

No baseball in Canada

EDITORIAL

IT LOOKS AS IF this will be a year in which Major League Baseball will retreat to playing all its games in U.S. cities and without any fans in the stadiums, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although both the City of Toronto and the Ontario government had tentatively approved the idea of Toronto Blue Jays playing their home games in the Rogers Centre, the federal government concluded that it would be far too risky to have American teams allowed in to Canada when the U.S. border has been closed to all but essential travel until at least August 21.

And as if there was any doubt as to the need to extend the border closing, that seemed to vanish Wednesday with disclosure of the fact that for the first time in months there were more than 1,000 deaths in the U.S. from the coronavirus in a single day, with the death toll having reached 145,000 compared with under 9,000 in Canada.

And as if to illustrate the seriousness of the situation, for the first time since April, U.S. President Donald Trump addressed the problem on TV and in a shift in rhetoric on facial coverings, encouraged Americans to wear a mask if they cannot maintain social distance from people around them in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

And in his first briefing focused on the coronavirus pandemic in months, Mr. Trump told reporters at the White House "it will probably unfortunately get worse before it gets better. Something I don't like saying about things, but that's the way it is."

Just why he chose Tuesday for the brief press conference didn't become clear, and he read most of the advice from a prepared text, but at least it included a call for everyone to stay six feet from others and to wash hands frequently.

Some observers saw the president's message as mainly a response to recent opinion polls showing him as well below Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential candidate.

As cases rise in states around the country, including in politically important states such as Florida, Texas and Arizona, the president is seen as having shifted his tone to try to get the number of cases under control.

"We're asking everybody that when you are not able to socially distance, wear a mask, get a mask. Whether you like the mask or not, they have an impact, they'll have an effect and we need everything we can get," he said. He added that he was getting used to masks and would wear one himself in groups or when on an elevator.

The president also urged young Americans to avoid crowded bars where the virus could spread.

Closer to home, there were some worrisome statistics in the wake of the relaxation of rules aimed at reducing the spread of COVID-19, particularly among residents aged 20 to 40.

Toronto Mayor John Tory is pushing Ontario Premier Doug Ford to impose more rules on bars and restaurants "such as early closing times and additional occupancy limits" as part of the provincial government's plans to reopen the economy of Canada's most populous city.

Mayor Tory tweeted Sunday morning that he'd sent a letter to Premier Ford requesting "additional measures" intended to help stem further spread of COVID-19, recommendations that come as Toronto is eyeing entry into the third and final stage of the province's reopening process.

"While many of these measures are already Toronto Public Health guidelines and recommendations, they are not included in the

province's legal regulation,? Tory wrote in the letter, which was dated Saturday. ?I believe ensuring these are requirements rather than recommendations will help ensure compliance and ultimately, protect the health of our residents.?

It will certainly be interesting to see whether it is mainly the rules for bars and restaurants are as important a cause in fresh outbreaks as social gatherings where one or more persons is an unwitting carrier of COVID-19.