**Insert Your Member Organization’s Letterhead**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to request the commencement of outdoor sport in our province, for both youth and adult athletes.

Our soccer organization is thankful for the Government of Saskatchewan and for the Saskatchewan Health Authority for their leadership and their diligent work in keeping the residents of Saskatchewan safe. We are also thankful for the government’s Business Response Team, who have helped us and our sport colleagues to navigate through these challenging times. We understand that safety has come at a cost to everyone, with us all having making sacrifices over the course of the pandemic, however, as spring has begun and as we all know, Saskatchewan summers are short, we believe now is the time for outdoor organized sports to safely resume.

We have heard countless times that Dr. Shahab is less concerned about outdoor activity than indoor. We agree, and we want to assure you, that **we are ready for a return to play.** Once the restrictions are lessened, as we have done over the past year, we will continue to demonstrate that sport can be operated safely.

Soccer is the largest outdoor participation sport in the province with around 25,000 registrations each summer, and 45,000 registrations annually (pre-covid). Saskatchewan Soccer’s 56 member organizations (down from 70 organizations prior to the pandemic), serving hundreds of communities, invested significant time and resources this past year to develop and deliver comprehensive return to soccer plans aligned with the directives from the Government of Saskatchewan. All organizations did a tremendous job to offer safe soccer programming to both adult and youth participants. This shows in the numbers: since the pandemic began over a year ago, there have been 13 known COVID 19 cases in our sport, and no known transmission.

Sport providesan essential service for our children, youth, and adult participants to stay healthy and fit, with a [demonstrated minimal risk of community transmission.](https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/e2e4-2392287/2020.09.25.20201616v1.full.pdf#_ga=2.118915465.140037550.1616335255-573109639.1600369732) Continuing to dismiss their physical and mental well-being as a necessary trade-off for combating COVID-19 is no longer acceptable considering other guidelines that are in place.

Organized soccer contributes to improved community well-being and is a safe solution that should be considered as an important part of the Re-Open Road Map in Step 1. Last week was Mental Health Week in Canada. The Canadian Mental Health Association teaches us that our mental health is something we can protect and nurture. Organized and controlled outdoor activity is a keyway to achieve this in a safe and affordable manner. Tragically, and for far too long, organized outdoor sport has not been available as an accessible way for Saskatchewan residents to take care of themselves, irrespective of their background, demographic, or socio-economic status.

**There is growing concern over the mental health challenges that people are facing after 14 months of self-isolation and** with every passing day that residents are kept away from soccer pitches, baseball diamonds, basketball courts, and other outdoor playing fields and facilities, **a mental health crisis grows.**

Furthermore, current practices discriminate against organized sport versus unsanctioned activities. Individuals are choosing to find alternatives to fulfil their physical activity needs – often choosing alternatives that do not align with the provincial guidelines and do not offer the controlled, safe environment of organized sport**.** Currently in parks and green spaces across the province un-regulated groups of people are out enjoying sports without safety protocols, no contact tracing systems, and no dedicated coaches and managers that can help keep people safe.Organized sport as a sector has often been ignored in the Re-Open guidelines and with the release of the latest Roadmap that is the case once again.

**While Step 1 includes Public Gatherings of up to 150 people, we also have significant concerns that organized sport is being asked to carry an unnecessary financial burden. Over the past year organized sport has been asked to carry financial costs that had a massive impact on our sector.** Currently there is a maximum of 30 participants allowed on a field, when over 90 athletes could be on a full-sized soccer pitch while still abiding to the social distancing guidelines. This impacts many non-profits financially, as they are renting multiple fields, doubling, and tripling their rental expenses.

We look for some hope, in the next week, that sport can resume in some fashion in Step 1. If we wait until late June or July, many youth and adults in communities across the province will be without outdoor sport for the second year in a row.

Our request:

* Lessened restrictions for sport for both youth and adults, and opportunity for competition, prior to Step 2 and the third week of June
* Increase of the maximum participants on a playing surface to align with the increased outdoor gathering size allowed in Step 1

As we are sure you are aware, sport has a great impact on the lives of Saskatchewan residents, and at these times the need for sport for individual and community wellness is substantial and its reintroduction will have a positive and significant impact of thousands of Saskatchewan residents. We look forward to the release of the outdoor guidelines for sport and to getting athletes back onto the field to the game they love.

Yours in sport,

NAME

ORGANIZATION NAME

EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER