



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

### *AHS Update: COVID-19 numbers continue to trend downward; update on vaccine supply and sequencing*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

#### Today's Update

- COVID-19 Cases in Alberta
- COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — The Latest Numbers
- COVID-19 Vaccination Update — Sequencing and Appointment Rescheduling
- Verna's Weekly Video Message — The Importance and Safety of Immunization
- AHS Launches Public Kindness Campaign to Support All Healthcare Workers
- PPE Question of the Week — Do I Still Need to Wear PPE if I Already Received the COVID-19 Vaccine?
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- Gratitude from Albertans
- Wrapping Up — Finding Joy, Building Resilience

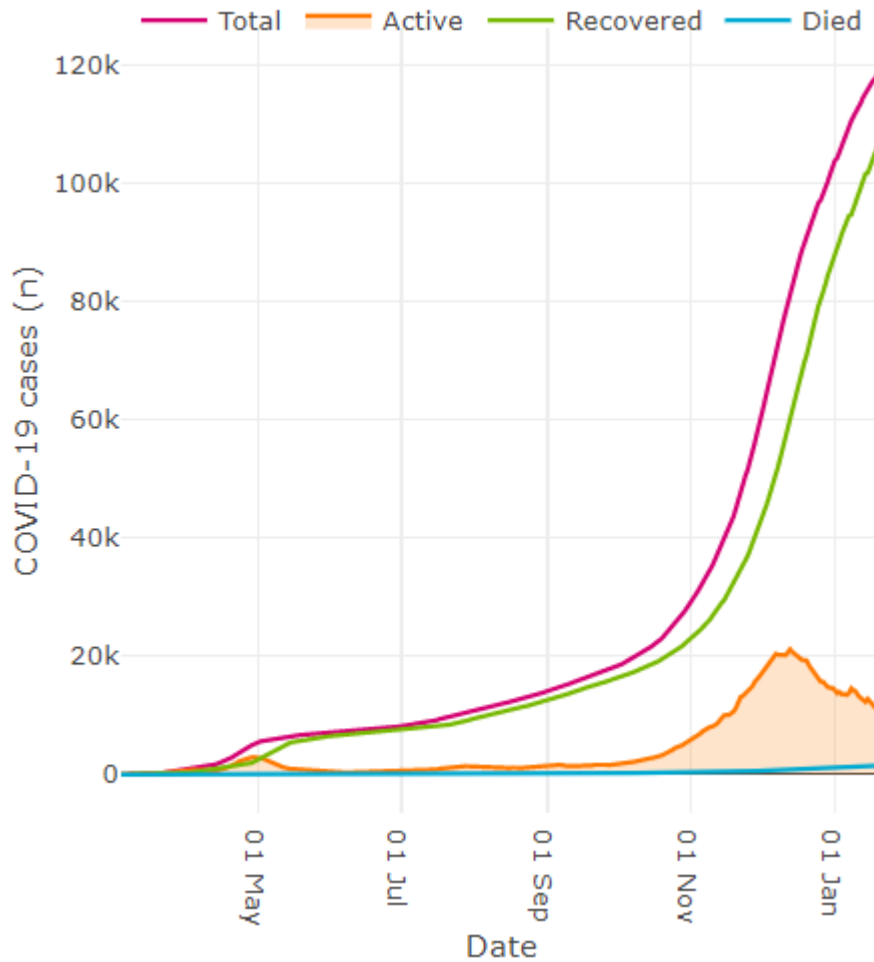
## COVID-19 Status

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This past week, many of our COVID-19 numbers continued to trend downward, with the province now reporting the fewest active cases since mid-November. However, our health system continues to experience significant strain and, as such, the Government of Alberta Thursday did not ease any of the current public health measures.

There was an average of 645 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending Jan. 20, compared to 876 the previous week, a 26.4 per cent decrease. As of Jan. 20,

there were 10,256 active cases in the province, compared to 12,538 on Jan. 13, an 18.2 per cent decrease.



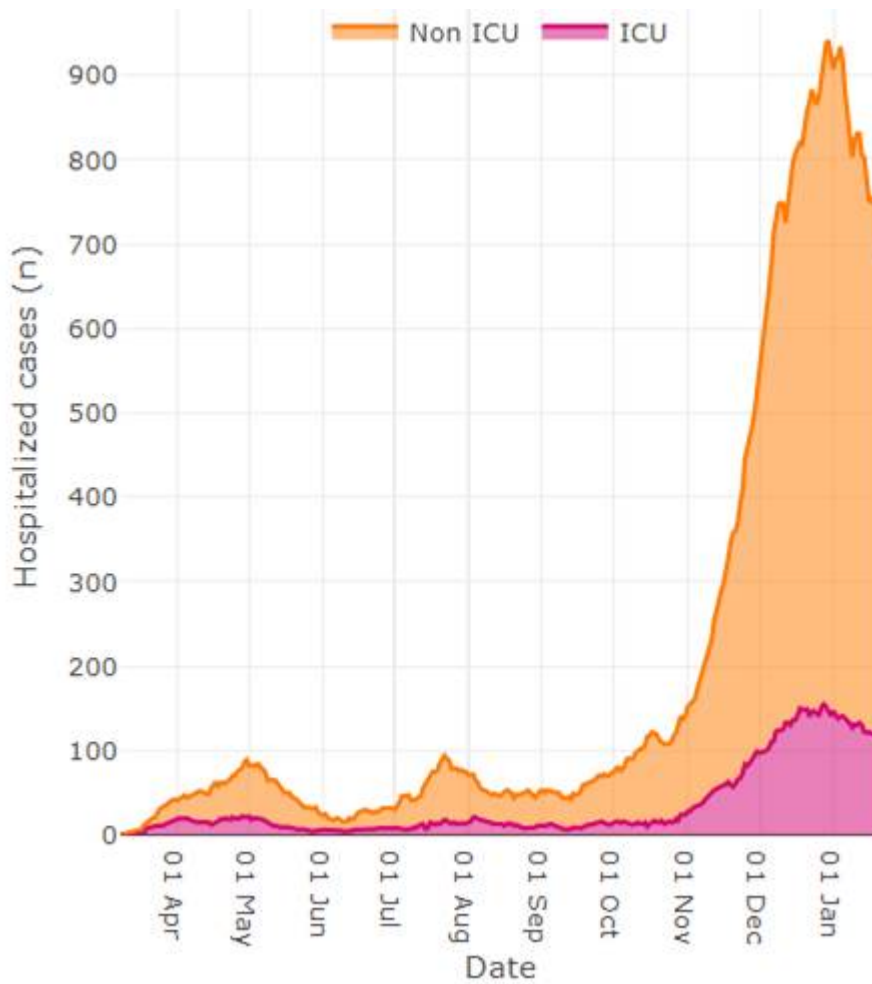
The table below shows the number of active cases in each zone for the last two weeks.

	Active Cases (as of Jan. 20)	Active Cases (as of Jan. 13)	Per Cent Change
<b>Edmonton</b>	3,561	4,570	-22.1%
<b>Calgary</b>	3,962	4,691	-15.5%
<b>Central</b>	931	1,152	-19.2%
<b>North</b>	1,383	1,635	-15.4%
<b>South</b>	405	362	11.9%
<b>Unknown</b>	14	24	-41.7%

#### Hospitalizations and ICU admissions

On Jan. 20, there were 726 individuals with COVID-19 in hospitals across the province compared to 806 on Jan. 13, a 9.9 per cent decrease. Also on Jan. 20,

there were 119 individuals in intensive care compared to 136 on Jan. 13, a 12.5 per cent decrease.



The Edmonton and Central zones reported the largest hospitalization decreases: 61 fewer patients in Edmonton Zone, a 15 per cent decrease, and 19 fewer patients in the Central Zone, a 24.5 per cent decrease.

The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of Jan. 20 is as follows:

	Hospitalizations	Patients in ICU
Edmonton	348	44
Calgary	216	53
North	75	8
Central	58	9
South	29	5

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

- As of Jan. 20, a total of 119,114 cases of COVID-19 have occurred in Alberta and 5,125 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.3 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 107,358 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Jan. 20, 1,500 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 111 over the past seven days. 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. 14 to Jan. 20, 83,354 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 11,908 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.58 per cent to 6.63 per cent. As of Jan. 20, a total of 3,066,222 tests have been conducted and 1,726,667 individuals have been tested.
- All of the school outbreaks for the fall school term were closed as per direction from Alberta Health. For the winter school term, as of Jan. 21, AHS has confirmed 282 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 182 out of 2,415 schools in the province have reported an individual has attended their school while infectious or had in-school transmission.

## 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. 20:

- 75,133 employees (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,275 (or 5.7 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 1,238 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 413 (or 33.4 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 3,037 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 4,841 physicians (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 187 (or 3.9 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 138 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 Update — Sequencing and Appointment Rescheduling**

Since the rollout of COVID-19 vaccine began in December, we have been receiving questions from staff, physicians, partners and the public on COVID-19 immunization sequencing: who will be immunized when, in what order, and why some groups are chosen to go before others. While we truly wish that everyone could be immunized right away, the reality is that it's going to take many months to make it happen.

Vaccine supply is the major issue we face right now. There is not enough vaccine available to immunize our entire workforce, so tough decisions have to be made about sequencing the vaccine rollout. These decisions have been and continue to be made with careful consideration. For background on immunization sequencing, rationale, and insight into the immunization rollout process, visit [ahs.ca/covidvaccine](https://ahs.ca/covidvaccine).

To be fully immunized against COVID-19, two doses of vaccine are required. Right now, there are more than 80,000 people in Alberta who received a first dose of vaccine and require a second dose, and 21,000 people who are eligible as part of Phase 1/1a who still need to receive a first dose.

Because COVID-19 vaccine supply over the next few weeks will continue to be unpredictable, we are allocating the vaccine we do have to those who require a second doses within the allowable window, while continuing to offer immunization to long-term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) residents.

As a result, all first-dose appointments for staff and physicians continue to be postponed. Second-dose appointments for staff and physicians are being rescheduled, with more than 30,000 notifications going out today. Anyone whose appointment is being postponed or rescheduled will be contacted directly by AHS via email, text or phone call. Please continue to check back to the online tool as more appointments open up. Please do not call Health Link. In some instances, this may mean moving an appointment just a few days. Every day is critical to our current vaccine supply to ensure all Albertans, including residents of LTC/DSL, can be immunized according to the recommended timelines.

We ask for your continued co-operation and understanding, and also your respect and kindness as we work diligently to immunize as many people as possible as quickly as possible, with available product.

We will continue to communicate openly and transparently, and appreciate your patience and understanding as we work through details.

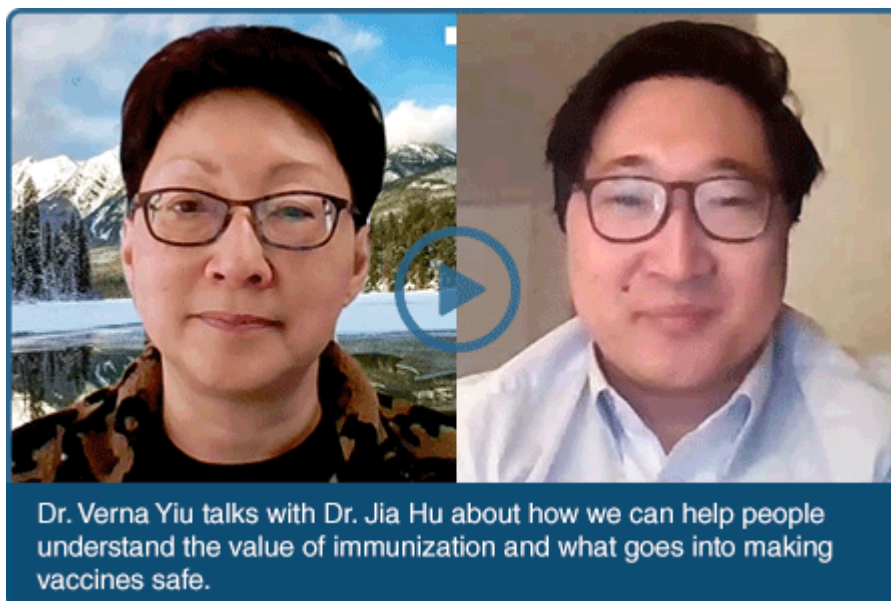
### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — The Importance and Safety of Immunization**

Continuing last week's vlog theme, I (Verna) want to talk to you more about COVID-19 immunization.

COVID-19 immunization is an important part of our overall approach to protecting patients and staff, and is crucial to making our facilities safe and protecting the health of all Albertans.

I know it's natural to have questions and possibly feel some hesitation when a new vaccine becomes available. Health Canada has a thorough approval process that ensures the safety of the many vaccines and medicines we take routinely, including the COVID-19 vaccines.

With me today to talk about [the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines and the importance of immunization is Dr. Jia Hu](#), Medical Officer of Health for the Calgary Zone, who is also involved in a national research project looking at vaccine hesitancy.



In the vlog, Jia shares how we can help people understand the value of immunization, why some people might be hesitant to be immunized, and what goes into making vaccines safe.

### **AHS Launches Public Kindness Campaign to Support All Healthcare Workers**

AHS always has the best health and safety interests of Albertans in mind. Sadly, there have been instances in recent weeks where our staff — including public health inspectors, immunizers and other front-line workers — have been mistreated, verbally abused and disrespected while carrying out their duties.

In response, AHS is launching a public kindness campaign, reminding Albertans that AHS is here for them but harassment is never OK and won't be accepted.

We're spreading the word through our social media channels and asking our partners — including our Health Advisory Councils, Provincial Advisory Councils and health foundations — to remind people in their communities to treat our public

health inspectors, and all our staff, with respect as they go about their important work.

We understand COVID-19 restrictions can be difficult and this is a stressful time for many Albertans. Sometimes this leads to high emotions. But we are here to help.

We remain committed to working with businesses and communities to provide further clarity on how to operate safely during COVID-19 and follow public health guidelines, set out by the Government of Alberta and the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

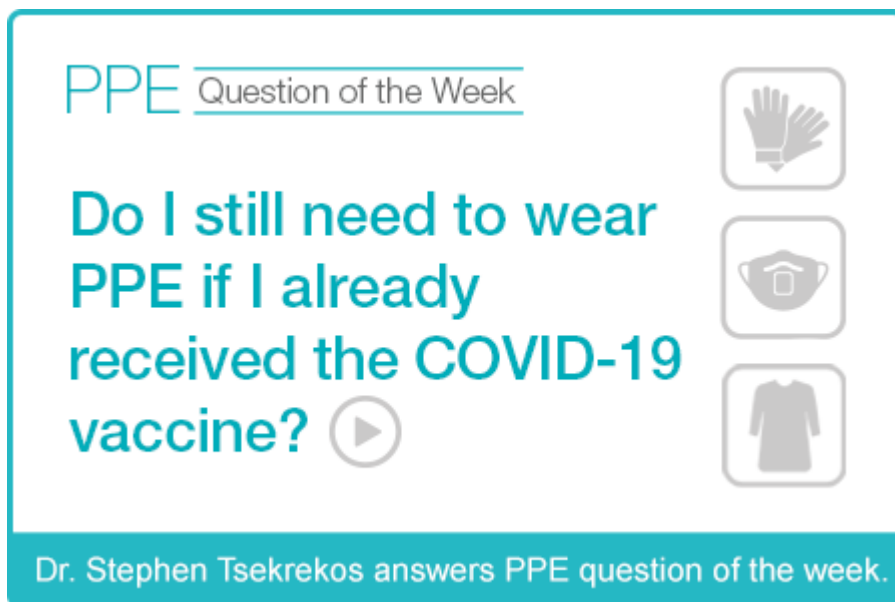
We will always act as a good partner to Albertans and communities across the province. We will also always support and protect our people.

For those who need support after experiencing mistreatment, abuse or disrespect while carrying out their duties, please know confidential supports are available through the [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) at 1-877-273-3134.


### **PPE Question of the Week — Do I Still Need to Wear PPE if I Already Received the COVID-19 Vaccine?**




Many staff and physicians have asked if they're required to wear PPE and perform daily fit for work screening once they've had their two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. The answer is yes.

In the latest [PPE Question of the Week video](#), Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos — Medical Director of Workplace Health and Safety — explains why it's essential that staff and physicians continue to adhere to PPE guidance and ensure all IPC recommendations for COVID-19 are followed, even after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine.



PPE Question of the Week

**Do I still need to wear PPE if I already received the COVID-19 vaccine?** 

Dr. Stephen Tsekrekos answers PPE question of the week.

**Straight Talk from You — ‘Everything Has Become Harder’**



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 Stephanie Wanner, a Child Life Specialist at the Stollery Children's Hospital in Edmonton.



“People think that because we don't have a lot of children in the hospital with COVID that maybe it hasn't changed things very much but everything has become harder,” says Stephanie. “Brothers and sisters being apart. I had a mother give birth alone in the hospital a couple days after her child was diagnosed with a serious cancer and them not being able to be together.”

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.





Meagan McCance hugs her daughter Hailey, 13, before she goes in for a surgical procedure at the Alberta Children's Hospital.

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

### **Influenza Immunization Update**

As of Jan. 16, 1,518,893 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. This is the highest uptake of influenza vaccine recorded in our province over the past 10 years and nearly double that of the 2010-2011 influenza season.

For the 11<sup>th</sup> consecutive week, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. Alberta Precision Laboratories have tested more than 86,000 respiratory swabs for influenza since Aug. 23, 2020.

The low case count for influenza can be attributed to multiple factors, including the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and public health guidelines currently in place that encourage enhanced respiratory etiquette, hand hygiene, physical distancing and staying home when sick.

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.

[Click here](#) for more on the clinics for the public, including your families. 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](#).

**Save the Date — President's Speaker Series returns Feb. 1**

On Feb. 1 from noon to 1 p.m., you're invited to join an online discussion on applied artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare at the [President's Speaker Series](#).

Recent developments in AI are transforming society, from retail giants such as Amazon to the use of self-driving cars in the transportation industry. Healthcare is no exception and is among the most data-rich industries. We can expect the way we use that data, along with virtual care and AI, to greatly expand in the future.

Our keynote speaker is Muhammad Mamdani, Vice President - Data Science and Advanced Analytics, Unity Health Toronto, and director of the Li Ka Shing Centre for Healthcare Analytics Research & Training.

In his presentation, Muhammad will provide an overview of the concept of AI, its applications in healthcare, and its implications for clinicians and healthcare administrators in the future.

Email [pss@ahs.ca](mailto:pss@ahs.ca) to register.

## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Supports Available to Manage Seasonal Stress**

We know this time of year can be particularly difficult. The stress of COVID-19 makes it even more challenging, whether at work or at home.

Mental health supports are available through the [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP). Try the [new EFAP Resilience App](#) to help you develop the skills you need to cope in tough times. The app is a resilience trainer and offers a personalized experience focused on proactively building your mental health to help you get ahead of adversity.

Also, check out the following [wellness seminars](#) through [MyLearningLink](#):

- COVID-19: Working from Home
- COVID-19: Strategies for Managing Stress
- COVID-19: Building Resilience

Other resources include:

- [Feeling Overwhelmed?](#)
- [Self-care Tactics](#)
- [How Do I Support Someone Who May be Struggling?](#)

Self-care is important for us all, especially if you struggle during the winter when the days are short. See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) to find the resources you need for your health and safety. If you have questions or feedback, 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 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](#).



*My family is thinking of you every day and we are truly grateful. I can only imagine how difficult this year has been. Please know our family has limited our contacts since March, we get most things delivered and, when we can't, we wear our masks (we still wipe down groceries!) We do this not just to avoid getting sick but out of respect for our community and healthcare workers. No COVID-19 fatigue in our home! Know that we have not given up and count on you to not give up, too. You are important and what you do matters.*

— the Twordik Family, Calgary (see attached picture)

*Thank you for all you do every day to provide care and services for Albertans at this difficult time. I have the greatest respect for my nursing colleagues and all members of the healthcare and support teams. Your jobs are so challenging and you are truly heroes in my view. I recognize that these times are taking a physical, mental and emotional toll on you and your families. Please take some time, if possible, to care for yourself and to connect with others (who) love and care for you. Your health and well-being is so important and you are valued and truly appreciated.*

— Dianne

*A huge special thank you to all of the dedicated Alberta Health Services employees and contracted agencies who are working so hard to deliver the highest quality care possible. Because of you, we are a better, stronger province. We are grateful.*

— Eric

*You are the front line against COVID-19 and have been working so hard since the pandemic began. Both physically and mentally, you have and still go through so much each and every day. We thank you for your selfless dedication and devotion to your work and to the Albertans you help each and every day. People from all walks of life owe you big time. Take care and stay safe.*

— Rob

### Wrapping Up — Finding Joy, Building Resilience



Laura and I (Verna) were so pleased to receive the above postcard this week from an Edmonton student. We want to share the postcard and its simple, heartfelt message with all of you.

This gesture really brightened our day because it's a timely reminder that Albertans recognize and appreciate our efforts during this pandemic. These individuals — those we've cared for but also those who are still strangers to us — realize many are working long, hard hours to keep them well, to keep them safe and, in many cases, to keep them and their loved ones alive as they struggle with this coronavirus. We know the past year has been difficult, not just physically but emotionally. You have all **been** remarkably resilient. We can continue building resilience when we find joy, wherever we can find it: in the smile of a co-worker; in expressing gratitude for someone's act of kindness or generosity; or in a postcard that a child drew, wrote and sent to remind us that others are thinking of us and grateful for the work we do. Let us keep finding and protecting these precious moments of joy.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

**Dr. Verna Yiu**  
AHS President & CEO

**Dr. Laura McDougall**  
Senior Medical Officer of Health

