



February 24, 2021

Dear Partners / Key Stakeholders,

As we all know, the last 11 months have been a very challenging time. In 2020, though, golf was a shining light in some of the darkness of COVID-19. By providing a gold standard set of protocols and operating procedures, facilities across Ontario allowed golfers to get much-needed outdoor exercise, mental stimulation, and safe social time with family and friends. And for that, we thank you! Golf facilities across the province, such as yours, went above and beyond in 2020 to ensure these protocols were followed. As a result of this, the NGCOA Canada reported that rounds played in 2020 (even after losing all of April and most of May) were up 19.4% over the previous 5-year average in Ontario. This is something we should all be proud of!

Over the last few months, **Ontario's We Are Golf** partners having been working hard to continue to communicate with the government and help ensure that golf would be well positioned when the province began to reopen. Two separate letters were sent to Premier Ford and all the MPPs who are members of the Ontario Jobs and Recovery Committee. A December 10 letter was sent reminding them of what an important (and safe) role that golf played in the early stages of the pandemic. A follow up letter was sent on February 10, reminding the government how well positioned golf is to adhere to all Physical Distancing and Safety protocol measures while providing Ontarians with a welcome physical and mental break from the rigours of every day. We reiterated our commitment as an industry to be good partners and continue to be the gold standard for businesses in the province.

With this in mind, **our efforts have helped ensure the inclusion of golf** in the recent [COVID-19 Response Framework](#). In all colours (from Green to Grey) of the Framework, golf courses and outdoor driving ranges will be able to open (with various restrictions depending on what colour your health unit is in). As well, indoor golf simulators and indoor driving ranges, will be able to open (with various restrictions) in Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red zones. When all zones have returned to the colour coded framework, this is great news for the golf industry and golfers alike and will ensure that golfers across the province can continue to enjoy the sport they love.

For reference, here is a [link to a recent Zoom Webinar with Premier Doug Ford and the Honourable Lisa MacLeod](#) on February 8th, 2021 where the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries is asked directly about golf courses opening up in spring 2021 (see the 42:00 mark).

Our commitment to the provincial government, on behalf of the entire golf industry, is that golf will continue to be a LEADER in Ontario in providing recreational activity that is so important for mental and physical well-being of all participants, while doing so in the SAFEST manner possible. As we head into the revised framework, here is what we know and ask for your support on:

**We were SAFE in 2020** – Thank you again for implementing additional COVID protocols and safety procedures to make golf courses one of the safest, if not the safest, recreational option for Ontarians:

- **Longer tee time intervals** – at many golf courses, foursomes were spaced further apart than pre-2020.
- **Pre-bookings only** – most courses forced golfers to pre-book rounds to avoid walk-ups and congestion.
- **Cart protocols** – regular cleaning and cart sharing protocols.
- **Clear and consistent screening protocols** – to ensure the safety of all golfers and staff at the facilities.





***We need to all work to CONTINUE TO BE SAFE in 2021*** – this is imperative! As an industry, we proved in 2020 that with the right protocols in place, golf was incredibly safe. ***As a result of the diligence of our golf courses with these protocols, as far as we know, not one person contacted COVID as a result of playing golf this past season.*** This means that for the upcoming season, you need to plan to continue to implement the successful protocols from 2020 that we know will make us successful again in 2021. All courses need to continue to stay in tune with their local public health units to ensure that our courses in each region are being true to the guidelines set out in these areas. Your We Are Golf partners are also committed to continuing to stay in close contact with the government to ensure timely communications of any changes. Here is a link for you to review [Best Practices & Operational Resources](#) that was created last season for Ontario golf courses.

For further information on the current regulations – here are a few links for your reference:

- [Rules for Stage 3](#) (Orange, Yellow, Green zones)
- [Rules for Stage 2](#) (Red zone)
- [Rules for Stage 1](#) (Shutdown zone & Grey zone)

**NOTE:** One of the changes we have seen is a new protocol regarding the use of masks while riding in an open air vehicle. We will continue to seek clarity on this rule after the government has focused on returning all regions to the framework.

4. Any person, including a person who performs work at the amenity, while driving or riding on an open air vehicle within the amenity, must wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin, unless,
  - i. the person driving or riding on the vehicle is entitled to any of the exceptions set out in paragraph 2, or
  - ii. all persons driving or riding on the vehicle are members of a single household.

**We have a UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY ahead of us to continue to grow the game of golf.** 2020 was an incredible golf season. Golf was played in numbers not seen for a long time. We need to commit to continue to do things properly and safely in 2021 and work together to ensure that all golfers from 2020 (from long-time players to new and lapsed players) stay in the game in 2021 and beyond.

We will continue to work on your behalf in 2021 and look forward to continuing to build on the momentum created in 2020. While we would love nothing more than to return to ‘the old normal’ at the beginning of the season, we will still have protocols to focus on and we thank you in advance for your continued support in creating a safe environment for your staff, players, and guests.

Thank you,

Ontario’s We Are Golf partners

