



Message from  
Dr. Verna Yiu &  
Dr. Laura McDougall

*AHS Update: Submit your COVID-19 immunization status, get your influenza immunization*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

**Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,**

**Today's Update**

- **Supports When You Need Them**
- **Submit Your COVID-19 Immunization Status**
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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.

## Supports When You Need Them

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### **Relationship and Family Supports Available**

The stress of the pandemic can affect our relationships with our loved ones. The [Employee Family and Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) offers [Relationship Solutions](#) as part of the [Life Smart Coaching program](#), where you can receive specialty coaching from an expert on a range of topics to improve your well-being. It covers topics such as communication, resolving conflict and more.

To access Relationship Solutions, call the intake line at 1-877-273-3134. You will be asked a few questions to ensure you receive a customized service. A relationship specialist will call you and walk you through the types of personalized support you could benefit from, including written and printed materials, and online resources. The specialist will continue to be in touch with you while you're using the materials. If you are feeling uncertain or overwhelmed about any issue, reach out for help. Counselling services are also offered through EFAP.

For physicians, contact the [AMA Physician and Family Support Program](#), a confidential 24/7 support line at 1-877-SOS-4MDS for options and support.

There are many ways we can support your mental health and well-being, regardless of your situation. Download the [Resilience app](#) to learn skills to build your mental health, proactively. See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports. Questions? Contact [wellness@ahs.ca](mailto:wellness@ahs.ca).

### **The Right to a Safe Work Environment and Options to Report**

AHS does not tolerate any form of [harassment](#) – no one should be subjected to any form of unwelcome behaviour from anyone they work with, or feel threatened in any way. That includes sexual harassment in any form, such as inappropriate advances, or any unwelcome physical or verbal behaviour. Anyone who works for AHS has the right and expectation to a safe work environment – behaviours that are not consistent with our values are taken extremely seriously.

Your first step for any concerns about harassment should be to talk to your leader or next level leader, and then report it in MySafetyNet (MSN). MSN reporting is a [safe](#)

and confidential way for all AHS employees, medical and midwifery staff and students to address concerns about harassment. Individuals who come forward will have support as the complaint process unfolds.

We acknowledge that coming forward with a complaint can be difficult. Any instances of such behaviour will be investigated thoroughly and confidentially, and we will take appropriate action to ensure our people are safe and protected.

See our [Respectful Workplaces and the Prevention of Harassment and Violence policy](#), which ensures any form of workplace violence or harassment is addressed appropriately, and in accordance with AHS' legal obligations, values and principles of a just culture. Additional resources are available on Respectful Workplaces and Workplace Harassment and Violence Prevention on Insite.

Our Whistleblower Policy also provides a confidential option for you to report any concerns about wrongdoing. If staff wish to report confidentially, they can email [complianceofficer@ahs.ca](mailto:complianceofficer@ahs.ca) or call the Safe Disclosure Line at 1-800-661-9675.

Sexual harassment can find its way into any workplace. We'd like to share a past [President's Speakers Series presentation by Carla Kettner](#), a writer and producer from Los Angeles, who has decades of experience in the movie and television industry. The four-part series, which we posted in 2018, is called Sexual Harassment in Hollywood: What Healthcare can Learn? It provides insight and learnings generated by the #metoo movement, which can be applied to our workplaces at AHS. Please take some time to watch these compelling videos, available here: [Part 1](#) | [Part 2](#) | [Part 3](#) | [Part 4](#)



### Submit Your COVID-19 Immunization Status

If you haven't submitted your proof of immunization or received your final dose of COVID-19 vaccine, please submit it today. Use the [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#) to submit your record. You will need your **Alberta Health Care Number (9 digits)**, **Employee ID Number (8 digits)** and **date of immunization**. Alternatively, use these [instructions](#).

To avoid any delays with your record submission, please use the following tips:

- Enter all eight digits, including leading zeros in your employee ID number
- Use month, day, year (mm/dd/yyyy) as the order for your date of birth and all

date fields

If you have questions regarding your immunization status, email [COVID19Immunization@ahs.ca](mailto:COVID19Immunization@ahs.ca).

Employees have **until Nov. 15** to submit their proof of immunization for COVID-19. We've extended the deadline to ensure as many workers as possible have the opportunity to be immunized and provide their full proof of immunization. All employees, medical and midwifery staff, students, volunteers and contracted healthcare providers must be fully immunized by **Nov. 30** to comply with the [Immunization of Workers for COVID-19 Policy](#). We stand by this policy: it is essential to ensure the safety of our people, patients and communities. Healthcare workers have an [ethical and professional responsibility](#) to protect others. Immunization helps us meet this standard.

Except where a workplace accommodation is approved, those employees who are not fully immunized by Nov. 30 will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. For more information, see the latest staff and leader FAQ [here](#).

[Submit proof of immunization now](#)

## COVID-19 Status

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### ICU Capacity Update

AHS continues to do all it can to ensure we have enough ICU capacity to meet patient demand.

With pressure easing slightly on our ICUs, we are reducing the available surge beds so that we can redeploy staff back to caring for non-COVID-19 patients who need surgeries and procedures completed.

We will ensure that we maintain ICU capacity above daily demand to a planned maximum of 380 beds as long as staff and physician availability allows, and will readjust our plans as needed if COVID-19 cases rise again.

We currently have 323 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 150 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds.

There are currently 257 patients in ICU, about two thirds of whom are COVID-19 positive.

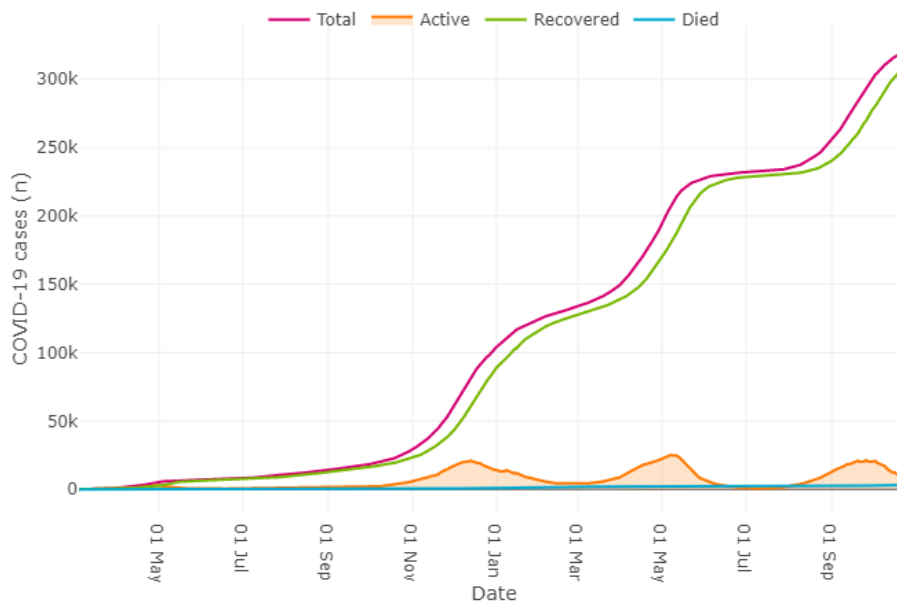
Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 80 per cent.

Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 159 per cent.

### New and Active Cases

As of October 27, there are 8,387 active cases of COVID-19 in Alberta, a 19.6 per cent decrease compared to October 20. All zones reported a decrease in active cases, with South Zone reporting the largest decrease, down 20.6 per cent from October 20. For the fourth week in a row, the Calgary Zone reported the most active cases, with 2,162.

There was an average of 555 new cases of COVID-19 per day this week, compared to 761 cases per day the previous week (October 14 to October 20), a 27.1 per cent decrease. For the third week in a row, all zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from an 18.1 per cent decrease in the South Zone to a 35.4 per cent decrease in the Central Zone. Over the past week, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 1,041 (an average of 145 cases per day), compared to 1,295 new cases the previous week (an average of 185 cases per day).



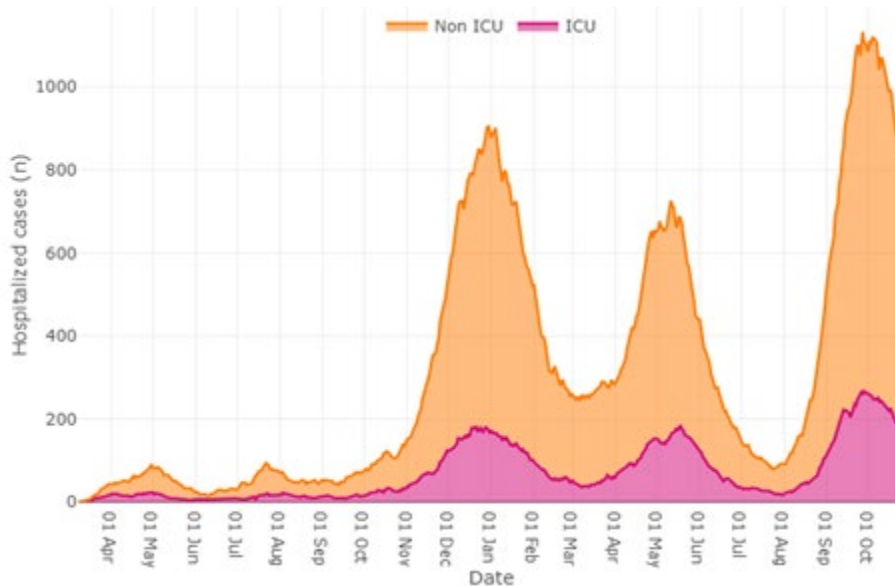
### Hospitalizations

A total of 594 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 on October 27, compared to 719 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on October 20, a 17.4 per cent decrease.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of October 27 is as follows:

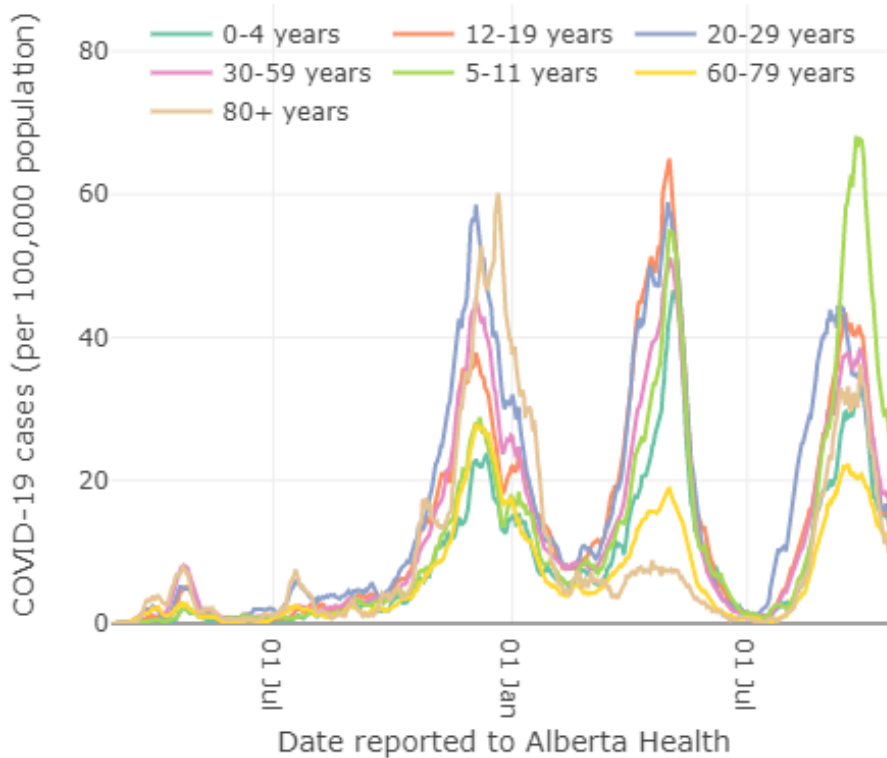
- 249 hospitalizations with 86 of those in ICUs in the Edmonton Zone
- 176 hospitalizations with 49 of those in ICUs in the Calgary Zone
- 161 hospitalizations with 19 of those in ICUs in the Central Zone
- 105 hospitalizations with 10 of those in ICUs in the North Zone

88 hospitalizations with 21 of those in ICUs in the South Zone



### Cases by Age Group

As of Oct.24, children ages five to 11 – who are currently ineligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine – had the highest seven-day rolling average of new daily COVID-19 cases, with 23.71 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 13.29 cases per 100,000 people. All age groups reported a decreased rate of COVID-19 cases compared to the previous report. Trends in cases in Alberta by age group are shown below.



As of Oct. 27, 3,085 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.

### **Variants of Concern**

For variants of concern, the lab is still using targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From October 19 to October 25, the average percent of positive samples that were strain-typed was 55 per cent. Of those strain-typed the rolling average was 99.7 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.3 per cent was a wild variant. Strain-typing takes a number of days and these numbers may change as lab data becomes available.

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

- As of October 27, a total of 322,386 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,262 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 310,914 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19. In this case, recovered means they are no longer considered contagious.
- From October 21 to October 27, 66,079 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 9,440 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 5.35 per cent to 6.70 per cent. As of October 27, a total of 5,846,824 tests have been conducted and 2,514,046 individuals have ever 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 R value is updated every two weeks. From October 11 to October 17, the provincewide R value was 0.85 and the previously reported value was 0.92. The R value was not updated this week.
- Public reporting of schools continues and you can find more information, [here](#).

### **COVID-19 Immunization Update**

#### *Pfizer vaccine for younger age group still under review by Health Canada*

Health Canada continues to review a submission from Pfizer-BioNTech to authorize use of its COVID-19 vaccine in children five to 11 years of age.

This is the first submission Health Canada has received for the use of a COVID-19 vaccine in this younger age group. Health Canada will only authorize the use of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine if the independent scientific review of the submission shows that the vaccine benefits outweigh the potential risks in this age group. The assessment will include a review of evolving information about the health impacts of COVID-19 and variants of concern on children in Canada.

This week, a [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) advisory committee voted in favour of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children five to 11 years old and today, the U.S. FDA issued emergency use authorization. This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized for children younger than 12 in the United States.

Studies with Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine are ongoing in children less than five years of age, and other manufacturers are also testing their vaccines in children of various age ranges. Health Canada expects to receive data for review in the coming months.

#### *Availability of Janssen vaccine in Alberta*

Alberta has requested a small shipment of the Janssen vaccine from the National Operations Centre, which is expected to arrive in November. More information should be available next week.

The other COVID-19 vaccines – Pfizer and Moderna continue to be available in Alberta, and are safe and effective. You can book an appointment online at [ahs.ca/vaccine](#), call Health Link at 811, or check with your local pharmacy or doctor's office.

You can sign up to be notified when there are vaccine updates and timeline changes from Alberta Health at [alberta.ca/vaccine](#).

#### *Update on additional doses for healthcare workers*

No decisions have been made on expanding third doses to healthcare workers.

Alberta Health makes decisions regarding eligibility for vaccines in the province. These decisions are informed by expert advice from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization. We will continue to keep you updated on Alberta Health decisions in this area. NACI today released its recommendations on third doses, which includes recommendation for some frontline health care workers who received initial doses within a short interval. This new information will be considered by Alberta Health, as noted. Additional detail on the [NACI recommendation is available here](#).

Appointments can be booked [online](#) at AHS clinics, participating pharmacies and doctor's office, or by calling Health Link at 811. COVID-19 vaccines are also available by walk-in at [participating clinics](#) and pharmacies. Individuals aged 65 and older who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on their reserve. For more information, go to [alberta.ca/vaccine](#).

#### *Travel and COVID-19 immunization*

Of note, the U.S. will be reopening its borders to fully immunized travellers starting Nov. 8, and individuals immunized with [any combination of two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine](#) authorized by U.S. regulators or the World Health Organization – including



AstraZeneca - will be considered fully immunized.

Federal vaccine requirements to board a flight, train or ship are also changing this weekend. Starting Oct. 30, if you are 12 years of age or older, you will need to be COVID-19 symptom-free and fully vaccinated in order to board:

- domestic or international flights departing from airports in Canada
- VIA Rail and Rocky Mountaineer trains
- non-essential passenger vessels, such as cruise ships, on voyages of 24 hours or more departing from ports in Canada, once voyages resume

However, from October 30 to November 29, there will be a short transition period when travellers who don't yet qualify as fully vaccinated will be able to travel if they can show a valid COVID-19 molecular test taken within 72 hours of travel. More information is available at: [COVID-19 Boarding flights, trains and cruise ships in Canada – Travel restrictions in Canada – Travel.gc.ca](#)

## Things You Need to Know

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### **At-home Rapid Tests Available for K-6 Schools on Outbreak**

As announced by the [Government of Alberta](#), starting Oct. 27, at-home rapid test kits are being provided to schools with kindergarten to Grade 6 students across the province, which are on outbreak status. Schools on outbreak must [submit a request to Alberta Health](#) to receive tests for this program.

Schools are providing students and staff who wish to participate with 10 tests to take home, and they will be required to test twice weekly for five weeks. A [how-to video for parents](#) and [a fact sheet translated into multiple languages](#) is available, offering tips on how to use the kits.

If a student or staff member has symptoms of COVID-19, they should not use a rapid test. They should stay home and book a test online using the [AHS online self-assessment tool](#) or by calling Health Link at 811. If a student or staff member has a positive rapid test result, they must isolate for 10 days or until they have a negative test through AHS.

### **Influenza Immunization Update**

As of October 23, three cases of influenza have been confirmed and 289,990 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered across the province.

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has tested 14,361 respiratory swabs for influenza, from August 29, 2021 to the end of day October 23, 2021. This does not include a small number of tests completed at regional hospitals.

Although the influenza activity we are seeing right now in the province is less than

we would see in a typical season, we expect to see influenza and other respiratory viruses circulate in our communities this year.

Last influenza season showed us just how important and effective immunization combined with practicing good hygiene, physical distancing, masking and staying home when sick, are in preventing the spread of influenza and other respiratory illnesses.

We all must do our part to protect one another. If you haven't received your COVID-19 vaccine, get immunized at the same time as your flu shot. It's safe to get both vaccines at the same time.

#### *Influenza Immunization information for staff, physicians & volunteers*

Staff, physicians and volunteers can also choose to be immunized through a site champion at their facility, a roving cart at their site or a Workplace Health and Safety drop-in clinic.

Immunization appointments are available at the Fort Saskatchewan Community Hospital or the Strathcona Community Hospital in Edmonton; and the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary. Book your appointment using the [AHS Influenza Immunization booking tool](#) or call Health Link at 811. See [Insite](#) for more on the staff immunization campaign.

#### **Verna's Weekly Video Message – Influenza Immunization**

As we've just read, flu season is upon us – and once again it comes in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is critical that we all continue to take the required precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19, and other viruses as we enter into the respiratory disease season.

By keeping the number of influenza cases and outbreaks low, we can help protect our patients, as well as our more vulnerable populations, such as seniors and young children. Keeping flu numbers down will also help our healthcare teams maintain capacity in the system and allow us to focus on our COVID-19 response.

As we've seen with COVID-19, immunization is the most effective way to prevent the spread of infection. Immunization for the flu will also reduce symptoms if you do get sick, and limit the spread to those around you. I encourage you all to take action and get the flu shot as soon as you can.

Joining me to [tell us more about this year's influenza campaign](#) are:

- Dr. Kristin Klein, Medical Officer of Health for Provincial Population and Public Health
- Yvonne Haniak, Occupational Health Advisor with Workplace Health and Safety's Standards and Innovation team
- Danielle Neave, Director of Workplace Health and Safety Business

## Partnerships for the North Zone







Please remember, if you get your flu shot at a public health clinic, pharmacy or doctors' office, don't forget to report your immunization by completing the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#) on Insite.

### **PPE Video of the Week – Ongoing Safety and Wellbeing of Staff**

The fourth wave of the pandemic has been especially demanding - our teams on the front lines continue to face immense pressures every day. In this week's PPE video of the week, Dr. Steve Tsekrekos, Medical Director, WHS, reviews some of the [important guidelines in place to help ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of our hardworking, dedicated staff.](#)

PPE Question of the Week

**How do we help ensure the ongoing safety and wellbeing of our hardworking, dedicated staff?** 

Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos answers PPE question of the week.

## **Safe Healthy Environments Team Responds to 100K Service Requests**

As of Oct. 26, The AHS Safe Healthy Environments (SHE) team has responded to more than 100,000 COVID-19 related complaints and service requests since the beginning of the pandemic.

This is a significant milestone – 100,000 requests over the course of 19 months is an unprecedented volume for the SHE team.

SHE staff are often the first point of contact for many Albertans. They respond to requests related to compliance with current public health measures, masking, capacity and gathering limits, and concerns about people that are not following isolation requirements.

Despite the changing needs of the pandemic, the team has stepped up repeatedly to respond when Albertans have needed them most.

This achievement represents contributions from across SHE - including administrative staff who log the requests, public health inspectors who investigate and resolve/refer complaints, provincial strategy staff who handle system logistics and reporting, and management and leadership staff who guide and support the overall effort.

Thank you to all SHE staff for your dedication, compassion and professionalism during these difficult times. Thank you for keeping our communities healthy and safe.

## **Join a Special Practice Wise Session for Allied Health Week**

Join us in celebrating Allied Health Week with a special Practice Wise session on Nov. 4 from 12 to 1 p.m. In the session, [Jeremie Saunders](#), co-host of CBC's Sickboy podcast and TEDx speaker, will share what he has learned through conversations with hundreds of podcast guests about their health issues and their most uncomfortable realities. And how, by allowing himself to feel uncomfortable, he has become a more compassionate, empathetic person and a stronger leader.

- Nov. 4 from 12 to 1 p.m. | [Join by Zoom](#)

Can't make the session? A recording will be available after. See the [Practice Wise archives](#).

## **Be Well - Be Kind**

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### **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.

*Of course personal hospital visits can be stressing but the very nature of the devotion and dedication of all the staff from COVID screeners to doctors, nurses and home care gives calm and reassurance no matter what global threat ensues.*

—Gary Plotnikoff

*You guys are amazing. Please know there is an entire army of supporters cheering you on. In every unit, in every shift, you guys are our heroes!*

—Anonymous

*Thanks AHS team. I always feel safe when my mom is with AHS staff. Kudos to all of you!*

—Dhinesh Ramasamy

*Thank you very much for getting up and going to work when you were tired and scared and felt helpless. You are a hero!*

—Carstairs Andrea

### **Wrapping Up – Regaining Some Ground**

Another week of slowly decreasing case numbers is positive. It speaks to the importance of being immunized and continuing to follow the health restrictions in place. Slowly, it seems we are regaining some ground in this pandemic. We know this does not signify the end of COVID-19, or even significant relief for our healthcare teams who continue to diligently care for Albertans across our province under very demanding circumstances. We want our teams to know they are supported. We see you and the incredible work you do. You deserve to be appreciated, but even more importantly, you must feel safe when you come to work. If you don't, for any reason, please take the steps to reach out to your leaders, or through the other confidential channels mentioned above. We stand by our commitment to providing a safe work environment. Thank you for all you do for Albertans day and night, around the clock, 365 days each year.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health



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

