



January 7, 2022

Executive Director letter to Membership: 2021-2022-04

Dear Swim Saskatchewan Membership:

COVID-19 numbers are expected to continue increasing daily with the Omicron variant and to aid in reducing transmission of this rapidly spreading variant, Swim Saskatchewan has made the very difficult decision to **cancel the upcoming 9th Annual Prairie Optimist Cup**, hosted by the Regina Optimist Dolphins that was scheduled for January 14-16, 2022, in Regina, SK.

This decision was not taken lightly and is not an outcome that we want, but feel that it is the right decision given how rapidly the Omicron variant is transmitting.

One of the primary reasons for this cancellation was based on Chief Medical Health Officer, Dr. Saqib Shahab's recommendation "that this is not the time for any gatherings at all and that we should only do what is essential, as these are critical things to stopping the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant." (Jan 6, 2022). As Dr. Shahab states: "Absolutely I think a single large transmission event right now can generate hundreds of cases in that event, which can within a week lead to thousands of cases because the doubling time was three to four days." (Jan 6, 2022)

Swim Sask does recognize that currently the Government of Saskatchewan has not brought in any new measures or restrictions, however, because a swim meet typically brings together 250+ people, we feel this hard decision needed to be made for the health and safety of all swimmers, coaches, officials, and the community at large.

It is felt that the sport of swimming hosting an event of this size is not the proper thing to do. The risk is currently too great for an event like this to proceed as the possibility to create an outbreak and become a super spreader. There is significant asymptomatic spreading going on. The virus is likely to spread before becoming symptomatic.

With high school exams set to begin around January 24, the potential risk of exposure at a gathering/swimming competition such as this could result in swimmers becoming ill or isolating as close contacts around this same time. We recognize that school is essential and while we all believe that sport is critical for everyone's mental and physical health, sport is unfortunately not deemed essential.

At this time, I once again ask our clubs, COVID committees and members to review and reset their use of a layered approach to reduce transmission as per the Swim Sask COVID-19 [Training and Competition Guidelines](#) that are posted on the [Swim Sask website](#)

(see next page)



Better Lives Through Swimming



“Each member club is responsible for assessing the risks in its environment and establishing the appropriate safety procedures to minimize those risks, while following the advice, guidelines, and directions of Swim Sask and instructions of public health and other government authorities, including facilities.”

- **Wear a mask and wear it properly**
- **If sick or symptomatic stay home**, only participate if you are asymptomatic/symptom-free. Follow the Positive Case and Close Contact process, which was released January 5, 2022 by the Government of Saskatchewan. Details here: [COVID-19 Case and Contact Management in Schools](#). This information is important to know and understand, as most of our swimmers are school aged.
- **Seek testing if symptomatic and use rapid tests and follow the [Updated Public Health Order for Mandatory Isolation and Face Covering that was released Jan 6, 2022](#)**
- **Vaccinate when eligible. This means boosters too!**
- **“Co-horting”** has been mentioned on an earlier press release this week, in relation to education but it is a good practice for Club Covid Committees to review and possibly return to smaller groups, to help reduce transmission.
- Ensure you have prepared and **have contingency plans** in place for when you or a member of your club (coach, swimmer, etc.) is a close contact or tests positive.
- When communicating positive cases within the club, clubs must continue to strive for **anonymity of the positive case(s)** and notify Swim Sask.
- Please continue to use a layered approach for reducing spread of COVID-19. Everything anyone can do; they should do right now.

We recognize that this pandemic is hard on all of us, and especially the younger population, and that this will be disappointing to many, but we all need to rally together and do what we can to support each other.

Right now, the phase we are in is like the middle of a tough swimming set. Dig deep, focus on the small details. Together we can get through this.

We thank you again for being a part of swimming in Saskatchewan.

Swimming builds #betterlivesthroughswimming.

Sincerely,

Marj Walton, Executive Director



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