



VIA EMAIL

April 30, 2020

Attention: BC Soccer Full/Associate Members and Affiliated Soccer Clubs

From: Jason Elligott, Executive Director, BC Soccer

Re: Return to Play Update

Note: this memo will not be posted on the front page of the BC Soccer website, however, it will be posted on the communications page for future reference purposes.

Dear Full/Associate Members and Affiliated Clubs,

On behalf of BC Soccer, we continue to wish everyone well during these strange and difficult times we are living in. As we have stated previously, we are working to provide information and updates to best support you as we collectively work through the uncertainty and ongoing impacts of COVID-19.

Return to Play Survey Response

Thank you to the members and affiliated clubs that completed the Return to Play Survey conducted between April 23-26, 2020. Following this memo is a Summary Report of the information gathered.

Industry Guidance and Return to Play Planning

The Recreational Sports Advisory Group that is being led by the BC Recreational and Parks Association, with support from Sport BC, held their first call and BC Soccer was one of three organized sports to participate. Also, on the call were eight municipalities from across BC. Overall, they are looking for answers to what sports may look like in the short/medium term. It was good to hear the discussion as many of the municipalities were looking for answers on how sport is going to be offered and delivered over the next few months. The overall group's focus was more on recreation rather than organized sport, however, they wanted to gather the perspective from different sports. To support the government, the BCRPA is working on a framework for recreation to return in some form.

Importantly, the BC Government has also requested Via Sport (BC Soccer's link to government) to develop a framework that supports a Return to Play Plan for all organized sport. Being that all sports are different, early indications note that the framework will be wide, phased-in, and must comply with the restrictions that the health authorities have in place now and as they are adjusted over time, including:

- Adhering to mass gathering limits in place (currently 50 or less and yes, we agree that is it not clear on per field, per complex, per ?????)
- Adhering to distancing measures in place for people who do not live in the same household (currently 6 feet or 2 meters)
- Hygiene guidance on handwashing, washing of surfaces, etc.

Via Sport's Sport Framework will require approval from the government. Each sport (Provincial Sport Organization) will then need to develop its Return to Play Plan that fits within Via Sport's Framework

(and adheres to the health authorities' requirements). All individual Sport Plans will need to also be approved by the Government (care of Via Sport). Of course, due to the vast differences between some sports, some will be able to get back to some form of play sooner than others.

Based on the above, BC Soccer is working to develop a Plan for Soccer which currently takes the form of two documents:

1. Timelines, recommendations, and guidelines for members and affiliated clubs, administrators, coaches and anyone organizing soccer activities.
2. Timelines and recommendations for participants.

These draft documents are not available at this time as they are not finalized. Once they are finalized, before being able to share them widely, they require approval from not only the BC Government but also Canada Soccer. Canada Soccer will also have to adjust the [current suspension of all soccer activity](#), in order for us, as a collectively soccer community, to commence any form of soccer activity.

In our effort to provide as much information as possible, with the understanding that things may change as they have been daily since the middle of March, early indication on what the framework will allow for soccer in Phase 1 are:

- No games.
- Distancing type training as long as the guidelines from the health authorities are adhered to.
- Smaller and more controlled groups.
- Limit touchpoints.
- Limit the sharing of equipment.
- Stay more local.

To support the two documents noted above and taking into considering the early indications of the framework, BC Soccer development staff are also working to develop distancing type training and individual skill development sessions to support members and clubs for phase 1.

Timelines

Importantly, the timelines will be set by the BC health authorities and we have not received any indication on when activity may return, however it will depend on the above plans and approvals. Dr Henry stated on April 21, 2020 that restrictions may be softened around mid May, however, we understand that any soccer activity offered will take time to implement.

It is also not clear from the government if BC Soccer members/clubs must also develop a plan or if it will suffice for your organization to work within the recommendations and guidelines that BC Soccer develops. From a logistics perspective, we are hopeful of the latter.

Understanding the Situation

BC Soccer understands that the local activation of soccer rests with the members, affiliated clubs and organizations and the impacts of the current situation are vast and still unknown. We all know that families have been impacted and the way we are currently living has changed drastically. We are all hoping to return to some form of normalcy in life and in soccer, sooner rather than later. However, we also do not know what the new normal will be as we work to come through this situation.



As stated above, we are working with Via Sport, and ultimately the government, on a Return to Play Plan that we hope meets their approval. However, we also understand that there may be members, affiliated clubs, and organizations that may decide to not offer soccer activity under the recommendations and guidelines that we must put in place; and that is okay. Members, affiliated clubs, and organizations have the choice to offer soccer activity. Those organizations that do opt to offer activity, will need to adhere to the recommendations and guidelines and we know that soccer will be different in the short term. Along those lines, we also understand that there may be coaches, players, and families that do not want to participate in the short term, which is understandable and okay. We encourage all organizations to do what they feel is best for their members/participants and we will be here to support you as best as we can as we collectively work through the current situation.

As we all know, sport is a powerful vehicle that supports not only healthy living and activity but also community. We know that soccer will play an important role across BC as we look to the future to support British Columbians.

In closing, I would also like to share that BC Soccer is exploring with Kid Sport ways to support families that are experiencing challenging times and want their kids to get back into soccer (once we are able to).

Thank you for your attention to this. Keep well and stay positive.

Kind regards,

Jason Elligott
Executive Director
BC Soccer

CC:
Kjeld Brodsgaard, President, BC Soccer
Charlene Krepiakovich, CEO, ViaSport British Columbia

See next page for the Survey Summary Report

SURVEY REPORT: RETURN TO PLAY INFORMATION GATHERING APRIL 2020

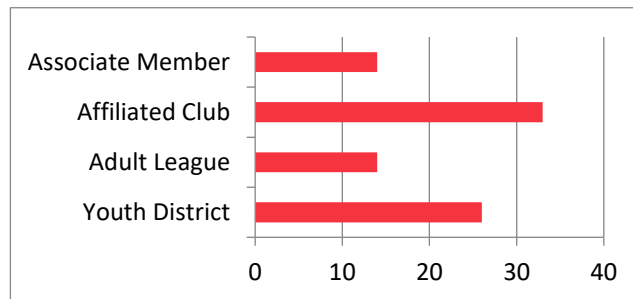
BACKGROUND

BC Soccer designed a survey to gather information from within its membership on what suggested protocols/guidance would look like in a responsible return to play plan considering their own organization and/or their parent/participants comfort levels. The survey encouraged all thoughts and ideas including pre-requisites or restrictions around activity.

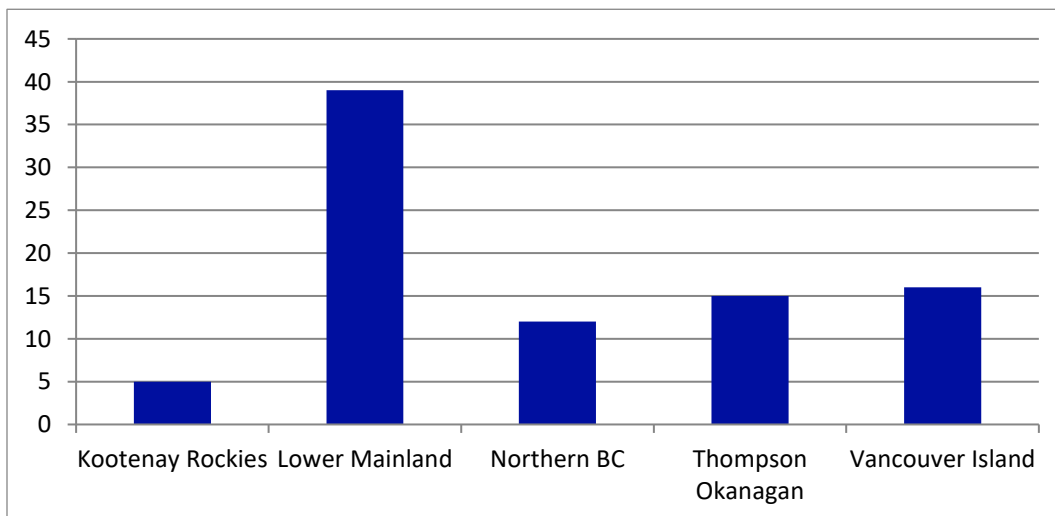
RESPONSE RATE & DEMOGRAPHICS

77% Organisational Response Rate - The survey was sent to contacts representing 172 member organizations and affiliated clubs. BC Soccer received 82 responses representing approximately 77 organizations. (7 respondents did not specify their organization name and approximately 5 organizations had responses from more than one person).

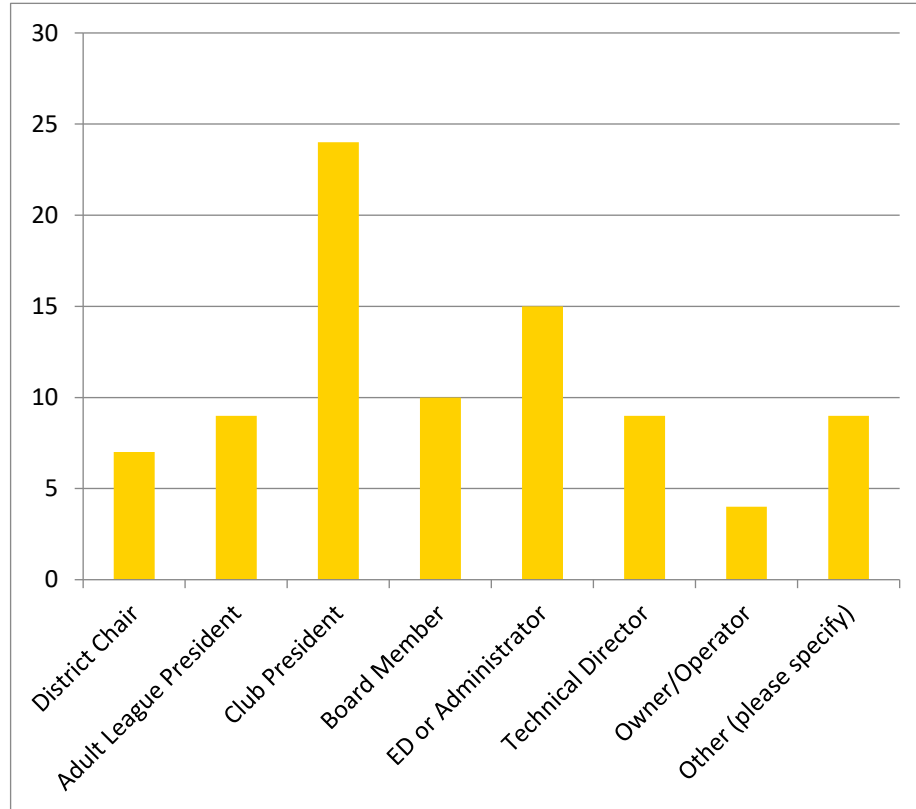
ORGANIZATION TYPE



REGIONAL REPRESENTATION



RESPONDENT POSITION/ROLE



SUMMARY: WHAT WOULD A RESPONSIBLE RETURN TO PLAY PLAN LOOK LIKE? WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED?

GENERALLY SPEAKING...

Across most of the survey, responses reiterated what provincial health authorities have emphasized to the public, being the importance of hand washing, physical distancing and, if one is sick, stay home and isolate. From a soccer perspective within BC Soccer’s membership, that also translates to having hand sanitizer available, removing pre/post-game handshakes, not sharing water bottles or other equipment (later referred to collectively as “mitigation of spread guidance”) and, a focus on individual fitness and skills with a move to small group activities or small-sided games when appropriate (as determined by health authorities). Comments and suggestion were made surrounding exploring other medical related items if health authorities deemed needed, including players wearing breathable masks; as well as, when and if coaches and parent/spectators should also where the same.

FOLLOW PROVINCIAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES FOR SIZE OF GROUP GATHERINGS

As it relates to the size of group gatherings, 87% of respondents felt comfortable for their organization to follow whatever provincial health authorities advise acceptable. Some organizations noted it would

also depend on municipal access to fields/facilities. A couple respondents stated they would only be comfortable generally with the suggestion of a maximum of 50 people. BC Soccer does note that definition is needed between single field, and multiple fields in one location (soccer complex) and is hopeful clarity will be provided by the appropriate health authorities in this regard.

MODIFIED TRAINING AND GAMES, BUT NOT IF SOMEONE IS SICK

When respondents were asked if there should be restrictions on who participates, approximately 45% of respondents said returning to play should only be with modified training in the first instance, while 38% were more comfortable with modified training and modified games. Of all responses, there was consensus that individuals that are sick, have flu-like symptoms, or have been sick within the last two weeks should not participate, nor should those with underlying health conditions/compromised immune systems, with the suggestion to consider participation for individuals who live with someone that has underlying health conditions/compromised immune systems.

TEAM SIZES KEPT THE SAME, BUT PARTICIPATE IN SMALLER GROUPS

There was consensus that the number of players on a team should be kept the same or reduced which was supported by ideas provided for delivering modified training and games. Reducing the number of players and participants per field with coned-off training activities or small-sided games was the top response along with mitigation of spread guidance and suggestions of kick-ins instead of throw-ins and refraining from the use of team benches.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS CAN STAY, BUT AT A DISTANCE (2M)

The majority (58%) of respondents felt parent/guardians could drop their children off and stay to watch or spectate so long as they respected physical distancing measures.

EVERYONE SHOULD BE WELCOME BACK, BUT IF THERE WERE PRIORITY, IT WOULD BE YOUTH

The majority of respondents (60%) did not think return to play should take place gradually based on age or level of play. On the other side, the 40% of respondents that did think there should be a gradual return, generally thought youth players (approximately U10 – U18 age levels) should be first with rationale being they were old enough to understand and adhere to distancing requirements. More specifically, some stated that higher levels of youth play could return first, mostly with team selection processes in mind.

STAY WITHIN CITY LIMITS

For youth activity, the majority of respondents (69%) were comfortable to keep activity within their club in the first instance. 45% were also comfortable with in-District activity, while 32% were also comfortable with inter-District activity. Based on BC Soccer's membership structure and geographical boundaries, this could be interpreted that youth activity should mostly remain within the city limits of where a player is registered.

On the adult side, where BC Soccer does not have geographical boundaries in place, of the 41% that did think there should be restrictions, consensus was that teams' activity should remain within their respective city limits. 35% of respondents did not think city or regional restrictions for adult leagues/teams should apply.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, STANDARDS WILL BE KEY

The survey also asked for ideas on what should be considered as it relates to other stakeholders such as parents/guardians, volunteers, coaches, referees, etc. Across the respective roles the top response emphasized a need for education, training and standards to be put in place. There was also a consistent response again emphasizing distancing and not participating if one is sick. The other trend were suggestions of minimizing roles to reduce the number of participants at fields/facilities. Some responses did acknowledge added responsibilities and comfort levels of individuals in these roles is something that needs to be considered.

PARTICIPANTS EAGERLY AWAIT THE “GO AHEAD” AND EVENTUAL RETURN TO REGULAR PLAY

Upon conclusion of the survey, returning to play only when provincial health authorities deem it safe and following mitigation of spread guidance remained themes. There was also a general enthusiasm to return to play in some way; however, this was countered by responses acknowledging the challenges of participating in soccer with distancing measures currently in place.

Generally, participants also appreciated the opportunity to participate in the survey.

-End-