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To golf or not to golf? Around 100 B.C. courses still open amid pandemic



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TORONTO -- In a world where strict lockdowns and physical distancing have become par for the course, many B.C. golfers are still enjoying some tee time.

Of the roughly 2,300 golf courses in Canada, only around 100 of them are still open. All of them are believed to be in B.C.

The reaction to these golf courses remaining open has been mixed. While some health officials advise against it, golfers in B.C. are thrilled to have an outlet during the pandemic.



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Tom Monaghan, president of the Monaghan Golf Group, told CTV News that he's seen an "overwhelming positive reaction."

"I mean, you can imagine you've been cooped up in your house for a month," he said. "People just want things to do."

Club owners are adamant that they're following the rules to prevent contamination and a COVID-19 outbreak. At Shadow Ridge Golf Club in Kelowna, which reopened this week, efforts to limit contact are in full force.

The pro shop is closed, players have been told not to touch the flagpoles and staff have removed the rakes from sand traps. They have also reminded players to observe physical distancing.

One golfer, Clay Atkinson, told CTV News that there have been some close calls.

"There was a few times someone would kind of start walking to you," he said. "And you'd have to put your club up and point it at them and say 'stop' or 'stay away.'"

Many provinces are simply not allowing courses to open, in keeping with the cancellation of non-essential businesses.

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Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's medical officer of health, has said that she does not approve.

"It would be my direction that driving ranges, in addition to golf courses, would be considered non-essential and would not be open at this time," she said.

In provinces like Alberta and Ontario where golf courses remain closed to the public, some frustrated golfers have started online petitions urging their governments to reconsider.

Ty McCullough, a college student from Hamilton, Ont., started a petition aimed at convincing Ontario to get the golf ball rolling again.

"Right now, with all of our work being closed, if golf was open I know there'd be a ton of people ... up there every day if they (could)," McCullough told CTV News. "I really think it'd be a really big morale booster."

So far, the petition has more than 4,000 signatures.

But as of yet, there is no sign that Ontario golfers will be stepping back onto the green to practice their swing any time soon.

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