



April 29, 2021

Hello OTA Member Club Executives;

As a follow-up to my letter of April 20th concerning the sudden closure of all tennis courts by the Government of Ontario, I thought it would be prudent to provide an update of what the OTA has been doing in an attempt to persuade the Province to reconsider their position on outdoor amenities, and what we plan to do moving forward.

Our first order of business last week, was to contact Premier Doug Ford and the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, Lisa MacLeod and ask them to reverse their decision as it pertained to closing tennis facilities. We also had a Zoom meeting with MPP Roman Baber in which we requested that he use his influence to lobby the Province in favor of re-opening tennis courts.

Additionally, we sent out 2 media releases to over 180 members of the press, stating our position in opposition of the Government recreational amenities closings.

At this point, I would like to recognize our member clubs for their meaningful contributions to the messaging from the tennis community. As many of you know one of our member-club Presidents, David Harris from Club de tennis Orléans Tennis Club, started an on-line petition, also requesting that the Province reverses its decision with respect to closing tennis facilities. The OTA endorsed the petition and asked all of you to also endorse it (and two other petitions) and forward it to your membership. The response was phenomenal! As of now over 40,000 people have signed David's petition and another 53,500 have signed the other two!

Additionally, Kirsty Giles, the president of the Craig Henry Tennis Club in Nepean was contacted by CTV news for comments and spoke of the frustrations caused by this difficult ruling.

Finally, this past weekend, our new Board Chair Dianne Weatherby was featured in the Toronto Star, where, among other things, she was able to discuss how our clubs have paid strict attention to protocols and provided a safe environment for their players.

Thanks to all of you for your tremendous efforts!

While Premier Ford has yet to reverse his decision, we remain hopeful that in the light of mounting evidence being put forth by the medical community (and some politicians) stating that outdoor physical activity is safe when the proper protocols are adhered to, the Province will choose to re-open outdoor recreational amenities, including tennis, across Ontario ASAP. It is

certainly obvious that he is aware of the backlash caused by his actions and we are hopeful that continuing the pressure on his Government will pay off.

Of course, I think we can all agree that sooner or later (hopefully sooner) our clubs and academies will re-open. When that happens, we still have some issues to deal with as a tennis community. Once the Stay-at-Home Order is lifted, we believe that municipalities will again be placed into one of the Covid-19 Zones and again will be obligated to interpret the vague provincial protocols. As you well know, trying to navigate these rules and the municipalities' interpretations were confusing and frustrating for club managers and players. Not to mention the financial hardship felt by closed clubs, academies, and their employees.

While continuing to lobby the Provincial government to reconsider the club closing situation, the OTA has also begun to ask for meaningful changes to the protocol that unfairly penalizes our member clubs, players, and their staff.

We have recently created a Safe Return to Tennis blueprint that we feel will help with the re-opening of tennis facilities in most Covid Zones. It is our hope that the Province and municipalities will consider it when reviewing their Covid Zone protocols moving forward. We have sent letters with the Safe Return document attached to the Premier, Minister MacLeod, 120 MPP's, several cities and regions Mayors and Councilors (more to follow shortly) and members of the press. It is our hope that they will be compelled to review their protocol and adjust it accordingly.

At this juncture, would like to ask you for your help once again. We feel that in many cases our clubs have the strongest relationships with their respective local municipalities and politicians, particularly Parks and Rec departments in the case of community clubs. We are hopeful that you can take the time to examine the document, and if you agree with its content, forward it to the appropriate contacts and departments within your municipality for their consideration... and where possible, use your influence to encourage them to make appropriate policy changes.

Our hope is to persuade the Government of Ontario to adjust their recreation facility protocol equitably, and for all municipalities in Ontario to apply the rules concerning tennis facilities consistently. A top-down – bottom-up approach.

The OTA continues to feel that the most effective way to encourage the Province and municipalities to adjust their stance on tennis, is to show a united voice from our tennis community and to continue to voice our concerns.

Thank you in advance for your support with this matter.

Sincerely,

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