



MEMORANDUM

TO: BCSS MEMBER SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS & ATHLETIC DIRECTORS
FROM: JORDAN ABNEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: BCSS COVID-19 UPDATE #5
DATE: MAY 29, 2020
CC: COMMISSIONERS, PRESIDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

BCSS is continuously fielding questions from all over the province regarding the plan for interscholastic sporting activities in the fall. We know as schools take the first steps to re-open next week, and as the calendar flips to June, our collective focus will shift to looking ahead to September. Co-curricular activities such as school sport, music, drama, speech and more make up a significant and valued part of the educational experience. More than 70,000 students in Grades 8-12 participate in a BC School Sport activity every year. We know there are significant mental and physical benefits to the physical activity as well as the sense of belonging and identity that comes with participation. The challenge for us, as a collective of leaders in schools, is how can we adapt what we have traditionally known to make it safe so that students can have some small element of normalcy in the fall?

There are still many more questions and what-ifs than there are answers at this moment, but in an effort to continue to be transparent with our membership, the following is intended to provide an update on what BCSS is doing in planning for the fall. It is critical to note that all of the information in this update is dynamic and subject to change many times between now and September 7th. There have been no decisions made to this point. It is very likely any decisions will be made in late August/early September.

Return to Play Planning

We have been in contact with each of our commissions to get some initial ideas about what can be considered when examining the various return to play options. These preliminary discussions were simply to open dialogue and source ideas. Each BCSS Commission was asked to provide a very brief summary responding to five questions

- 1) What are the major COVID-19 health concerns that are specific to your sport?
- 2) What are some of the rules of play that could be modified to lower the risk profile of your sport?
- 3) What are some of the logistical/structural changes that could be made to how events/tournaments/championships are run to reduce the risk profile?
- 4) What are some of the safety protocols and PPE that could be introduced in your sport to lower the risk profile?



- 5) What are some of the opportunities and concerns related to changing seasons of play for your sport

We have received responses from nearly every commission related to these questions. There are some quality ideas, but overwhelmingly there was an apprehension to change seasons of play for various reasons. The Board hasn't ruled it out, but at this point, it is a lesser desired option.

Government Guidelines

As Executive Director, I sit on the ViaSport Multi-Sport (MSO) Leadership Council, with the CEO's and ED's from the other multi-sport organizations in BC. ViaSport, as the government's funding agency for the sport sector, has been asked by the government to assist in the drafting return to sport guidelines for the province. The council was able to review a draft of the guidelines last week, which are now with the Sport Branch of the Provincial Government for final review. It is expected they will be released in the coming weeks. Most provincial sport organizations are preparing to draft their sport-specific return to play policies once these guidelines are published.

There is some evidence that youth are lesser affected by COVID-19 but there is yet to be a scientific consensus on this, especially considering the recent discovery of auto-immune complications related to the virus in youth and children. Even if a consensus is arrived at confirming a lower risk profile for youth, we must also be cognizant of our coaches, officials and administrators who are critical to ensuring the safe execution of our activities, many of whom are in high-risk populations.

Insurance and Legal Considerations

One of the major stumbling blocks facing the return to sport across BC is the insertion of a communicable disease/pandemic exclusion clause into our insurance policies. Markel, who underwrites our insurance as well as the majority of amateur sport in Western Canada has notified its policyholders that upon renewal, new language will be introduced that does not cover an organization in its commercial general liability (CGL) policies or their Directors and Officers (D&O) policies for action as a result of communicable diseases such as COVID-19. This means that should someone sue BC School Sports, the BCSS Sport commissions, or one of our affiliated local athletic associations, which are all covered under our policy, that neither legal damages (if any, awarded by the court) or legal costs (defending the lawsuit) would be covered by our insurance.

This has led to much discussion around the assumption of risk, and how to define COVID-19 as inherent risk, and the validity of waivers and other risk management techniques. As this is such a new issue, there is no precedent based on case law, making these areas difficult to navigate. We along with most other organizations involved in amateur sport are navigating this as well. I am sitting in on a weekly call with



our sport colleagues to discuss various learnings as we attempt to safely reintroduce sport to our province.

Education

We have another layer of complexity to consider, which is that we are an educational body more so than a sport body. We function within the education system as our members are schools. This means we have 60 school districts, and over 100 independent schools to work with on any planning to move forward. I have been in contact with our Superintendent Representative, about a strategy to properly engage district leadership at the appropriate time. Additional outreach with the Federation of Independent School Associations (FISA BC) and the Ministry of Education is required.

There are many additional considerations and topics for discussion, that for example will include whether schools are running at 100% capacity or something less than that in September, or whether gymnasiums and other spaces generally used for interschool athletics, will be used to assist in social distancing and not be available.

Next Steps

So what happens from here? Thankfully we have a bit of time. Unlike some sports who normally play over the summer, we will have the benefit of seeing how some sports return to play, and what the progression and transmission of the virus looks like. This will of course affect the Province in adjusting its re-opening plan, which hopefully by September see us at Phase 3. Of course, a medical breakthrough or conversely, a new wave in the number of cases of the virus may change the trajectory of any plan quickly.

At this point, BCSS plans to await the finalization of the guidelines from the Provincial Government, and then work through the various options for adaptation to lower the risk profiles of our sports to align with the guidelines where possible. We will be consulting with our Sport Commissions and the Provincial Sport Organizations in each of our 19 activities. We must remember that any protocols or variations implemented have to be achievable at any of our member schools.

Once the various options for our activities are prepared, with input from our legal counsel and insurance broker, the Board of Directors, and the leaders of school districts and independent schools, we will enter into discussion to evaluate the viability of school sport come the fall. The array of outcomes ranges at this point from a full schedule of activities to conversely, a continuation of the full stoppage of all interschool related activities that are currently in place. I am hopeful we will still be able to offer some activities, although I think it should be expected it is likely that any school sport activities will look very different in the coming year.



Reminder on Current Status

The BCSS Board of Directors would like to remind all school leaders that the prohibition of all interschool and intraschool sport activities remains in place, and will not be lifted before the end of the academic year. With some students returning next week, we have heard of some coaches, planning small gatherings or practices, specifically in football. Coaches should not be gathering student-athletes, even in small groups at this time.

Other BCSS Reminders

Rather than sending other emails, here are a few more important reminders for you:

The CIAAA is offering free webinars to all its members, and very low cost for non-members. (Remember, as an AD at a BCSS member school, you are a member already!) These are short 45-60 minutes on a variety of great and useful topics for any school AD. They are looking for feedback of when to schedule them, and you can complete the survey here: <http://tinyurl.com/ADworkshops2020>

A reminder that BCSS has partnered with Sportsnet 650 to announce a school's male and female athlete of the year, in the absence of athletic banquets and normal year-end activities. Once your school has determined its award winners, fill out the easy [submission here](#).

Lastly, there was a small typo in the AGM package that was sent out. You should have all received the package, but it can be found on our homepage at www.bcschoolsports.ca. To clarify, the critical AGM dates are as follows:

Advanced Votes may be cast from June 3, 2020 at 12:00pm - June 12, 2020 at 12:00pm

(All times are in Pacific Daylight Time)

AGM Registration (for schools not casting an advance vote) **will be available from**

June 12, 2020 at 3:00pm - June 15, 2020 at 3:00pm

(All times are in Pacific Daylight Time)

The Virtual AGM will take place on June 16, 2020 at 12:00pm-3:30pm

(All times are in Pacific Daylight Time)