

August 4, 2017

To all members of the BCSSA,

I have been receiving a number of emails expressing concern about the upcoming Championship meet to be held in Kamloops. Concerns about availability of accommodation, infringing on relief efforts, threat of fire and air quality top the list.

The Board of Directors and the Office have been in constant communication with the City of Kamloops and the University as well as with municipal governments and fire marshals in the area. The office staff and meet committee have been living this situation since early July. All decisions made around the upcoming Championships have not been taken lightly and have been made with the best and latest information we can get. Let me address some of the concerns.

Threat of Fire. There is no threat of fire to the City of Kamloops. At this time there is no threat of fire on the routes to Kamloops for 7 of our 8 regions. The only region that may face road closures to get there is the Cariboo. Kamloops is safe from fire.

Stress on relief efforts. We have been assured by the City of Kamloops that we will not be placing any stress on relief efforts. At this time the large evacuations of Williams Lake and 100 Mile House, have returned to their homes. There are some small evacuations at this time but our event will have no impact on them. Fire fighters are in the field closer to the fires, we will not be impacting their accommodations or efforts. In fact, the City of Kamloops feels we would be a benefit to the community and allow them to return businesses back to a normal level.

Accommodation. There is no shortage of accommodation in Kamloops. Even during the height of the evacuations there were many rooms available in Kamloops because the evacuees were being housed in evacuation centres, not hotels. We have checked will all hotels and the TRU Residences, every one of them said they are ready for us and there are no issues.

Alternate Locations. Our Director of Competitions, Sean Cauley, has been looking at alternative locations for the meet since the beginning of July. The short answer is there are not many options. The truth of the matter is there are very few facilities that can handle our event and even fewer that want us there at all. It is getting harder and harder to secure a facility for the event in any year, especially if costs are a concern. If we changed the location at the very minimum we would have to hold it out of several pools. That is doable but most of the pools would have to be outdoor pools which brings up our next concern.

Air Quality. Air quality is our greatest concern. I have been monitoring the Government air quality testing sites for the past two weeks. The Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) has been fluctuating up and down. There have been some astronomical numbers reported in the news and I don't know where they are getting the numbers they are reporting. The numbers I see are from the actual testing locations.

The primary site we have been watching is the Aberdeen testing site which is just up the hill from the pool.

Air quality has been bad, there is no doubt. On August 1st, Kamloops was at 11 but, at the same time, the Fraser Valley was at 10 and Metro Vancouver was 8. Earlier in the week Kamloops was at 4 with blue skies. Air quality is a concern all over southern BC and it will be fluctuating as winds and fires change. The long term forecast for the Kamloops area is for northern winds that will blow the smoke south, away from the city. Both weather and smoke predictions call for large improvements in air quality in the Kamloops valley.

The advantage we have in Kamloops is the pool is indoor and air conditioned. Two of our regions have switched the location of their Regional meet to be able to hold the meet in an indoor pool out of the smoke. In an indoor pool we have some control over the quality of the air. The City of Kamloops and the University have been extremely cooperative and are reserving extra classrooms and a full gymnasium for our use. These areas will give our athletes inside space to rest and prepare for their events. I do have to say that the cooperation and support from our hosts has been phenomenal.

Let me assure you that the meet committee has not taken the situation lightly or made quick decisions. We have worked hard to get the best information available and make the best decision for our athletes. At this time, taking into consideration all the factors, we believe Kamloops gives us the best chance to hold a successful and safe Provincial Championships. We will continue to monitor the situation and are prepared, if necessary, to go to a plan B but at this time, I'll see you in Kamloops.

Danny Schilds

President, BCSSA