



Objective: Partner with the Sport Climbing Industry to support Canada's relaunch

Honorable Member of Parliament

On behalf of Climbing Escalade Canada (CEC), the national governing body for Sport Climbing in Canada, we hope you and your family are staying safe during these difficult and unprecedented times.

CEC, in partnership with sport climbing's Provincial Sports Organizations (PSOs), and the 130+ climbing gyms in Canada, representing over 500,000 recreational and competitive climbers, is writing to you to explain the challenges faced by climbing gyms during the COVID-19 crisis, and to present opportunities to support a healthy and active return to normal.

Canadian climbing gyms are uniquely positioned, vis-à-vis other recreational facilities, to implement the culture of safety required following the COVID-19 pandemic. **As a result, we ask federal and provincial governments to allow climbing facilities to reopen their doors as soon as possible.**

As small-businesses, we struggle to make ends meet

Climbing gyms in Canada are privately owned by small-business entrepreneurs. These businesses are facing challenges that will continue in the upcoming months, regardless of the social/physical distancing measures being lifted. Summer is the off-peak season for climbing gyms, as the climbing community moves to outdoor recreational activities. As a result, owners must typically earn a surplus in the winter months to survive the summer when traffic is significantly reduced. Rent, salaries, insurance, debt, and interest must still be paid, even though revenues are currently non-existent, and the winter "cushion" wasn't realized.

When the gyms are allowed to open, it will not be business as usual for these small-business owners. Continuing to provide government subsidies while these gyms get back on their feet will go a long way in helping prevent many of these small businesses from shutting their doors permanently.

Our National Athletes are falling behind

Sport Climbing was to make its debut at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Obviously, the games have been postponed until 2021, however, Canada's current and future climbing Olympians need to continue to train. As you can imagine, this sort of training must be done "on the wall." While the remaining national and international competitions in 2020 have been/will be adjusted, Canada's athletes need to continue to train in order to not fall behind.

Our environment is optimal to meet public health guidelines

Risk mitigation is an embedded and essential component of climbing. Our gyms are particularly adept at educating patrons of all levels about the importance of safe climbing. This is done through our mandatory orientations and assessments of safety checks, falls, and belaying skills with all clientele. Climbing gyms



keep a full record of attendance and can easily help with **contact tracing**. Further, our environment is optimal for **social distancing and capacity management**. Climbers are already physically distanced for safety reasons, and further separation can be added to meet public health guidelines. Lastly, when climbers participate with a partner, they are often from the same household, **reducing the risk of public transmission**.

The CEC and its partners (gym owners, PSOs, and other stakeholders) have created a *National Pandemic-Response Task Force* to address the challenges that will be presented when gyms are allowed to reopen. The CEC Task Force has consulted National Federations from around the world to create a toolkit for gym owners, providing guidance with regards to distancing, hygiene, and additional safety measures applicable not only to the climbing area of the gyms, but to the entire facility (entry, reception, washrooms, etc). As stated earlier, gym owners already have safety procedures in place, and the extra precautions provided in the toolkit will be easily added to the existing measures.

Let us be partners in relaunching Canada's economy and wellbeing

Climbing gyms need to reopen as soon as possible. Our gyms cater to a healthy, low-risk population and provide many Canadians with a sense of community, aiding both their physical and mental health. We fully understand the need to reduce capacity in the short term and are confident that gyms can adjust to this reality. We believe that our gyms can act as a valuable partner to you as Canada transitions out of this public health emergency, educating our community on new health and safety measures in a space already accustomed to risk mitigation.

We are ready to partner with governments at all levels to relaunch Canada's economy and wellbeing. We want to continue to offer our services to Canadians after COVID-19, we just need your help.

Sincerely,

Christiane Marceau
Executive Director
Climbing Escalade Canada
cec.ed@climbingcanada.ca

Greg Locke
President
Climbing Escalade Canada
cec.president@climbingcanada.ca