



Message from  
Dr. Verna Yiu &  
Dr. Laura McDougall

*AHS Update: Record number of patients in ICU,  
government introduces new public health measures,  
vaccination numbers rise sharply*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

**Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,**

### **Today's Update**

- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **Call For All Critical Care-Trained Clinicians**
- **Government Introduces New Public Health Measures**
- **Printable Vaccination Records Coming**
- **AHS Ensures Pandemic Preparedness with Critical Care Triage Protocol**
- **Updated Acute Care Designated Support & Visitation Access Takes Effect Monday**
- **Submit Your Proof of Immunization**
- **Weekly Video Message — A Discussion on Vaccination**
- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) CEO update**
- **Today is World Patient Safety Day**
- **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers**
- **Wield the Power of Gratitude**
- **Gratitude from Albertans**
- **Wrapping Up — Positive Thoughts to Keep in Mind**

We would like to recognize that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaties 6, 7 & 8, and the homeland of the Métis. We also acknowledge the many Indigenous communities that have been forged in urban centres across Alberta.

## COVID-19 Status

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Our severe capacity challenges have intensified over the past week, as more people are now being treated in ICU than at any time in Alberta Health Services history. In response, the government announced Wednesday more public health measures aimed at reducing pressures on our hospitals, while we're putting out a call for all critical care-trained clinicians (see items below).

There is also some heartening news to share: Yesterday (Sept. 16), there were 28,158 doses of vaccine administered across the province, a sharp rise from 9,750 the previous day.

### **Hospitalizations and ICUs**

AHS currently has 322 ICU beds open in Alberta, including 149 additional 'surge' spaces. AHS has opened 49 additional ICU surge spaces in the past seven days.

There are currently 260 patients in ICU, the vast majority of whom are COVID positive. Provincially, ICU capacity — including additional surge beds — is currently at 81 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be 150 per cent.

The number of patients in ICU has increased by 13 per cent in the past seven days.

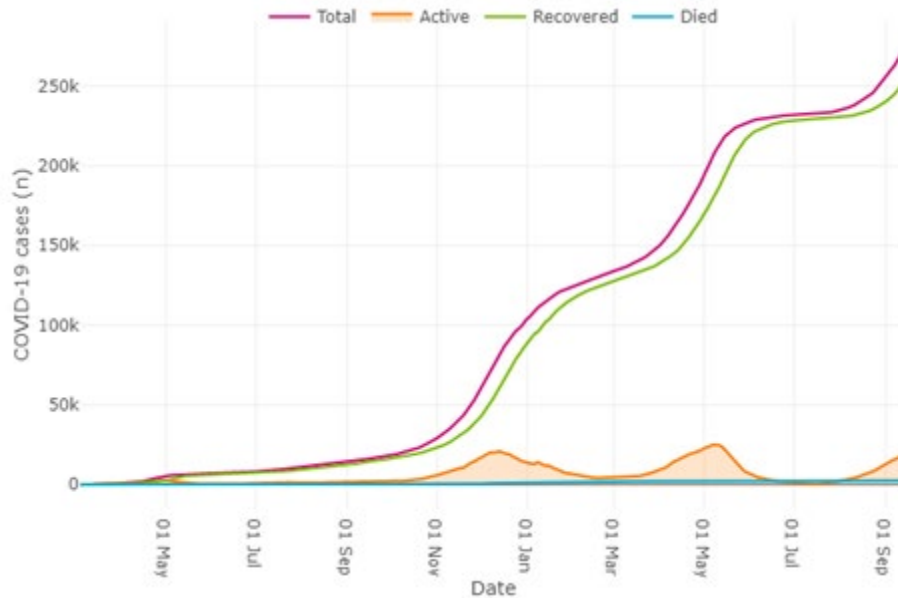
There are currently 911 individuals with COVID-19 in hospital, compared to 555 on Sept. 8, an increase of 64.1 per cent.

### **New and active cases**

There are currently 19,201 active cases of COVID-19 in Alberta, a 20.2 per cent increase compared to Sept. 8 when there were 15,977 active cases. Today Alberta reported 2,020 new COVID-19 cases; the first time the province has exceeded 2,000 new daily cases since early May.

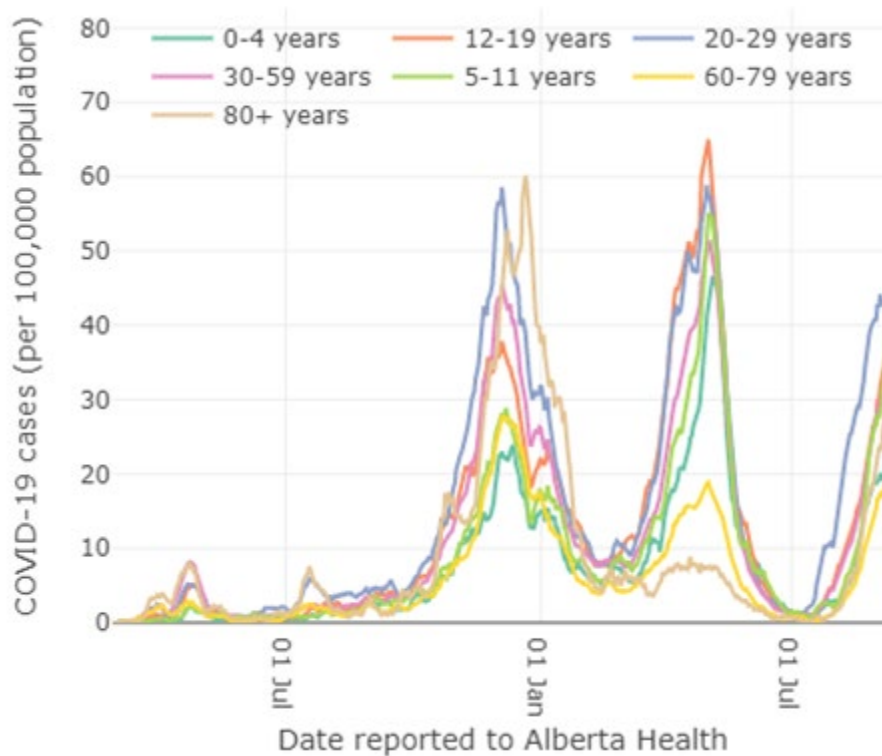
For the seven-day period ending Sept. 15, there was an average of 1,573 new daily

cases of COVID-19, compared to 1,290 for the previous week (Sept. 2-8), a 21.9 per cent increase. The Calgary Zone reported the most new cases over that period, with 3,183, a 25.7 per cent increase over the previous week when 2,533 cases were reported.



### Cases by age group

Children ages 5 to 11 — who are currently ineligible for vaccination — now have the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily cases, with 49.6 cases per 100,000 people. A visual representation of trends in cases by age group can be seen in the figure below.



### Variants of concern

The table below shows the proportion of active cases that are known variants of concern on Sept. 15 compared to Sept. 8.

COVID-19 Variant	Proportion of active cases (Sept. 15)	Proportion of active cases (Sept. 8)	Difference
Alpha variant	0%	0.1%	-0.1%
Beta variant	0%	0%	0%
Delta variant	60%	78.6%	-18.6%*
Gamma variant	0%	0%	0%
Overall	60.1%	78.7%	-18.6%*

\* The Delta variant is the dominant circulating strain. This decrease is likely not a result of another prominent strain but rather a decrease in strain typing of samples at the lab,

### Other notable COVID-19-related information

- As of Sept. 15, a total of 275,538 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 11,551 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.2 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 254,327 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Sept. 15, 2,505 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 71 deaths over the past week. 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 Sept. 9 to Sept. 16, 97,869 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 13,981 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 10.5 per cent to 12.2 per cent. As of Sept. 15, a total of 5.3 million tests have

been conducted and 2.3 million individuals have been tested.

- The R value, also known as the reproduction number, describes the ability of a disease to spread. It tells us the average number of people that someone with COVID-19 will infect. An R value of 1 means an infected person will infect one other person on average. Values below 1 mean transmission is decreasing; above 1, transmission is increasing. The provincewide R value from Aug. 30 to Sept. 5 was 1.12, the previously reported value was 1.19. COVID-19 R values are currently only being updated every two weeks.
- Alberta Health has not resumed school reporting.

## Things You Need to Know

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### **Call For All Critical Care-Trained Clinicians**

Capacity continues to be a serious challenge across AHS. Last week, we asked clinicians trained in critical care with additional availability to contact their immediate supervisor. Thank you to everyone who has been able to provide additional hours and shifts over and above what we count on you for every day.

In the event there are still internal staff who are willing and able to work in critical care, we are streamlining the referral process by creating a central intake where employees can signal an interest in working in critical care areas. Employees can email [icanhelp@ahs.ca](mailto:icanhelp@ahs.ca) to complete a survey where you can indicate your preference, skills and availability.

The survey responses will be reviewed by Provincial Staffing Services, which will then pair employees with appropriate managers or Zone EOCs and Site Command Posts for deployment. Indicating a preference does not guarantee additional shifts, and employees will only be contacted if their skills and qualifications match the area of need and zone they are able to work in.

### **Government Introduces New Public Health Measures**

On Wednesday, the Government of Alberta updated COVID-19 public health measures for gatherings, places of worship, events and a variety of businesses. The measures are aimed at protecting Albertans and easing pressures on the health system.

Measures now in effect:

- Indoor private social gatherings are limited to a single household plus one other household to a maximum of 10 vaccinated people and no restrictions on children under 12. Indoor social gatherings are not permitted for vaccine-eligible people who are unvaccinated.
- Places of worship must limit attendance to one-third of fire code capacity, with mandatory masking and physical distancing between people of different households.

- Masks are mandatory for students in Grades 4 and up, plus staff and teachers in all grades except for schools that implement an alternate COVID-19 safety plan.
- Physical distancing and other measures apply to children's sport, performance and recreation activities.

Effective Monday (Sept 20):

- Restaurants are limited to outdoor dining, six people per table (one household or two close contacts for those living alone).
- Capacity limits on weddings and funerals. Indoor receptions prohibited.
- Attendance limits and mandatory masking and physical distancing in place for retail, entertainment and recreation facilities.
- No indoor group sport, fitness, performance and recreation classes/activities permitted. One-on-one training and solo activities permitted with three metres physical distancing in place.
- Starting Sept 20, businesses, facilities and events that qualify may implement the Restrictions Exemption Program. These spaces can operate as they normally would.
- Customers will need to provide government-issued proof of vaccination, a medical exemption or proof of a negative, privately purchased COVID-19 test within the previous 72 hours. (See Printable Vaccination Records Coming item below.)
- Those under 12 do not need to provide proof of vaccination or a negative test to enter a participating business.

If a business or service chooses not to require proof of vaccination, it must adhere to the new health measures instead.

More information is available on the [Government of Alberta website](#).

### **Printable Vaccination Records Coming**

Starting on Sept. 19, Albertans will be able to print a copy of their card-sized COVID-19 proof of vaccination or show it on their phone or tablet.

Albertans can view and print this verified immunization health record through [MyHealth Records](#) from any computer, tablet or smartphone.

It is recommended Albertans plan ahead and save their proof of vaccination card on their phone or print it out before the needed date. Due to high traffic volumes, please access MyHealth Records during off peak times.

For instructions on how to sign up to get instant access to your immunization record, visit the [MyHealth Records homepage](#).

On MyHealth Records, you can:

Print a hard copy of your immunization record.

- Use the MyHealth Records app.

Albertans who need support can contact the MyHealth Records support line at 1-844-401-4016 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Friday, and weekends from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you received your vaccination from a pharmacy or physician's office, you can obtain a copy of your immunization record from that provider. If you received your immunization from an AHS clinic, you can call 811 to request that a copy of your record be mailed to you.

For more information, please refer to the [Proof of Vaccination FAQ](#) on alberta.ca.

### **AHS Ensures Pandemic Preparedness with Critical Care Triage Protocol**

Earlier this year, AHS developed the critical care triage protocol (adult and pediatric) as a planned and pre-determined provincewide approach to guide our response should the demand for life-sustaining critical care support become greater than the available resources either during the current COVID-19 pandemic, future pandemics, or other disasters. Resources can range from beds, ventilators, life-saving equipment, healthcare workers and medicines.

AHS is not currently implementing the critical care triage protocol, nor has the protocol been enacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. AHS is educating clinicians on its use and implementation given the rising numbers of Albertans with COVID-19 and the increasing number of Albertans requiring critical care.

The pressure on our ICUs is severe, and AHS is doing all it can to increase capacity so all patients needing critical care will receive it. Given the significant pressure on our ICUs, we are providing education and training on the application of the protocol, which is posted on the [critical care triage webpage](#).

The triage protocol would only be activated when all available resources for critical care have been utilized and all other mitigations have been exhausted.

It is important to be ready, and AHS is taking steps to ensure we are prepared today and for the future.

Led and operationalized by highly trained critical care physicians and staff, the protocol ensures a fair and equitable process is applied to all Albertans. Vaccine status does not impact access to critical care in the event of enacting the protocol. AHS values the lives of all Albertans and follows Canadian standards for healthcare to provide non-judgmental healthcare to all who are in need. The AHS critical care triage protocol applies to all patients considered for ICU admission.

For more information, please see these [frequently asked questions](#).

### **Updated Acute Care Designated Support & Visitation Access Takes Effect Monday**

As COVID-19 hospitalizations across the province rise and sites report capacity challenges, AHS has made the difficult decision to reduce family/designated support and visitation access at this time. We know the importance of family presence for patients and staff, and we understand this reduction in access is not ideal. We thank you for all you are doing, and continue to do, to support family presence during this difficult time.

The following applies for designated support person and visitor access effective Monday (Sept. 20):

- Inpatient services — Two designated support persons can be identified; however, only one at a time can be on site with the patient unless alternate arrangements have been made with the service area (e.g., personal support worker or care provider), or if requested by the service area.
- Maternity — Two designated support persons can be identified and be on-site with the patient if physical distancing can be maintained. One additional designated support person (for the infant) will be considered in cases of adoption/surrogacy if physical distancing permits.
- Emergency and urgent care — one designated support person if required to support the care of the patient and physical distancing from others (not from their immediate household) must be able to be maintained. Seniors, minors and patients with mobility and/or cognitive challenges should be given priority to have their designated support person remain with them in-person.
- End-of-life — Two designated support persons can be identified and be on-site with the patient.
- Pediatric inpatient and ambulatory — Two designated support persons can be identified and are welcome to be present with the patient at the same time.
- Ambulatory — One designated support person only if masking and physical distancing from others, not in their immediate household, can be maintained; two designated support persons when pre-arranged with the clinic area and in situations involving:
  - The need for assisting the patient and staff with patient care.
  - End-of-life care or goals-of-care designation discussions.
  - Significant diagnosis/change in medical status leading to poor prognosis.
  - Behaviour challenges requiring two caregivers.
  - Medical or equipment needs requiring two caregivers.
  - Involvement of social services.
  - When requested by the care team.
- Gifts, food and/or flowers — Designated support persons and visitors should check with the service area before bringing in gifts, food and/or flowers to confirm what is appropriate for the unit and how to bring items safely. Delivery services cannot bring gifts, food and flowers to patients or drop them



off at site entrances.

- Pediatrics — Due to the increased prevalence and spread of COVID-19 variants, sibling visitation for inpatients is temporarily restricted to monthly visits for long-stay patients (admitted for a minimum of 30 days) and for patients who are at end of life. Sibling visitation must be approved by site command post and follow guidance from Infection Prevention and Control. An adult must accompany sibling(s) at all times if they are under the age of 14. Sibling(s) can no longer accompany a patient to an ambulatory appointment. Exceptional circumstances for sibling support may be considered through site command post.
- Volunteers — AHS volunteers are recognized as vital members of the AHS team and can support patients in addition to designated support persons and visitors.
- Designated support persons are strongly recommended to be fully immunized, and physically and mentally able to assist the patient and staff with patient care.
- Access for visitors, which is anyone not identified as a designated support person, continues to be limited to individuals with a scheduled appointment to see a patient who is at end of life, and outdoor visits.

Sites and service areas that have determined a need to restrict designated support persons and visitor access further than this guidance due to safety concerns (e.g. outbreaks, limited space preventing safe physical distancing, etc.) MUST follow the process outlined in Section 4.0 of the AHS COVID-19 [designated family/support access and visitation in acute care, ambulatory and emergency sites directive HCS-275](#).

The updated guidance is available on [Insite](#) and [ahs.ca/visitation](#).

### **Submit Your Proof of Immunization**

AHS' new [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Immunization Policy](#) has been approved following consultation with union partners and key stakeholders.

The policy requires all employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers to be fully immunized for COVID-19 by Oct. 31, 2021. This policy will help protect our vital front-line healthcare teams who continue to provide excellent care to anyone who needs it and maintain a safe environment for all staff and patients, as well as anyone who visits or works at our healthcare facilities.

Workers will need to provide proof of immunization of their final dose no later than Oct. 16, 2021. Thank you to the more than 30,000 individuals who already have submitted their [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#). We are very grateful for the exceptional work and dedication of all healthcare workers and their key role in helping keep Albertans safe.

Submit proof of  
immunization now

[Frequently asked questions](#) on the policy and additional resources can be found on [Insite](#). For more information, contact [AHSVaccineTaskForce@ahs.ca](mailto:AHSVaccineTaskForce@ahs.ca). Thank you for your ongoing support.

### **Weekly Video Message — A Discussion on Vaccination**

On last week's vlog, we addressed some of your questions about our [immunization policy](#) and touched on vaccine hesitancy. Today, guest host Sean Chilton continues that discussion, as I (Verna) know it's on the mind of many as of late.

Immunization against COVID-19 is the most effective means to prevent its spread, prevent outbreaks in our facilities, preserve our workforce capacity to support the healthcare system, and protect workers, patients and visitors.

While COVID-19 vaccines have been proven safe and effective, I know many Albertans, including some of our staff, still have questions. [Joining Sean to answer some of those questions and discuss vaccine hesitancy](#) are:

- Dr. Cora Constantinescu, Pediatric Infectious Disease, Clinical Assistant Professor, University of Calgary
- Dr. Mark Joffe, Vice President and Medical Director, Cancer Care Alberta, Clinical Support Services and Provincial Clinical Excellence



Find answers to commonly asked questions about vaccine safety and effectiveness on the COVID-19 Immunization Insite page. You can book your COVID-19 immunization appointment through [ahs.ca/vaccine](https://ahs.ca/vaccine).

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) CEO update**

As we strive to keep our patients, families and each other safe, we want to remind staff about the important routine safety measures in place at all AHS sites.

Healthcare workers in AHS and Covenant Health facilities must:

- Always follow appropriate [PPE guidelines](#) when caring for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients.
- Consistently follow the proper steps for [donning, doffing](#) and disposal of PPE.
- [Follow continuous masking](#) at all AHS and Covenant sites.
- Ensure eye protection is cleaned or discarded whenever you change your mask.
- Follow the [Use and Reuse of Eye Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) if reusing eye protection.
- Complete the [COVID-19 Daily Fit for Work Screening Protocol](#) before every shift.
- Be mindful of simple but important actions, such as staying home when you are sick, [physical distancing](#) and [continued hand hygiene](#).

In addition to wearing appropriate PPE and being mindful of public health measures, all employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers [must be fully immunized for COVID-19 by Oct. 31](#). We encourage all staff who have not yet been immunized to book their appointment as soon as possible. COVID-19 immunization appointments can be booked through [ahs.ca/vaccine](#) using the Government of Alberta's new Alberta Vaccine Booking System.

The integration of immunization with appropriate use of PPE, hand hygiene, physical distancing and other Infection Prevention and Control measures are critical to upholding safe, excellent care. We remain committed to a collaborative approach to worker safety, which includes access to PPE, while encouraging staff to continue practising precise execution of donning and doffing, and meticulous hand hygiene.

For more information, please visit:

- [Personal Protective Equipment](#)
- [PPE Safety Coaches](#)

## **Today is World Patient Safety Day**

Today is [World Patient Safety Day](#), and AHS is pleased to participate.

World Patient Safety Day was established by the World Health Assembly to increase public awareness and engagement, enhance understanding of patient safety risks and create a call to action to promote patient safety. Whether you are delivering care on the front lines, or working in a supporting role across AHS, we are all responsible for keeping patients and families safe.

Each year, in celebration of World Patient Safety Day, a new theme is selected to raise awareness on a priority patient safety area where action is needed to reduce avoidable harm in healthcare. This year's theme is Safe Maternal and Newborn Care.

Share World Patient Safety Day messages on your social media channels – let's get #PatientSafety, #WorldPatientSafetyDay and #BuildingaSaferSystem trending around the world.

### **COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers**

Testing data for healthcare workers is reported every two weeks and will return next week.

## **Be Well - Be Kind**

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### **Wield the Power of Gratitude**

Showing appreciation and recognizing others can go a long way in making us all feel supported at work. Take the opportunity to [say thank you](#) to your co-workers and let them know how much their hard work means to you.

If you or someone you know is struggling, there are many ways you can find support:

- If you need immediate support, call [Employee Family and Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at 1-877-273-3134. If you are in crisis, dial 1 and be connected to a senior clinician for immediate intervention and crisis management.
- Use EFAP [counselling services](#), which are offered over the phone, through video, or online.
- Download the [EFAP Resilience App](#) which offers custom lessons and content to build skills on resilience. Read more about how to use the app [here](#).
- Use [i-Volve](#), a web-based solution to treat employees struggling with mild depression and/or anxiety.
- Join a [wellness seminar](#) on a variety of health and wellness topics. Register on MyLearningLink by searching 'WHS Wellness Seminar Series' or 'wellness'. [Schedule available here](#)

See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports, and the [COVID-19 EFAP Support Menu](#) for a quick reference on resources for stress and burnout, immediate support and self-care.

For questions and more information, contact [wellness@ahs.ca](mailto:wellness@ahs.ca).

### **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 coming in from across the

province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to share some recent messages of gratitude with you — and you can see others on our Sharing the Love webpage on Insite.

*Just watching the news about protests. I would like to send a heartfelt thank you to all healthcare workers who keep the system moving, who treat COVID-19 patients and who simply do their jobs during this pandemic. I cannot imagine how drained they are and yet they continue to show up every day. Thank you to all of you who are there to take care of us all, vaccinated and unvaccinated. You are true heroes.*

— Kim Kordov

*Thank you, healthcare workers, for continuing to work hard during this challenging time. How interesting that some of the very people you work to protect and heal are protesting at your workplace. None of you deserve this. May my words help drown out those voices. Know that you are surrounded by the love and support of so many. I personally honour you for the work you do, and wish you the strength and compassion to smile and thrive despite this adversity.*

— Colette

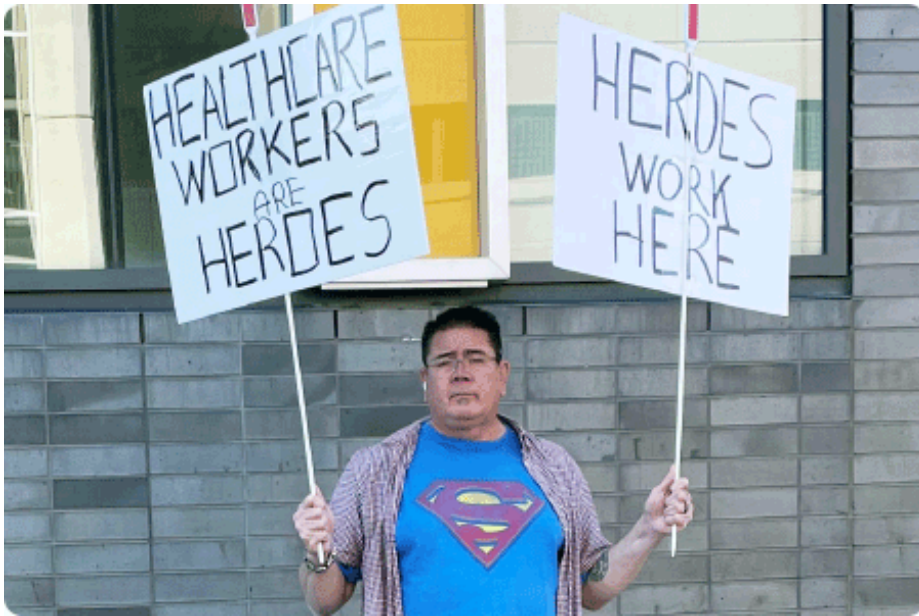
*Thank you, healthcare workers, for the long hours suffering through thankless days and traumatic situations. For caring for others who are alone, scared and sick. For being at a hospital or clinic instead of with your family who also need you. Thank you for doing a job that has saved my children's lives twice. You are appreciated.*

— Stacy

### **Wrapping Up — Positive Thoughts to Keep in Mind**

We recognize the incredible work, dedication, professionalism and compassion that you have shown and continue to show as we work to treat patients and support the health of Albertans. Unfortunately, this week has seen pressures and emotions continue to mount. The protests that we saw outside some of our facilities can be very disheartening and discouraging. These events have been difficult for all of us, especially our staff who have been directly impacted. We won't tolerate any harassment, bullying, or violence directed towards patients, families, staff and physicians. We'd like to say thanks to our Protective Services teams around the province, who have stepped into heated situations outside some of our hospitals and worked to protect the safety of physicians, staff, patients, families — and even the protesters themselves.

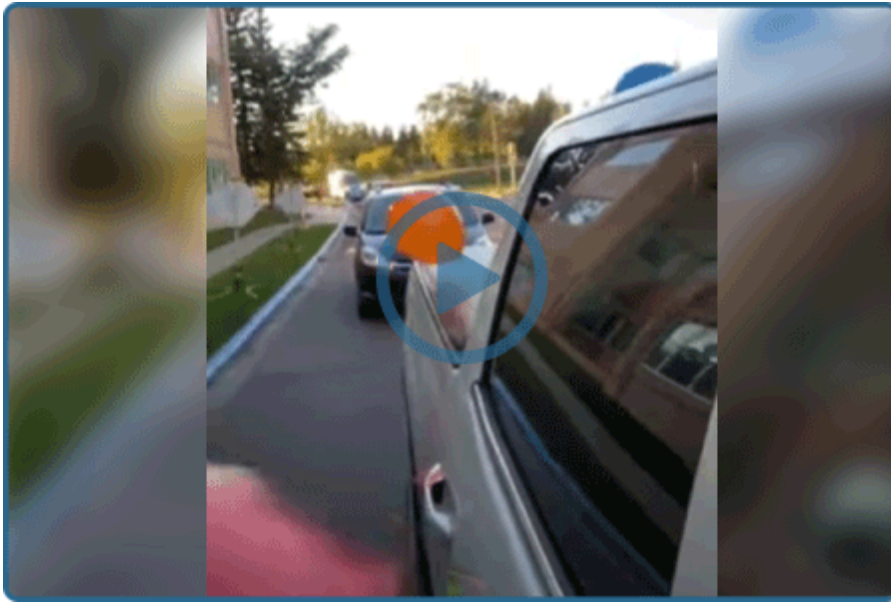
Please remember the protesters are far outnumbered by our supporters. For instance, this is Angus, who heard about Tuesday's protests around the province and decided to share a different message at Chinook Regional Hospital in Lethbridge.



This is the sidewalk outside of Strathcona Community Hospital, where anonymous chalk messages were left for the facility's staff and physicians. Here are a couple of them.



And here is a [convoy of supporters](#) who drove around Foothills Medical Centre Thursday night to show their support and appreciation for healthcare workers.



Edmonton physician Dr. Raiyan Chowdhury wrote a [First Person article](#) for CBC, in which he says: “Let the protesters outside jeer and the haters online hate, and we’ll meet them with a Ted Lasso-like kindness and unbreakable dedication to our patients — vaccinated or not.” We recommend you find time to read Dr. Chowdhury’s story, which is heartbreaking and yet somehow inspirational as well.

Finally, it is worth taking time to reflect on how we are feeling and how we are managing under stress. We need to attend to our own health and well-being to ensure that we can continue to function as individuals, in our families, in our communities, and as a team at work. Supporting each other through listening and checking in is important.

Make sure to continue taking time to do things that you enjoy. Connect with loved ones and family. Rest. If you are struggling and feel you need more support, call [Employee Family and Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at 1-877-273-3134. If you are in crisis, dial 1 and be connected to a senior clinician for immediate intervention and crisis management.

We know you continue to come to work every day to do your best for the people that we serve. The work that you do is critical to the health and well-being of Albertans. And we thank you for everything you do.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health



Healthy Albertans.  
Healthy Communities.  
**Together.**

