

The Bright Side of Hell

As Winston Churchill once said, “When you’re going through hell, keep going...”

The world has certainly been “going through hell” since the pandemic landed, and the pressures on everyone seem to be mounting the longer it goes. Unfortunately, Canada is nowhere near the front of the line in terms of vaccine roll outs, so that hell is lasting longer than it should.

Within golf, Ontario has become the poster child for all of that, having been shut down completely. Other provinces are grinding through various degrees of restrictions and health statistics. But we must all “keep going...”

So, I offer the following focus on some of the positives that do help keep us going. Golf is, after all, in a better position than most other industries and careers.

When open, the golf industry throughout Canada is booming. We ended the 2020 golf season with rounds played up by 19% over the 5-year average, despite being down by 38% as of last June 1. Golf’s popularity as a safe and healthy activity that appeals to a very broad range of demographics has never seen such a dramatic short-term boost in demand. And 2021 is delivering more of the same success.

Many golf operating budgets have therefore been restored to the stronger financial positions than in recent years. That bodes well for maintenance expenses, overall course conditioning, some of those deferred capital investments, and affording increased staffing at a lot of courses. It also drives our supplier partners’ success.

The CGSA itself is also an integral part of golf’s resurging success story. We have supported the allied association efforts to properly position golf with governments as that safe, healthy, outdoor activity. The development and promotion of safety protocols for the maintenance department and the protocols for golfers, have been important and successful priorities this past year.

We successfully reimagined the Canadian Golf Course Conference & Trade Show, delivering the experience virtually for the first time. It was very highly rated. 16% of delegates actually rated the virtual Conference format as so appealing that they would only return next year if also virtual. The majority still prefer in-person, so the CGSA will reach for the best of both formats going forward.

CGSA membership has also been growing this year, with more new members than any recent year. I would suggest that the CGSA’s leadership through the pandemic, combined with an ever-increasing portfolio of member benefits and improved golf course budgets has led to this current success. If you have not yet joined your fellow industry peers, now is the time to add CGSA membership to the success of your own career and that of your golf operation. If you are already a member, now is the time to add your assistants, equipment technicians or others.

In the coming months, you can also look forward to celebrating golf through National Golf Day and then Thank A Golf Course Superintendent Day, as well as two CGSA Fall Field Days this year. Watch for full details and please plan to participate.

Having said all that, managing your way through this pandemic still remains a very challenging reality for many. If you find it overwhelming at any time, please reach out to the CGSA for support. Those who

opted into our Ultimate Membership offer also have free access to HumanaCare, a confidential professional counselling service for individuals or families experiencing work-life challenges.

On behalf of the CGSA board and staff team, all the best for a healthy and successful '21 golf season!