

**RASC Halifax Centre Board of Directors –
Meeting on Requisition regarding SCO during the Pandemic
Wednesday, May 13, 2020: 7:30 – 8:00 PM
Via zoom - Meeting ID: 947 3203 0999**

1. Present:

Judy Black (President), Gregg Dill, Paul Heath, Wayne Harasimovitch, David Hoskin, Matt Dyer, Pat Kelly, John Liddard (SCO Manager).

2. Regrets:

Tom Crosman, Dave Chapman, Peter Hurley, Paul Gray, Mary Lou Whitehorne.

3. Welcome

Judy Black welcomed members to the meeting and thanked for agreeing to meet on such short notice. Quorum was met.

She explained the reason to have this discussion now was twofold:

1. The provincial government has changed its regulations regarding outdoor activity during this current State of Emergency (extended to noon May 17, 2020), and
2. A request came through the Discussion List as to when SCO would be available for use.

The decisions made today will be included in the meeting minutes of our next Board meeting (May 21, 2020) and will also be reviewed if there are any changes to the government's position regarding gatherings and physical distancing.

4. Emails (May 12, 2020)

At 9:36 AM on the morning of May 12, 2020, a request came through the Halifax Centre Discussion List from Tony McGrath for inform him of the current status of SCO for observing, i.e., if it was allowed and what protocol will be followed. Judy Black responded later at 11:49 AM through the discussion list – “I do recognize there are some clear nights coming up. There will be an online discussion by the Board regarding the use of SCO. I will keep everyone apprised via the Announce List of the outcome.”

AT 2:01 PM of May 12, 2020, Judy Black sent an email to the Board of Directors informing them of the request and provided some background information and the situation from her perspective that was there as a start point for discussion (Refer to Agenda Note #1). A meeting of the Board was suggested for later that evening, but it was postponed to today.

5. Discussion

An open discussion was held regarding feasibility of maintaining physical distancing and maintaining a clean, safe environment for all who used SCO. John Liddard clarified that members' keys gained them immediate access to the driveway barrier and the Warm Room. The box in the Warm Room contains the key to the Observatory and the Storage Room/Washroom. He stated the key access code could be temporarily changed.

It was quickly realized the 2 metre (6 feet) separation was feasible due to the spacing of the three concrete pads and expanse of gravel on the remainder of the site. As per provincial guidelines at this time, no more than a total of five (5) people would be allowed on the site at any one time on any evening. Members also discussed how sanitation could take place despite the lack of running water at the facility. This could be accomplished through effective hand sanitizers and through disinfectants that could be provided on site by the Centre, such as a bottle of disinfectant/watered down bleach and some rags or paper towels, or Lysol wipes. Members would be responsible for removing used paper towels and all other used disinfectant materials from the site.

Members agreed that when the facility was opened, the Discussion List would be the place for members to announce their intentions to go to SCO using the Announce List, and that they would have to stipulate

the number involved in that announcement (i.e., are they going alone or bringing a buddy). It would be on a first come first served basis and easy to track given all messages are time stamped.

Discussion then led to the statements in the government advisory of what it means for Nova Scotians (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/what-it-means-for-Nova-Scotians/>). In particular, in the section involving gatherings and social distancing, it stated: "A gathering is any event that brings people together in a single space at the same time. There are to be no non-essential gatherings of more than 5 people. Any workplace, business or organization that isn't deemed essential (or not already required to be closed) can remain open as long as a 2 metre (6 foot) distance can be maintained." It was recognized that the use of SCO is not an essential service and that travel to the facility could therefore also be considered non-essential. It was acknowledged that clarification of the term "non-essential" was required, especially in light of the conditions under which outdoor sport facilities were given permission to open across the province.

6. Next Steps

Members agreed to the following:

1. SCO is closed for now. Members will be advised as next steps become known.
2. Contact with the provincial government must be made for clarification and verification that SCO can reopen under the provincial Guidelines.
3. This will be reviewed on a regular basis as changes to the government COVID-19 become known.

2000513MN-Act01

John Liddard will seek clarification of the opening of SCO under the provincial COVID-19 Guidelines.

2000513MN-Act02

Members will review the draft of the Discussion List response that Judy Black will prepare.

200513MN-Act03

Judy Black will post the approved message to all members via the Halifax Centre Announce List.

Judy again thanked members for attending on such short notice.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 PM.

Agenda Note #1 re Emails (May 12, 2020)

The questions are these:

A- Given the current set of government guidelines regarding COVID-19, should we re-open SCO for use by our membership?

B- If the decision is to re-open, under what conditions and/or restrictions should it be opened?

C- If the decision is not to re-open at this time, what is the rationale for remaining closed?

D- When should these decisions be revisited?

Please note the Warm Room heater was turned off to reduce propane usage when the site wasn't being used. John Liddard assured us at a previous Board meeting that it is easy to restart, when needed. At present, John is the *only* person with access to SCO because of his responsibility as SCO Manager.

According to the NS COVID-19 website (<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/what-it-means-for-nova-scotians/>):

"Nova Scotia has restricted gatherings to protect Nova Scotians' health and limit the spread of COVID-19. A gathering is any event that brings people together in a single space at the same time. There are to be no non-essential gatherings of more than 5 people. Any workplace, business or organization that isn't deemed essential (or not already required to be closed) can remain open as long as a 2 metre (6 foot) distance can be maintained. See [social distancing guidelines](#)."

The provincial site also states that "viruses can live on surfaces or several days" and they recommend we "clean and disinfect things like doorknobs, light switches, railings, toilets and tabletops every day. Wash with soapy water first. Then disinfect with household cleaning products, following the directions on the label."

Recreation and entertainment sites are closed - children's playgrounds, golf courses (except driving ranges and maintenance work), provincial campgrounds, provincial and municipal beaches, provincial tourist attractions. Privately operated campgrounds open only for maintenance and seasonal campers in fixed RV campsites.

Here are my thoughts about re-opening and these are just that - my thoughts.

1. The **Observatory** is off limits for now. Cleaning of equipment and eyepieces are not easily done on site and they should not be removed from the Observatory. Past experience has shown us we can lose equipment when allowed offsite.

2. The **Warm Room** is off limits for now. Cleaning all surfaces with each visit upon both arrival and departure would be challenging. One person's idea of "cleaned" is not the same as another person's idea. For the very first person entering the space since SCO was closed, the initial cleaning may not be required. But what about subsequent entries by members into the space on the same evening. Is physical distancing possible in that space?

3. The **Storage Room** is off limits for now. I recognize the washroom facilities are in this building and that the lack of this facility could mean female members (self included) may subsequently be reluctant to be at SCO. This is, in essence, reverting back to conditions present before the Storage Room was built.

4. The ability to sanitize objects within any of the spaces cited above (door handles (inside and outside), toilet crank, toilet paper container, tables, chairs, and any other surface touched) would be required. The provincial guidelines would not be easily accomplished on site. I don't know which disinfectant wipes would be sufficient.

4. There are **3 concrete pads** on site that are suitably spaced to allow the 6 feet/2 metre physical space requirements. This would allow for 3 people, but no more than 5 total, to be onsite at any given time on any given evening. Should there be a formal or informal booking system?

5. The virus can live on surfaces for a few days. The requirement for members to provide their own masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes would be considered when determining what building(s), if any, are to open.

Government of Canada site re hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19):
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>