team, your golfers, and all stakeholders in the golf industry. As you know, on Saturday April 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:01am, the Ontario Government forced all outdoor golf courses and driving ranges to be closed in conjunction with the stay-at-home order to May 20<sup>th</sup>.

Since then, Ontario's We Are Golf partners have had numerous in-person video meetings with multiple key Ontario Government offices. There is no question the golf industry is being heard, as we (and our golfers) voice concerns about the current forced closure of our facilities. They understand the financial pressure on your business and the added pressure golf courses are feeling from golfers who want to be outside enjoying the game during this difficult time. The Ontario Government is working to balance those pressures with the ongoing provincial health concerns.

On May 4, Deputy Premier and Health Minister Christine Elliott and Minister of Sport, MPP Lisa MacLeod were both asked on the record about golf courses re-opening ([click here](#) for Global News article). Since that article was published, the good news is that the daily COVID case count numbers for Ontario have continued to come down, the ICU numbers have dropped again throughout the province, and more Ontarians have registered and received their vaccination – all key elements that need to happen to reopen outdoor recreation, including golf.

Ontario's We Are Golf partners have sent seven official communications to the Ontario Government on behalf of our industry over the past two months ([click here](#) for most recent letter sent earlier this week). These messages have consistently highlighted the following key elements:

- **Golf Is Safe** ... over 20 Million rounds played throughout the province in 2020 and no known confirmed cases of COVID transmission at a golf course.
- Golf has **important health benefits** – the studies are clear about golf – it is good for your heart, it relieves stress, and it can improve your mental health.
- We have heard legions of **doctors and medical professionals**, including the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table, speak out **in support of outdoor recreation (including golf) being open**. The science seems clear – the risk of outdoor transmission is extremely low.
- **Numerous elected officials** throughout the province have **publicly pleaded** for the reopening of outdoor recreational amenities.



- Golf has a clear set of **well established, very safe protocols**. (See [Appendix A](#) for complete list of exhaustive protocols from 2020, that was again presented to the Ontario Government on May 3.)

**To be clear, the golf industry feels strongly that golf should now be reopened ASAP.** However, there are complex health, economic and political factors involved, and we need to maintain a professional and collective strategy in order to manage through these complications.

We know that our best opportunity to successfully negotiate the reopening of golf is for all facilities to respect the government's temporary lockdown. If any one course chooses to disregard the lockdown, the entire golf industry loses credibility and trust with the government officials with whom we are negotiating.

We will keep you updated as we work through this process. If any of you have direct connections with your local MPP, the Premier's Office, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, or any other key personnel inside the Ontario Government please let us know and do not hesitate to reach out with similar messaging. In terms of key messages, we believe the focus should be on the following:

- **Golf is naturally aligned to physical distancing.** It takes place in vast outdoor spaces and is played with 4 people or less. Perhaps no other sport is this well positioned against this terrible virus.
- **Our protocols are well established and safe.** We proved it in 2020 and are committed to these protocols in 2021. (See [Appendix A](#) for updated Protocols submitted to Ontario government)
- **Clear and consistent screening procedures.** Golfers must book a tee-time, can pre-pay, and are screened before enjoying the facilities.
- **Golf has important health benefits.** The studies are clear about golf ... it gets golfers outside, it is good for your heart, it relieves stress, and it can improve your mental health. In fact, the Ontario COVID-19 Science Table's ***Fighting COVID-19 in Ontario: The Way Forward*** states that "Maintaining social connections and outdoor activity are important to our overall physical and mental health ... It means clearly encouraging safe outdoor activities."
- **Golf Is A Home Game.** Recent research conducted by NGCOA Canada and Golf Canada in the past week confirmed that more than 85% of golf in 2020 was played locally. People are not travelling around the province to golf. With over 800 golf courses throughout Ontario, there is virtually a golf course in every community to be enjoyed.

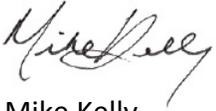
### **Let's Work Together to Reinforce the GOLF IS SAFE Message | #LetUsPlay**

In an effort to strengthen our efforts to get courses open immediately; your Ontario We Are Golf partners are launching a coordinated social media campaign to reinforce our message that GOLF IS SAFE. All Ontario We Are Golf partners will launch this campaign on each of their social media platforms (*Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.*) and encourage you to do the same. Launch time has been set for today (Friday, May 7) at 1:00 pm. Our social media collateral includes the below images that are also attached to this email. Together (after 1:00 today) let's make sure that the message that GOLF IS SAFE is amplified across social media and make the plea to #LetUsPlay. FYI – there are both regular and tall images depending on your social plan.



On a final note, **we strongly urge you to not listen to any mixed messages or unfounded rumours that you may be seeing on social media or the news.** Your Ontario We Are Golf partners will continue with our communications to keep you up-to-date with what we know as we continue to push for the safe inclusion of golf courses and driving ranges to be open as soon as possible in this stay-at-home order. We know how important this is to the well being of so many and we, of course, will do so in a safe manner.

Yours in golf.



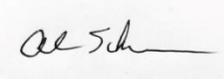
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## APPENDIX A: GOLF FACILITY BEST PRACTICES DURING COVID-19

Golf Courses in Ontario have met and will continue to exceed current Public Health regulations as indicated in the ***Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for Golf Courses During COVID-19.***

In addition, the following Recommended Best Practices as outlined below go above and beyond.  
If additional actions are required, the golf industry is happy to engage in that discussion.

REFERENCE NO.	DEPARTMENT	PROCEDURE
CH-001	Clubhouse	Clubhouses are closed during the current stay-at-home order, with the exception of access to washrooms. Payment will be taken online or outside as curbside pickup.
CH-002	Clubhouse	Place appropriate signage outside the pro-shop and clubhouse plus at the first tee entries briefly outlining the physical distancing guidelines in place.
CH-003	Clubhouse	Place signage at the pro-shop and clubhouse plus at the first tee encouraging good handwashing and respiratory hygiene.
CH-004	Clubhouse	Increase the frequency throughout the day of cleaning, sanitation and disinfecting of all common areas locations, especially high traffic areas such as counter surfaces, tables, public restrooms, POS system, credit card terminal, door handles, telephones, pens, golf carts and more. Create a log sheet for cleaning frequency tracking. Credit card terminal if touched by a customer for pin pad entry needs to be cleaned after each use.
CH-005	Clubhouse	One staff member - either a greeter at the front door, pro shop attendant or the starter at the 1 <sup>st</sup> tee - must remind each golfer of the physical distancing requirement, plus not to touch anything on the course besides their own belongings, this includes the flagstick.  Golfers are not permitted to shake hands post round.  Golfers caught disobeying any safety protocols will be requested to leave the facility immediately and banned to return while safety protocols being utilized.  Each golfer must be asked if they have returned from travel outside of Canada within the last 14 days, if they have they will be asked to leave the property immediately as they must be in self-quarantine for 14 days (signage to be posted).
CH-006	Clubhouse	If a golf course has an announcement system, then they can use this to recite the golfer rules of physical distancing and more.
CH-007	Clubhouse	Some golf courses may wish to install a splash guard or plexiglass barrier at pro shop counter - if unable to ensure the staff member can be physically distanced - for when the stay-at-home order is complete.
CH-008	Clubhouse	Educate staff on hygiene, sanitation and food handling, and its impact of preventing the spread of communicable diseases



CH-009	Clubhouse	Make available wash stations or hand sanitizer stations in common areas
CH-010	Clubhouse	Signage posted in English may also be posted in other languages if useful for the particular golf course clientele
GO-001	Golf Operations	Payment options to be either: touchless, online pre-paid or pre-paid call ahead for green fees. Eliminate any walk-ups. Cashless preferred.
GO-002	Golf Operations	Golfers without a pre-scheduled tee time are not permitted, they must arrange a reservation prior to arriving at the course
GO-003	Golf Operations	Request golfers to arrive only 20 minutes ahead of their tee time to ensure a limited number of people are waiting to play and discourage loitering.
GO-004	Golf Operations	Do not permit customers / golfers to congregate in the parking lot either before or after round. Masks to be worn as soon as arriving on property until the 1 <sup>st</sup> tee, and then again immediately after the round.
GO-005	Golf Operations	Golf courses are to limit the number of people on the course at one time by either increasing tee-time intervals and/or blocking off additional starter times. It is imperative that golf course pace of play is maintained as this will allow for a good spread of golf groups throughout the golf course and prevent any back-ups at any tee boxes. Golf courses must manage their tee sheet closely and make adjustments to ensure each group is spaced out from each other with the recommendation to have no more than one foursome at a tee box or at a green. Expectations of pace of play have to be set and tell people they will be asked to pick up and move ahead if falling behind.
GO-006	Golf Operations	One tee time booking per person, maximum of 4 players.
GO-007	Golf Operations	If a course employs a Players Assistant/Marshal, then this person will be tasked with ensuring everyone is adhering to the rules of the course and anyone failing to comply will be asked to leave the property immediately.
GO-008	Golf Operations	Pull or push carts must be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
GO-009	Golf Operations	Encourage golfers to walk.
GO-010	Golf Operations	In 2020, plastic cart dividers were recommended for golf carts when being used by 2 people not from the same household. In 2021, masks are now mandatory at all times when in a power cart, except when being used by 2 people not from the same household. Golf facilities are encouraged to operate with golf cart rentals for single riders only, where possible.  Golf carts rented out must be cleaned and sanitized prior to the next rental.

GO-011	Golf Operations	Staff cleaning any rentals must be given Protective Personal Equipment – gloves, mask, eye protection/full face mask and wash their hands often and after each cart.
GO-012	Golf Operations	Remove bulk scorecard, pencil, and tee holders from starter areas. Only issue when requested.
GO-013	Golf Operations	Remove ball washers on course or tape them shut.
GO-014	Golf Operations	Remove or disconnect water fountains or coolers; offer bottled water only.
GO-015	Golf Operations	Remove bunker rakes.
GO-016	Golf Operations	Remove benches to assist with physical distancing requirements
GO-017	Golf Operations	Direct players to leave the pin in the cup at all times. Post small signage on each flag as a reminder, options for the golf course instead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implement a golf ball retrieval system (numerous options became available in the market in 2020) at each hole which eliminates the need for the golfer to touch the flagstick to remove the ball.</li> <li>• consider raising the cup 1" above the putting surface, inserting the cup upside down or stuffing a piece of Styrofoam into the cup</li> </ul>
GO-018	Golf Operations	Limit the use of the putting green to 4 people maximum, this may need to be reduced depending on size of the area or can be increased as well.  Recommend placing alignment sticks, or stakes on the putting green as targets, and/or turn the cups upside down and leave in the hole. Remove all flags and institute a “bring your own practice balls policy.”
GO-019	Golf Operations	Provide dedicated waiting areas with proper signage for next group on tee waiting to approach teeing ground.
GE-001	Golfer Expectations	Practice physical distancing by staying a minimum of two (2) meters away from other people at all times.
GE-002	Golfer Expectations	Leave the pin in while putting - DO NOT TOUCH THE PIN.
GE-003	Golfer Expectations	Wear a mask during ANY interaction with a staff member, from arrival through to departure.
GE-004	Golfer Expectations	Do not shake hands or high five to celebrate, a tip of the cap will do.
GE-005	Golfer Expectations	Do not loiter in the parking lot before or after your round / do not congregate in the parking lot as the “19 <sup>th</sup> Hole”
GE-006	Golfer Expectations	Please arrive no more than 20 minutes before your scheduled tee time, and depart parking lot immediately following the last hole of your round.

WS-001	Workplace Safety	Follow the Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for Golf Courses During COVID-19, which can be found at: <a href="https://www.wspss.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/COVID-19-golf-course-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?ext=.pdf">https://www.wspss.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/COVID-19-golf-course-health-and-safety-guidance.pdf?ext=.pdf</a>
WS-002	Workplace Safety	Educate staff to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 in each other and your customers.
WS-003	Workplace Safety	Establish a communication plan to keep your employees informed and updated on issues affecting the workplace.
WS-004	Workplace Safety	Institute a policy that requires employees to tell you when they've been exposed to any highly communicable illness, and then direct them to the local Public Health Unit for appropriate testing. Implement a per shift screening program to ensure that all staff are healthy and have not travelled outside of Canada.
WS-005	Workplace Safety	Train staff on proper hand washing and sneezing/coughing practices and have them sign off on the training document for assurance they understand the importance of implementing these practices.
WS-006	Workplace Safety	Conduct meetings by phone or online wherever possible. For in-person meetings, ensure safe social distancing (6+ feet) between attendees.
WS-007	Workplace Safety	Staff to be trained and reminder to stay 6 feet apart from all co-workers, customers, delivery people etc.
WS-008	Workplace Safety	Staff to not have visitors to the golf course
WS-009	Workplace Safety	Ensure appropriate signage is present throughout your facility.
WS-010	Workplace Safety	Provide necessary sanitation supplies and personal protection equipment.
WS-011	Workplace Safety	Ensure hand washing signage is present at all wash stations.
WS-012	Workplace Safety	Provide hand sanitizer stations for both staff and guests in multiple locations throughout the facility
TM-001	Turf & Maintenance	Minimize the number of maintenance staff members working on the course at one time. Consider splitting the crew into two teams that do not work at the same time.
TM-002	Turf & Maintenance	Maintain physical distancing guidelines at all times.
TM-003	Turf & Maintenance	Assign staff equipment to avoid sharing between employees.
TM-004	Turf & Maintenance	Stagger work hours and break hours and limit access to lunchroom.
TM-005	Turf & Maintenance	Place hand sanitizer throughout maintenance area and access to hand washing stations.
TM-006	Turf & Maintenance	Regularly sanitize any surface that is contacted – common areas.

TM-007	Turf & Maintenance	In the event that equipment (including radios) must be shared it must be thoroughly sanitized before being used by another employee   steering wheel as well as all areas touched by operators pre and post use.
TM-008	Turf & Maintenance	Practice handwashing and standard hygiene practices.
TM-009	Turf & Maintenance	No visitors to the facilities.

