**IMPACT OF COVID 19 on YEAR LONG AND SUMMER CAMPS**

**Who We Are**

The Ontario Camps Association (OCA) is a not-for-profit organization of over 450 accredited camps that impacts over 400,000 children and 600,000 parents/guardians annually. Our members hire over 35,000 mature, skilled young adults every year to lead camp programs and teach activities. Our camps annually contribute approximately $620 million dollars to the Ontario economy. The non-economic impact of camp may be more significant. Ontario is one of a very few ‘epicentres’ of the camp experience in North America, with a long-history of a unique Canadian culture arising from a varied Ontario landscape. From Algonquin Park to day camps in the centre of major cities, ‘summer camp’ is a term that almost all Ontarians know.

The business of “Camp” is not confined to the summer months; in fact, Camp runs all year long; Some camps operate year-round, providing fall, winter and spring outdoor education programs; some operate in the spring, and the lion-share are truly ‘Summer camps’, the hallmark of the camp industry. In addition, our camps are as diverse as the communities they serve. Many of our member camps cater to the special needs community, are not for profits (members of the Ontario Non-profit association) and serve the disadvantaged. In fact, 239,247 special need campers attend OCA summer camps each summer. Some examples of our camp communities include, The YMCA camps, Easter Seals, and The Catholic Youth Organizations. All private camps provide support and financial assistance to children who otherwise could not afford to attend camp including over 450 Syrian refugees.

**CAMPS OPERATING OUTDOOR CENTERS (FALL AND OR WINTER GROUPS) HAVE BEEN SEVERELY INMPACTED. OUR INDUSTRY IS NOW IN PERIL.**

Beyond the impact of teacher labour disputes that have severely compromised some camps, should there be a government mandated closure of camps this summer, many camps will not survive the economic consequences. We must prepare NOW for this possible outcome and provide a backstop for the most vulnerable camps. We need to have a voice at the table to prevent the financial devastation that all camps will experience and protect all camps’ short- and long-term viability. Camps that operate only during the summer season are unique in that their entire source of revenue, needed to operate during the summer and throughout the following year, has one, and only one chance to secure its revenue in any given year.

Please do not forget about us and do consider our unique business model and the importance of ‘SUMMER CAMP’ to the fabric of Ontario. Through our efforts, we help to develop healthy and resilient children; summer camp helps to develop self-esteem and sense of identity. We break down barriers, from

physical and emotional development, to financial. Camps offers enhanced opportunities for thousands of special needs children, and teaches values of global citizenship, critical thinking. And perhaps most importantly, camp develops leadership qualities needed to improve our society as they become adults. The exposure to different cultures and the people skills of emotional intelligence is what has created our strong and healthy Canadian culture. Simultaneously our staff, often experiencing a job for the very first time, are cultivated and trained to become the next generation of our work force.

**The Solution**

We propose the creation and funding of a SUSTAINABILITY FUND, directed at summer camps (nonprofit and private). The fund would be a mix of grants and interest-free loans, scaled to the operating size and financial requirements, that will allow them to weather the consequences of a forced-closure during the only possible time our businesses operate. This cannot wait until the summer. Our members are already being impacted and need this help immediately.

Secondly all municipal/realty taxes at the premises of the camp need to be paid over five years as the impact of same when not operating is devastating. The fact is if camps go bankrupt there will be no taxes to pay anyways.

Of course we hope that continued pressure can be placed on the Federal Govt to make the wage subsidy program and all programs for seasonal businesses be offered over four times the length since we have lost not three months but 12 months of revenue with expenses already paid for. As well EI, workplace sharing and CERB need to apply to seasonal staff and workers, students as well as owners.

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Mark Diamond

Chair of the OCA Government Relations Committee