



## Message from Dr. Verna Yiu & Dr. Laura McDougall

### *AHS Update: New cases, hospitalization, ICU numbers decrease; Pfizer announces temporary reduction in vaccine shipments to Canada*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

#### Today's Update

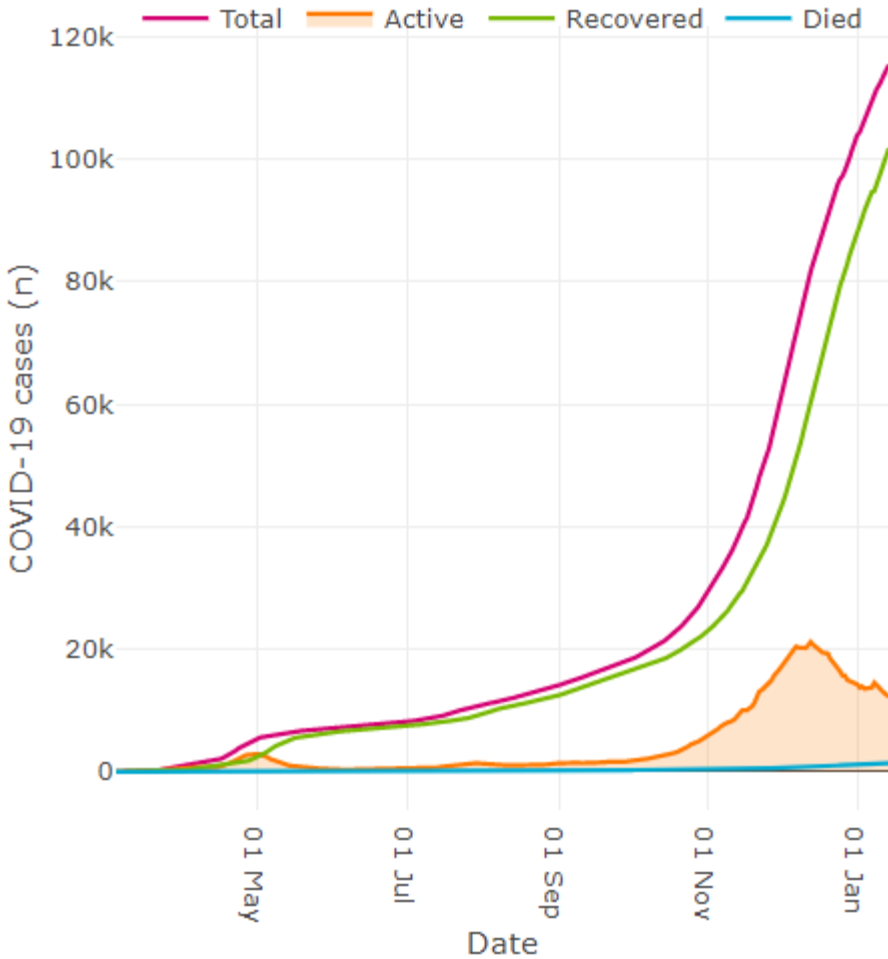
- COVID-19 Cases in Alberta
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## COVID-19 Status

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Alberta's average number of daily new cases is down this week, as are our hospitalization and ICU numbers. This week, 172 people in the province lost their lives to the coronavirus, a sobering reminder that we are still in the midst of a pandemic.

There was an average of 876 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending on Jan. 13, compared to 981 the previous week, an 11 per cent decrease. As of Jan. 13, there were 12,434 active cases in the province compared to 13,298 the previous week, a 6.5 per cent decrease.

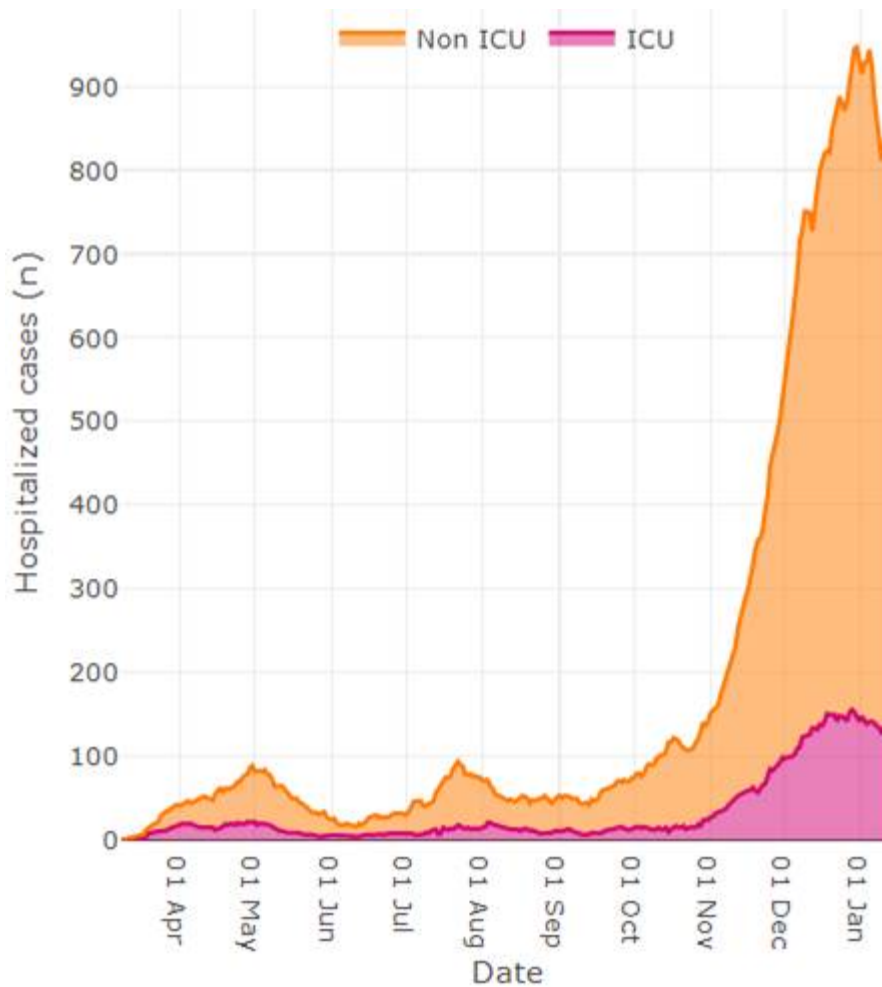


The table below shows the number of active cases in each zone for the last two weeks. It's worth noting that, for the first time in nine weeks, the Calgary Zone has the most active cases in the province.

	Active Cases (as of Jan. 13)	Active Cases (as of Jan. 6)	Per Cent Change
<b>Edmonton</b>	4,570	5,465	-16.4%
<b>Calgary</b>	4,691	4,739	-1.0%
<b>Central</b>	1,635	1,381	18.1%
<b>North</b>	1,152	1,384	-16.6%
<b>South</b>	362	252	43.7%
<b>Unknown</b>	24	77	-68.8%

**Hospitalizations and ICU admissions**

On Jan. 13, there were 806 individuals with COVID-19 in hospitals across the province compared to 871 on Jan. 6, a seven per cent decrease. Also on Jan. 13, there were 136 individuals in intensive care compared to 139 on Jan. 6, a two per cent decrease.



The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Jan. 13 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	Patients in ICU
Edmonton	409	60
Calgary	220	46
Central	77	8
North	75	15
South	25	7

**Other notable COVID-19-related information:**

- As of Jan. 13, a total of 114,585 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and a total of 4,858 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 100,762 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Jan. 13, 1,389 individuals have passed away from COVID-19. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.

- From Jan. 7 to Jan. 13, 93,932 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 13,419 per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 5.31 per cent to 7.10 per cent. As of Jan. 13, a total of 2,982,611 tests have been conducted and 1,704,911 individuals have been tested. While test volumes have decreased from late November/early December, it is recommended that individuals get tested if they exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19, are a close contact of a COVID-19 case and/or are connected to an outbreak.

## Things You Need to Know

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### **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers**

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers in the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing dashboard](#). These statistics provide the total number of AHS, Covenant Health and Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) employees and physicians tested, including a breakdown of the number of positive tests and those who have been confirmed to have been exposed in the workplace.

As of Jan. 13:

- 74,538 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,127 (or 5.5 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 1,084 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 345 (or 31.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 3,043 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,818 physicians (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 185 (or 3.8 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 49 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, eight (or 16.3 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 136 physicians who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

For more information, see the [AHS Healthcare Worker COVID-19 Testing infographic](#) and [dashboard](#).

### **COVID-19 Vaccination Updates**

#### *By the Numbers*

As of 12:01 p.m. Jan. 15, more than 69,600 Albertans have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including:

- 32,100+ Healthcare workers
- 22,100+ Long Term Care (LTC) and Designated Supportive Living (DSL) residents
- 22,000+ LTC/DSL staff

### *Vaccine Supply Update*

Today Pfizer informed the federal government that there will be a temporary delay in vaccine shipments due to expansion plans at its European facility. Shipments to Canada are expected to continue in the coming weeks but the number of doses will be fewer. Pfizer believes it will be able to restore supply by the end of March.

Next week, the amount of vaccine that Canada receives will be reduced by about 20 per cent. The week after that, trays will be reduced by 80 per cent, and the two weeks that follow will see only half of the expected doses entering Canada. We are waiting for more information from the federal government about how this will affect Alberta's allocation of vaccine for the coming weeks. Click [here](#) for more information.

Meanwhile, about 16,900 additional doses of the Moderna vaccine arrived today (Jan. 15), bringing the total COVID-19 vaccine received this week to approximately 41,000 doses. These doses will be distributed across the province as we work to immunize as many Albertans against COVID-19 as quickly as possible.

### *COVID-19 Immunization Highlights this Week*

- Paramedics and emergency medical technicians became eligible for COVID-19 immunization in all AHS zones, as announced by [Alberta Health](#) on Jan. 11.
- First dose of COVID-19 immunization at all continuing care facilities in northern Alberta was completed on [Jan. 11](#).
- Second dose immunization window was expanded on [Jan. 12](#). Going forward, second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will be offered within 42 days after the first dose. If you have already booked your appointment for your second dose, we will honour your appointment. For residents of long-term care and designated supportive living facilities, we will continue to offer the shorter interval of three to four weeks (21 to 28 days). More information on the rationale for this change is available in the [Jan. 13 AHS COVID-19 Immunization Update](#).
- AHS and Covenant Health are piloting a program to bring temporary satellite COVID-19 immunization clinics to some emergency departments throughout the province. As of [Jan. 13](#), nine satellite clinics have already taken place, with more than 425 emergency department staff immunized. As more vaccine becomes available, additional clinics will be opened for eligible staff.

### *Dr. Hinshaw and Dr. Yiu – The Importance of Vaccine*

Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and Dr. Verna Yiu, AHS President and CEO, [talk about the importance COVID-19 immunization in this new video](#), and encourage all eligible healthcare workers to get immunized. The COVID-19 is safe and effective, and is being made available to thousands of eligible healthcare workers and continuing care residents.



#### *COVID-19 Immunization Spotlight*

Sahra Kaahiye was the first person in Alberta to receive the COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 15. The Edmonton Zone respiratory therapist received her second dose Thursday, completing her COVID-19 immunization.



#### *AHS COVID-19 Immunization Survey*

As of midnight on Jan. 14, more than 4,502 participants have completed the AHS COVID-19 Immunization Survey. The survey launched Jan. 10, and is included in the email sent to eligible healthcare workers when booking their COVID-19 immunization.

In the first week, 86.5 per cent of respondents say they intend to get immunized against COVID-19. Information collected through this anonymous survey will inform our understanding of healthcare workers' perspectives towards the COVID-19 vaccine and immunization, and the information that our staff and partners require to make an informed choice about their own vaccination. We encourage you to complete the survey when you receive your email to book your immunization.

*More Information for Staff and Physicians:*

If you believe you are an eligible healthcare worker but have not yet been contacted to book your COVID-19 immunization appointment:

- We know everyone is anxiously awaiting their turn for immunization and we thank you for your patience. We are doing all we can to roll out vaccine as soon as supply is available.
- Staff eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine will receive an email directly from AHS with a unique link. Please check your email for your appointment booking invitation from **AHS Booking** and click your one-time link, as soon as possible. Visit the [FAQ page](#) if you have questions about this process.
- Lists of individuals in each eligible group as identified by Alberta Health were provided proactively and are being sent out in batches. Some may receive these emails before others. Please allow time for these emails to be sent, as, due to the volume, it takes time for everyone's information to get loaded into the system and the emails sent. Please be patient if you have not yet received your email.
- If you feel you have been missed in your phase, please reach out to your supervisor or medical leader. Do not call Health Link. Physicians should email [cmo@ahs.ca](mailto:cmo@ahs.ca)
- We are extremely grateful for the patience of all staff, physicians and Albertans who are waiting to be immunized.

If you have questions about when you will be eligible and if you can be prioritized or added to a waitlist:

- AHS is working within the immunization allocation parameters outlined by Alberta Health to provide immunization to key populations as vaccine supply becomes available. Please refer to the [Alberta Health website](#) for the current list of eligible healthcare workers.
- Immunization appointments are currently available to eligible healthcare workers in the current phase (Phase 1).
- Decisions around COVID-19 sequencing within the groups set by Alberta Health are being made very thoughtfully and carefully. We understand the significant impact of these decisions, and this weighs heavily on us. We do not make these decisions lightly.
- We would love to be able to immunize everyone who interacts with patients and families immediately. The reality is that it's going to take some time, primarily due to vaccine availability. We recognize that many staff and healthcare partners work with higher-risk patients who are vulnerable to COVID-19, and with COVID-19-positive cases, and we greatly appreciate the vital work you do.

- At this time there are no wait lists to join or applications for early immunization consideration.
- In the face of very limited supply, healthcare workers included in the initial phases are selected to ensure we protect patients, residents and clients at highest risk of severe outcomes and to ensure the health system can continue to respond.
- We anticipate in the coming weeks and months, and as we move into Phase 2 of the province's phased immunization program, the COVID-19 vaccine will be available to all healthcare workers. More information will be available as soon as plans are finalized.

### **Limited Changes to Public Health Measures Effective Monday**

The Government of Alberta announced Thursday limited provincewide changes to current public health measures will take effect Jan. 18.

While indoor gatherings remain prohibited, up to 10 people will be allowed at outdoor social gatherings. Personal and wellness services will be allowed to open by appointment only. Funeral ceremony attendance will be increased to 20 people, with mandatory masking and two-metre physical distancing. Funeral receptions are still not allowed.

All Albertans, businesses, organizations and service providers must continue to follow all other existing health measures.

Provincial and regional trends will continue to be monitored and assessed over the coming weeks to determine if further easing of restrictions may be considered.

### **CANVAS Project to Monitor Vaccine Safety Across Canada**

An important component of all immunization programs is monitoring for safety of each vaccine. The Canadian National Vaccine Safety Network (CANVAS) is working with acute care and public health organizations in several provinces, including Alberta, to determine the safety of COVID-19 vaccines.

This project will collect information about health events after receiving COVID-19 vaccines using web-based surveys after each vaccine dose and six months after both doses. Any health problems that develop after the COVID-19 vaccine that prevent regular daily activities and/or lead to seeking medical care will be documented. This information, as well as any reports to AHS' Adverse Event Following Immunization (AEFI) program, will provide detailed information to the province about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines and contribute to the national program.

Any Albertan who receives a COVID-19 vaccine can sign up to receive the surveys in one of two ways: when prompted at the time of online scheduling of the vaccine appointment, or at the time of the vaccination appointment through linking to the survey from a QR code that will be available on posters in all sites providing COVID-19 vaccine across Alberta.



The project is also being conducted in B.C., Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Answering Common Questions About the COVID-19 Vaccination Rollout**

We know the COVID-19 vaccine is at the top of everyone's minds lately, which is why, last week, we started sharing [regular email updates](#).

We also felt it was a good idea to use this week's vlog to talk to you about the COVID-19 immunization rollout and answer some common questions you may have.

Here with me (Verna) today to [talk more about the vaccination rollout](#) are:

- Dr. Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health.
- Dr. Cheri Nijssen-Jordan, Vaccine Task Force Co-Lead.
- Rod Kaliel, Executive Director, Workplace Health and Safety.

Laura, Cheri and Rod discuss how the immunization phases were decided, how the online immunization booking tool works and what AHS is doing to immunize people as quickly as we can. Please note this vlog was taped before today's Pfizer announcement to temporarily reduce vaccine shipments to Canada.

For Phase 1A, immunizations are being offered to respiratory therapists; healthcare workers in intensive care units; staff in long-term care and designated supportive living facilities; home care workers; healthcare workers in emergency departments; all residents of long-term care and designated supportive living, regardless of age; healthcare workers in COVID-19 units, medical and surgical units, and operating rooms; and paramedics and emergency medical technicians.



**Straight Talk from You — 'Please Wear A Mask. It Can Change So Much'**

Straight Talk is a video series in which healthcare workers talk from the heart about what they're seeing and experiencing at work and in their communities as COVID-19 spreads across the province. AHS is posting new Straight Talk videos every week on YouTube and sharing it through our AHS accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Please feel free to share these with your networks and on your social platforms as you see appropriate.

This week, we highlight a video featuring Sydney Voogel, a registered nurse at the Royal Alexandra Hospital and the Lois Hole Hospital for Women.



“I understand everyone’s frustrated with COVID-19. We all want to go back to our regular life but, unfortunately, it’s not going away any time soon,” says Voogel. “It’s definitely stressful. It’s affecting the healthcare workers in that it’s always on your mind. You don’t get to go home and not think about it.... Please wear a mask. It can change so much for us.”

You can see all of the [Straight Talk videos](#) on the AHS website.

### **Photo of the Week**

Every week, we highlight a photo in this space that illustrates your efforts, compassion and achievements as we respond to the pandemic and support Albertans who come to us for care.



More than 1,900 long-term care and designated supporting living residents in northern Alberta have received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, including 91-year-old Madeline Faucher of St. Paul Extendercare.

To see all our AHS photos, visit our [Instagram Gallery](#) on the AHS website.

### **Influenza Immunization Update**

More than 1.5 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. This is an increase of more than 37,400 doses from last week and immunizations are up to 226,744 compared to the same time last year.

For the tenth week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. The weekly influenza data report is available at [ahs.ca/influenza](https://ahs.ca/influenza).

Check [Insite](#) for options to get the flu shot, [resources](#) to support this year's campaign and guidance on what to do if you experience [influenza-like symptoms after immunization](#).

More on the clinics for the public, including your families is available on the [AHS website](#). And, if you got your flu shot at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#).

### **Changes to Online Access to Test Results Coming Feb. 1**

We want to make you aware of an upcoming change to the online access Albertans will have to the results of tests ordered by all healthcare providers across the province, regardless of care setting.

On Feb. 1, Albertans will be able to view more lab test results in Alberta Health's [MyHealth Records \(MHR\) portal](#), through the My Personal Records (MPR) application.

This change is being made by Alberta Health to provide Albertans with more access to their health information. Results will be viewable as soon as they are released by the lab, and will include:

- Approximately 95 per cent of the most commonly ordered (by volume) lab test results, which will be viewable by Feb 1.
- All remaining lab tests, including more complex results in microbiology, pathology and genetics, which will be available in MPR by July 1.

Lab results ordered from all sites in Alberta — including labs ordered during inpatient, ambulatory and emergency visits — will be included in MPR. Once the changes are in place, new users will see an 18-month retrospective view of any lab results slated for release. Existing users will not have labs added retroactively but they will be able to see the expanded lab results moving forward.

It is important to note that patients will still have access to My AHS Connect, which is the interactive online patient portal available through Connect Care, wherever Connect Care is in place. MyAHS Connect offers patients personalized and secure online access to their Connect Care record, together with the communications, care management and health monitoring tools that can help them achieve their healthcare goals.

Having access to both MyAHS Connect and MyPersonal Records components of MyHealth Records will improve access and consistency of health information for providers and patients.

Alberta Health is providing support to Albertans for this initiative through [MyHealth.Alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca) and a 24-hour telephone line at 1-844-401-4016. An [FAQ document](#) is available on Insite, with more details about these changes.

## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Sharing the Love — Kudos to our Contact Tracing Teams**

Laura and I (Verna) want to send out a huge shout out and thank you to the contact tracing teams within Communicable Disease Control.

They are playing a hugely important role in reducing transmission of COVID-19, and have worked tirelessly, particularly during the significant increase in cases that we have seen these past two months.

What was once a group of just 50 before the pandemic, our team now has more than 1,250 contact tracers and should exceed 1,600 by the end of the month. They are essentially our COVID detectives, investigating every case and helping track down people who have been in close contact to ensure they know to get tested and have the support they need to self-isolate.

The spike in cases provincewide in the last quarter of 2020 made this an extremely daunting task, and our teams have made some significant gains in the past few weeks to increase their capacity.

Once again, AHS is now able to reach out to all high-priority cases of COVID-19, including cases involving school-aged children, within 24 hours.

As well, currently about half of our active cases have an unknown source — that's down from about 80 percent in mid-December. It's important to note that even with a fully functioning contact tracing system, there are always a portion of active cases — around 30 per cent — in which the source of exposure cannot be identified.

We're continuing to train and onboard new contact tracing staff. They will continue to prioritize contact tracing for cases involving healthcare workers, returning travellers, school-aged children and youth and known outbreaks.

### **Gratitude from Albertans**

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to all Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep pouring in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share a few recent messages of thanks with you — and you can see others on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

*We are so grateful to all of you. I wish I could erase any negativity that you might experience from others. For our household, we are grateful you are there, that you are willing and able to assist those who need it. I seriously wish I could make you all dinner that you could share with your loved ones. Let our thanks be enough for now. We appreciate you.*

— Helen

*Words aren't adequate enough to express how grateful I am to have you all in the health field. Although I haven't been affected by COVID-19, it's a comfort knowing that help is available, and you are the help. Thank you.*

— Adelaide

*Thank you so much for having the compassion and courage to care for the sick, the elderly, and the dying. Without you, we couldn't make it through this pandemic on our own, and have any comfort in these challenging days, weeks, months and now a new year. You are our backbone.*

— Carole

*To all of you beautiful, incredible, brave people on the front lines: we thank you more than words can describe. So many people would crumble under the pressure you all have been put under but your resilience and strength are inspiring. On behalf of my circle, friends, family and all we thank you so very much. I hope one day we can repay you all for your courage. May 2021 treat you all extremely well.*

— David

### **Wrapping Up — Thank You As Vaccine Rollout Accelerates**

We've shared a lot of information this week about our COVID-19 vaccination rollout — and for good reason. The vaccine is our best weapon to ultimately end a global pandemic that has caused so much death and illness. (Let's remember: until the vaccine is universally administered, public health measures remain crucial to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect the health of ourselves and others.) We're pleased the vaccine rollout in Alberta continues to accelerate. Since the beginning of the year, we've made excellent progress in immunizing Albertans, with tens of thousands of people receiving their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. This is due to our pre-planning efforts, as well as the many teams across AHS who have mobilized to provide immunization clinics to eligible staff and physicians, and have supported the immunization of residents in continuing care and designated supportive living. This has been a huge, extraordinary effort, by so many teams and people across the organization.

So we close this week with a 'thank you' — to all of you who are administering the vaccine to your colleagues and to Albertans; to all of you who have received the vaccine after learning of your eligibility; and to all of you who have reached out with questions and comments about the vaccine itself and how we're rolling it out across the province. Your dedication, excitement and passion reflect the crucial work being done right now and the crossroads where we find ourselves. Let this be the beginning of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

