

**November 18: Notification from the Office of the Minister of Culture,
Multiculturalism and Status of Women**

Re: Temporary targeted COVID-19 measures for sport, recreation and physical activity groups

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging for Albertans. Since operations resumed in May, we know this sector has worked hard to incorporate COVID-19 public health guidance, mitigating risks in order to ensure a safe return to sport and recreation activities. Unfortunately, we have seen a steady increase in the number of positive cases in the province.

In an effort to curb these rising rates, we have implemented targeted measures to further protect Albertans, our healthcare system, and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the province.

Our office recognizes that this two-week closure is problematic for owners, organizers, and participants. It disrupts an already complex routine during this pandemic. We appreciate everything that you have done to keep going – introducing enhanced cleaning into your sites, building and tracking cohorts, ensuring physical distancing where possible, and enforcing ‘fit to play’ protocols.

We did not enter into the decision to implement these targeted measures lightly. We need to take action to reduce the stresses on our healthcare system. From November 13 to November 27, inclusive, all indoor group fitness classes, indoor team sport activities and group performance activities in Edmonton and surrounding areas, Calgary and surrounding areas, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray and Red Deer must remain closed. We encourage you to deliver your classes virtually.

We have implemented these measures because these activities pose a high risk of spread due to the exertion of participants. As our rates increase, so too does the likelihood that the virus could be introduced into these environments – which would have the potential to cause larger outbreaks.

These new measures do not apply to individual exercise, training or equipment; gym facilities are still open and must follow the provincial guidelines. Further, low intensity fitness activities may still occur but must have a group of fewer than five people. School-based sport and fitness activities may also continue due to measures already in place. All previous guidance, measures, and orders still apply.

No one wants increased restrictions, but we must reduce the spread of the virus in the province, particularly in the most heavily affected geographic areas. If we all work together, we’ll get through this, and we will be able to lift these measures. Albertans are known for their strength and resilience. They are also known for pitching in when others need help. We will get through this – together.

Department staff are available to assist you should you have questions about these temporary measures.

Thank you for your support during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

Office of the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women