



Message from  
Dr. Verna Yiu &  
Dr. Laura McDougall

## *AHS Update: Fourth week of declining cases, get fully protected with both COVID-19 and influenza immunizations*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

### Today's Update

- Supports When You Need Them
- COVID-19 Cases in Alberta
- COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers
- Provide Your Proof of Immunization
- COVID-19 Immunization Update
- Influenza Immunization Update
- Connect Care Launch Update
- Verna's Weekly Video Message— The World of Allied Health
- Medical Radiation Technologist Week
- Wait for Me: A Music Video
- Hallowe'en Fun across AHS
- Gratitude from Albertans
- Wrapping Up — Hang in There

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

---

Online Therapy for Depression and Anxiety at Your Own Pace

As we work through another difficult time, you may feel you need help coping with new or existing challenges. [i-Volve](#) is an online, self-paced Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) treatment program for mild depression and anxiety. The program helps users identify, challenge and overcome anxious or depressive thoughts, behaviours and emotions. i-Volve includes exercises that examine how you interpret and perceive external stimulation, and are designed to help teach coping skills.

i-Volve is available 24/7 and can be accessed through our [Employee Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) by logging into [Homeweb](#). For additional support, call the EFAP intake line any time at 1-877-273-3134. An intake counsellor will answer your call, speak with you to understand your needs and connect you to the support you need.

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 you no matter what 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).

## COVID-19 Status

---

### **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 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 295 general adult ICU beds open in Alberta, including 122 additional spaces above our baseline of 173 general adult ICU beds.

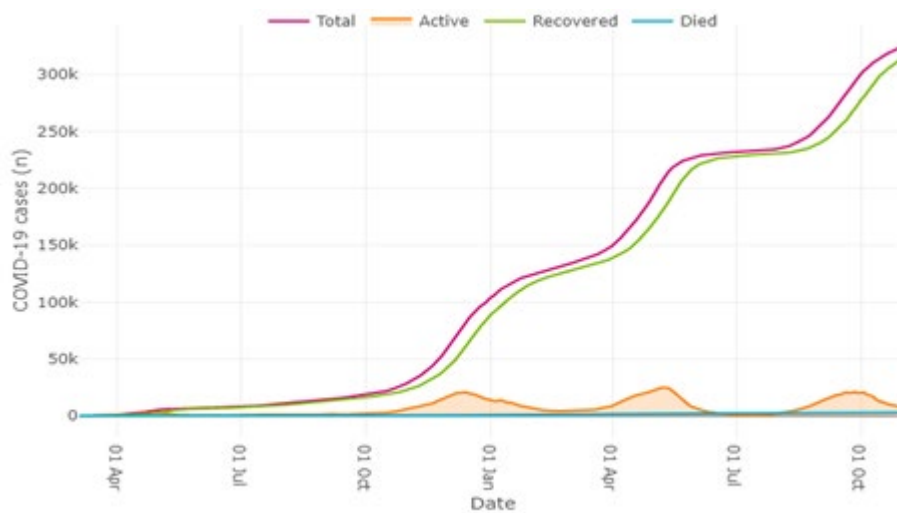
There are currently 229 patients in ICU, more than half of whom are COVID-19 positive.

Provincially, ICU capacity (including additional surge beds) is currently at 78 per cent. Without the additional surge spaces, provincial ICU capacity would be at 132 per cent.

## New and Active Cases

As of November 3, there are 6,515 active cases in Alberta, a 22.3 per cent decrease compared to October 27. All zones reported a decrease in active cases: the zone with the largest reported decrease was the Central Zone, down 28.5 per cent from Oct. 27. For the fifth week in a row, the Calgary Zone reported the most active cases with 1,771.

There was an average of 456 new cases of COVID-19 per day this week, compared to 554 cases per day the previous week (Oct. 19 to Oct. 27), a 17.7 per cent decrease. For the fourth week in a row, all zones reported decreases in the number of new cases per day, ranging from a 12.8 per cent decrease in the North Zone to a 25.4 per cent decrease in the South Zone. Over the past week, the Calgary Zone reported the highest total number of new cases with 857 (an average of 122 cases per day), compared to 1,040 new cases the previous week (an average of 149 cases per day).

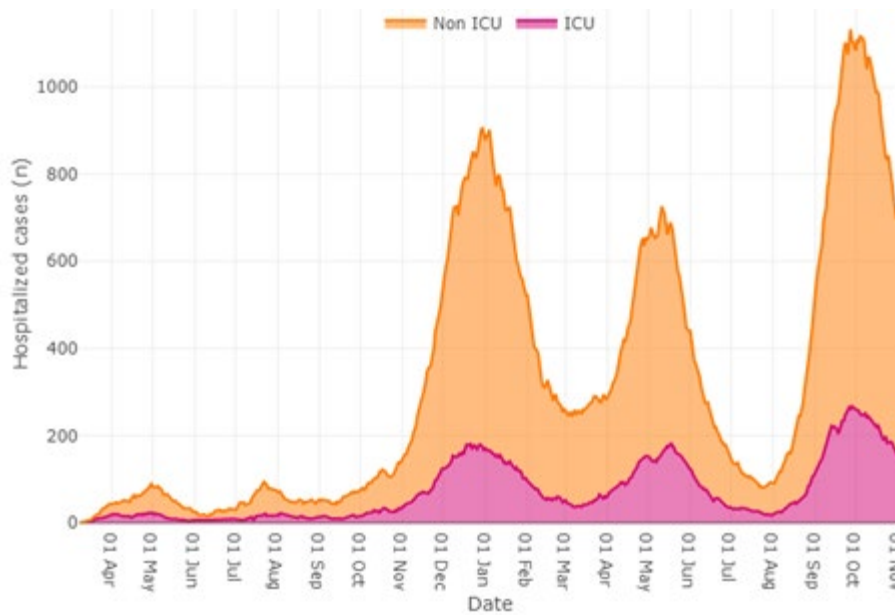


## Hospitalizations

A total of 531 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds for COVID-19 on Nov. 3, compared to 607 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on Oct. 27, a 12.5 per cent decrease.

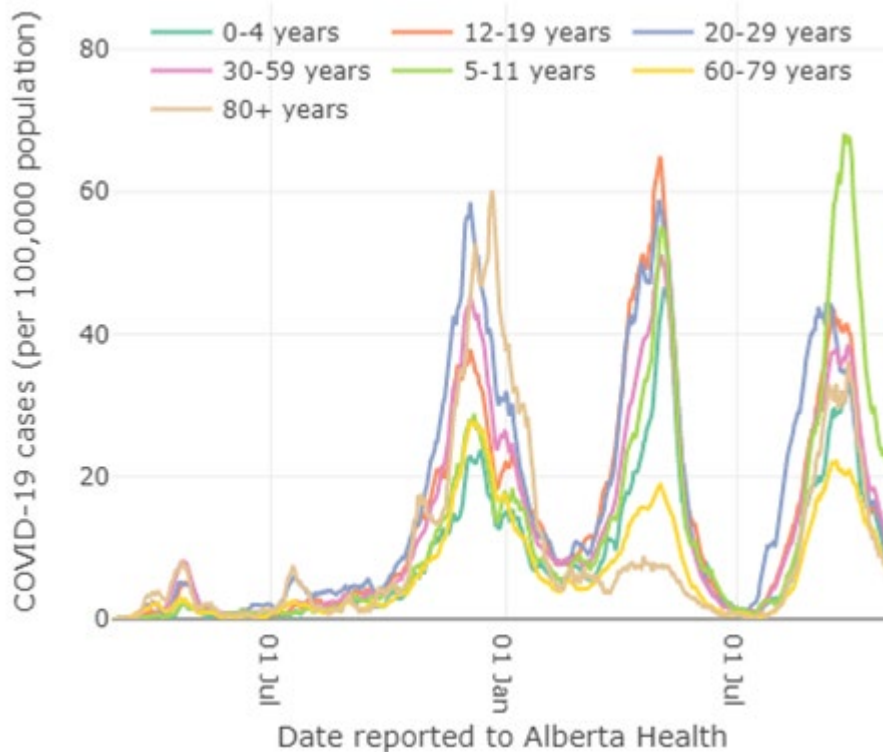
The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Nov. 3 is as follows:

- 212 hospitalizations with 70 of those in ICUs in the Edmonton Zone,
- 153 hospitalizations with 39 of those in ICUs in the Calgary Zone,
- 141 hospitalizations with 16 of those in ICUs in the Central Zone,
- 99 hospitalizations with 8 of those in ICUs in the North Zone, and
- 72 hospitalizations with 13 of those in ICUs in the South Zone.



**Cases by Age Group**

As of Oct. 31, 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 20.71 cases per 100,000 children. Albertans ages 30 to 59 had the second-highest rate with 11.14 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 Nov. 3, 3,137 individuals have passed away from COVID-19 including 52 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 utilizing targeted screening of positive samples for strain-typing. From Oct. 26 to Nov. 1, the average percent of positive samples that were strain-typed was 51 per cent. Of those strain-typed the rolling average was 99.4 per cent Delta variant. The remaining 0.6 per cent were 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 Nov. 3, a total of 325,517 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 14,483 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.4 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 315,865 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19, meaning they are no longer considered contagious.
- From Oct. 28 to Nov. 3, 65,160 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 9,309 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.07 per cent to 5.97 per cent. As of Nov. 3, a total of 5,912,074 tests have been conducted and 2,532,141 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 Oct. 25 to Oct. 31 the province-wide R value was 0.87 and the previously reported value was 0.85.
- Public reporting of schools continues and you can find more information, [here](#).

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

We continue to update the testing data for healthcare workers. These statistics provide the total number of AHS 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 Nov. 3:

- 85,274 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 8,603 (or 10.09 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 6,272 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 663 (or 10.57 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,331 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.

- 6,004 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 354 (or 5.90 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 254 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 22 (or 8.66 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 100 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](#).

### **Provide Your Proof of Immunization, If You Haven't Already**



Thank you to the many of you who have chosen to be fully immunized and who have already submitted your proof of immunization. To date, more than 95 per cent of AHS and APL staff and 97 per cent of physicians have confirmed their full immunization status, as well as 98 per cent of ICU staff. Thank you for leading by example and for being there for your colleagues and patients. Your commitment to protecting our most vulnerable people is greatly appreciated.

While the response has been high, we would like to see everyone fully protected. If you haven't yet, now is the time to confirm your full immunization status or book appointments. It's not too late to get immunized. You have **until Nov. 15** to get your proof of immunization in, by using the [Got My COVID-19 Immunization Form](#) to submit. If you need more information about the policy, see the latest staff and leader FAQ [here](#).

As a reminder, a booster shot is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of the AHS' Immunization of Workers for COVID 19 Policy, which is in alignment with Alberta Health's guidance at this time. You do not need to re-submit the Got my COVID-19 Immunization Form after receiving a booster.

## Things You Need to Know

---

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

*Eligibility expanded for additional doses, including some healthcare workers*  
As [announced by Alberta Health this week](#), third doses of COVID-19 vaccine will be available to additional Albertans, with bookings starting Monday, Nov. 8.

These individuals include:

- Frontline healthcare workers (HCWs) who provide direct patient care and who had their first two doses of vaccine less than eight weeks apart
- Adults 18 years of age and older who received two doses of the AstraZeneca/Covishield vaccine, or one dose of the Janssen vaccine, who have not already received a dose of an mRNA vaccine
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) adults 18 years of age and older regardless of where they live
- Adults aged 70 years and older

81,314 healthcare workers (HCWs) will be eligible for a booster on Monday including 39,000 AHS staff and 5,700 physicians. This includes HCWs who provide care in ICU, ED, COVID-19 units, medical and surgical units, OR, Long Term Care, Designated Supportive Living, Home Care, as well as Respiratory Therapists.

In the coming weeks, another 59,654 HCW will become eligible for an additional dose, including 28,682 AHS staff and 895 physicians.

These individuals are eligible for a third dose **at least six months** after their primary series.

As noted in the previous item, at this time, as per Alberta Health's guidance, the booster dose is not required to be considered fully immunized for the purpose of the AHS' Immunization of Workers for COVID 19 Policy.

AHS staff do not need to re-submit the Got my COVID-19 Immunization Form after receiving a booster.

Acting on the recommendations of the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization (AACI) and informed by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), Alberta Health is recommending an additional dose to more populations whose level of protection may have decreased over time to help ensure robust protection. Evidence shows that shorter intervals between dose one and dose two may result in lower immune responses and more rapid waning of protection.

Additional doses are recommended for frontline healthcare workers with shorter intervals due to the potential for waning vaccine effectiveness in these individuals. While there is no evidence that HCWs are having an increase in severe outcomes due to COVID, preventing infection overall through immunization helps to maintain health system capacity and prevent transmission to vulnerable populations. HCWs should use their own discretion to determine if they provide direct patient care.

Those who have received a vaccine series with only viral vector vaccines (AstraZeneca/Covishield or Janssen) are also recommended for a booster dose, as [emerging evidence](#) indicates better protection in individuals with at least one dose of an mRNA vaccine.



In addition to the groups announced this week, those previously eligible for an additional dose continue to be eligible. For a full list, visit [alberta.ca/vaccine](https://alberta.ca/vaccine).

Booking will be based on the honour system and appointments can be booked starting Nov. 8 through the [online booking tool](#), at 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 who live on a First Nations reserve can access third doses through local public health clinics on-reserve.

HCWs will not be contacted by AHS if/when they are eligible to receive an additional dose. Please book your own appointment if/when you are eligible.

*Pfizer vaccine for younger age group continues to be reviewed 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.

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, the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) recommended Pfizer's pediatric vaccine for children five to 11 years of age, allowing providers to begin vaccinating this age group as soon as possible. The CDC's endorsement follows the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration's](#) emergency use authorization of the pediatric vaccine last week. This is the first COVID-19 vaccine authorized for children younger than 12 in the U.S.

As we await approval from Health Canada and the Alberta Advisory Committee on Immunization, we are preparing our teams, as well as updating our policies, processes and resources, so AHS can support vaccine rollout in a child- and family-friendly manner. We will also ensure Alberta families have the relevant information they need to inform their decision about getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

#### *Vaccine availability*

Alberta has requested a small shipment of the Janssen vaccine from the National Operations Centre, which is expected to arrive in the next few weeks. More information will be available at that time.

Currently, there is no supply of AstraZeneca in the province, but supply is expected later this year. Those interested in getting this vaccine can call Health Link at 811 to be added to the waitlist.

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](https://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](https://alberta.ca/vaccine).

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

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

In Canada, new federal vaccine requirements to board a flight, train or ship were implemented last week. As of Oct. 30, if you are 12 years of age or older, you 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.

From October 30 to November 29, there is 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 and trains in Canada](#).

The Government of Canada is engaging with Indigenous peoples, provinces and territories to ensure that travellers from remote communities who are not fully vaccinated are still able to travel for any reason. More information is available, here: [Proof of vaccination for Indigenous peoples and Northerners in remote communities \(sac-isc.gc.ca\)](#)

#### **Influenza Immunization Update**

As of Oct. 30, 770,739 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered across the province, and three cases of influenza have been confirmed so far this season.

Interactive aggregate data on seasonal influenza is now available online at: [Alberta influenza statistics](#).

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has tested 16,249 respiratory specimens for influenza, from Aug. 29, 2021 to the end of day Oct. 30, 2021. This does not include a small number of tests completed at regional hospitals.

Although the influenza activity we are seeing right now is less than we would see in a typical season, with changes to public health restrictions and more people travelling, we expect to see influenza and other respiratory viruses circulate in our communities this year.

Now more than ever, we need Albertans to get immunized against influenza, to protect themselves, their families and community. Our healthcare system has been

significantly impacted by COVID-19. By keeping the number of influenza cases and outbreaks low, we can protect at-risk Albertans, and reduce the pressure on our healthcare system.

#### *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 some sites. 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.

#### **Connect Care Launch Update**

In Sept. 2021, we made the difficult decision to delay the planned launch of Connect Care's Wave 4 and subsequent waves, in order to support patients and healthcare teams, as we faced an overwhelming wave four of the pandemic.

Connect Care remains an organizational priority and with some relief in pressure on the health system, we have now been able to revisit the launch plans.

The existing sequencing and scope for each wave of Connect Care will be shifted six months into the future. This has extended the overall timelines for Connect Care, which is expected to be complete in 2024, however, the content of each wave remains the same. The next two waves will launch as follows:

- **Wave 4: May 14, 2022** — 57 sites and services in the Edmonton and Calgary Zones
- **Wave 5: November 6, 2022** — 117 sites and services in Calgary and North Zones

For more details on launch sequencing, please visit [Insite](#).

Thank you for your patience as we altered our plans to address the urgent needs of Albertans and the healthcare system. We look forward to these upcoming launches and continuing to improve the care we provide to Albertans through Connect Care.

#### **Verna's Weekly Video Message: the World of Allied Health**

It goes without saying that COVID-19 has impacted all of us in some form. It has challenged the way we live, the way we think, and even the way we work. These are all factors that can influence the outcomes and experiences of our patients and families. So how do we, as a workforce, consider these challenges in the care we provide?

In addition to our doctors, nurses, and many other healthcare providers, we are fortunate to have almost 7,800 dedicated allied health professionals at AHS. This diverse group includes several health disciplines, each of which bring a unique set of skills - creating a holistic approach for Albertans to recover sooner and live

more meaningful lives. They have proven to be very skilled at adapting their practice to meet the challenges of COVID-19.

As it is [Allied Health week](#), I (Verna) have invited three people to [the vlog today to tell us more about their respective Allied Health professions, and how they have adapted during COVID-19](#):

- Dr. Stewart Longman, Rehabilitation Psychologist, Foothills Medical Centre
- Dr Jaeun Macen, Spiritual Health Consultant, Palliative Home Care, Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre
- Lindsay Storm, Social Worker III, South Health Campus.



### **Medical Radiation Technologist Week**

This week our Medical Radiation Technologists (MRTs) received some well-deserved recognition as part of MRT Week, an annual celebration, which falls on the week of Nov. 8, every year. Our MRTs play an essential role in our healthcare system. They deliver professional imaging and radiation-related treatment services with a caring touch, allowing patients to fully benefit from the latest in medical diagnostic and treatment technology.

Please join us in thanking our MRTs for their commitment to quality care and their perseverance during these challenging times.

Learn more about this dynamic profession and see how MRTs are celebrating across Canada through [The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists](#) (CAMRT), the national professional association and certifying body for radiological, nuclear medicine and magnetic resonance imaging technologists and radiation therapists.

## Be Well - Be Kind

---

### **Wait for Me: A Music Video**

The Calgary Health Foundation (CHF) has just released a powerful video featuring the music of Calgary Zone emergency department physician, Dr. Grant Kennedy, the photographs of his colleague, Dr. Heather Patterson, and interviews with healthcare workers and former COVID-19 patients.

The project is an opportunity to profile the extraordinary, selfless efforts of our healthcare providers who have also stepped in as companion, confidant and comforter, despite the immense pressure they have faced during the pandemic. In addition, the video captures the real, emotional caregiver and patient stories from the frontline, which have opened the door for important conversations, thanks to Dr. Kennedy and Dr. Patterson's creativity and leadership.

CHF started working with Dr. Patterson early in the pandemic, sharing her images as a way to connect with the community and donors in a meaningful and impactful way. As colleagues and friends, she and Dr. Kennedy wanted to share their artistry with their peers and community and that's when the video was developed. Since its release on Nov. 2, the video has been viewed more than 6,000 times. The CHF has seen an outpouring of support and gratitude for Drs. Patterson and Kennedy, and all those featured in the video, for their vulnerability and courage in talking about mental health as a care provider.

Learn more about the project at [calgaryhealthfoundation.ca/waitforme](https://calgaryhealthfoundation.ca/waitforme).



**Halloween Fun across AHS**

The Annual AHS Staff Halloween Costume and Decorated Space contest was back this year and was open to costumes worn while working from home and house decorations, along with the traditional site and office costumes and decorations.

With over 140 submissions from all over the province and almost 2,000 votes, the winner has been chosen: Lego Avengers, Alberta Children's Hospital - Pediatric General Surgery. Circus, Addiction Centre, Foothills Medical Centre.



Circus, Addiction Centre, Foothills Medical Centre and Halloween Rehab Equipment Decoration, Rehabilitation Services took second and third places, respectively.







Congratulations to everyone who conjured up some Halloween spirit. You can peek at all of the spooky creativity lurking in the depths of our organization, [here](#).

### **Gratitude from Albertans**

Albertans notice what you are doing every day to provide safe, quality care across the province. Messages of gratitude keep coming in to let us know how appreciated you are. We want to share this recent message of gratitude with you, because it captures so much in just a few poignant words. You can see other messages on our [Sharing the Love webpage](#).

*Thank you to everyone for dedicating your time and effort without hesitation! You are saving the world every single day!*

— Anonymous

### **Wrapping Up**

We are now a few days into November 2021, which means we are nearing two years since the first cases were identified globally, in December 2019. It's hard to believe it's been that long. In some ways the time has flown by and in other ways it's been one exhausting hour upon another. We knew when COVID-19 declared itself as an aggressive and opportunistic virus that we were in for a long haul, but even knowing the potential for devastating spread, it would have been hard to comprehend that we would still be very much in the midst of a raging battle nearly 24 months later.

However, in spite of what this tiny microorganism has done on a massive scale, you are still hanging in there. We want to encourage you to keep doing just that – please keep hanging in there. There continue to be signs of hope. The news that vaccines will likely soon be available for children aged five to 11 is very positive. Protecting this segment of our population through immunization would mean greater protection for them, especially those most vulnerable, and it could also reduce the spread of COVID-19, significantly.

Thank you for your continued work to care for Albertans, and for doing it so compassionately, no matter the circumstances. You have even managed to keep your sense of humour, as we can see by the Halloween contest submissions shared above. Thanks for making us smile, too.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health



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

