



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

*AHS Update: COVID-19 numbers remain stable as  
Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccinations begin*

*Please print and share with your teams as needed*

### Today's Update

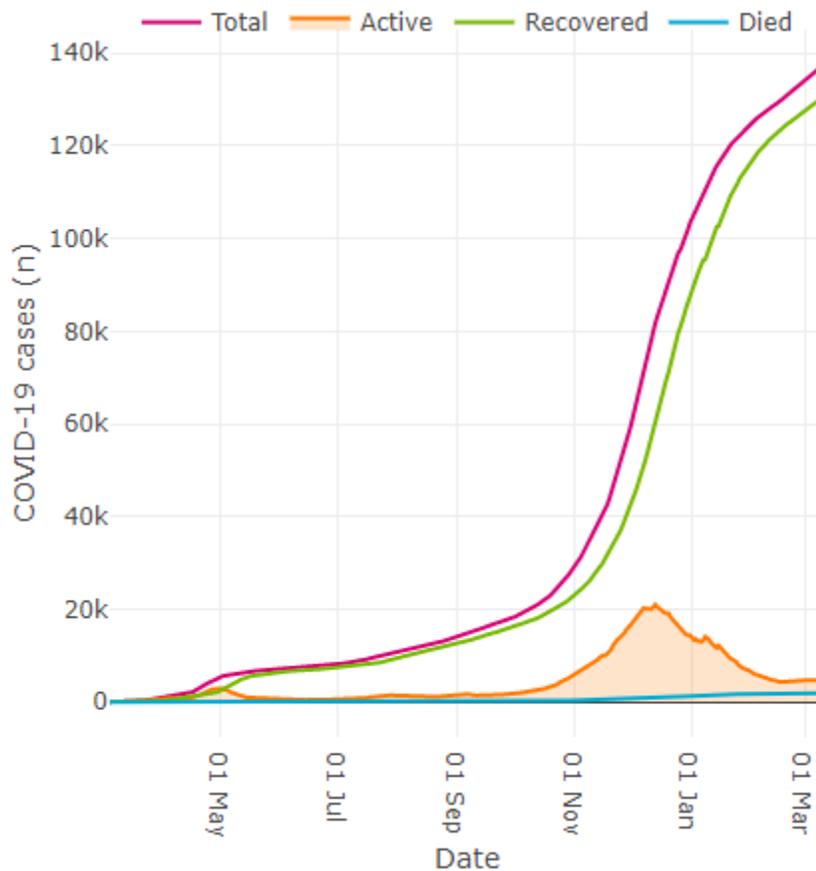
- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
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## COVID-19 Status

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The province's COVID-19 numbers remained relatively stable this past week.

As of March 10, there were 4,488 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, 125 fewer than the previous week (representing a 2.7 per cent decrease) despite a spike in cases in the South Zone.



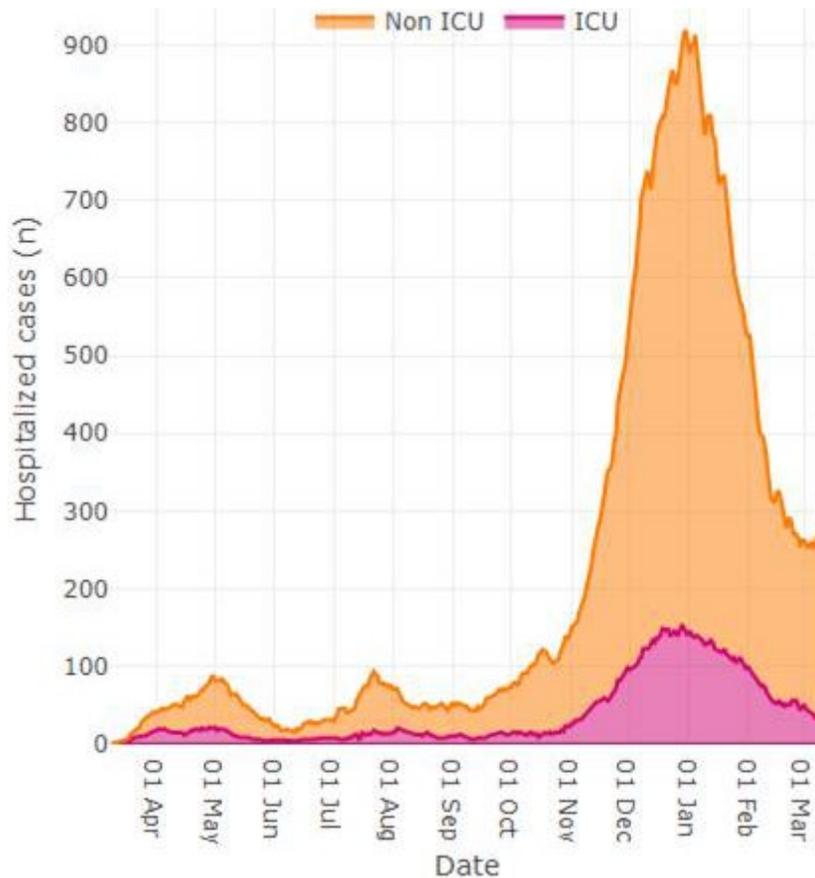
The table below shows the number of active cases for each zone for each of the last two weeks.

|                 | Active Cases<br>(as of March 10) | Active Cases<br>(as of March 3) | Per cent<br>Change |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Calgary</b>  | 1,654                            | 1,645                           | +0.6%              |
| <b>Edmonton</b> | 1,147                            | 1,082                           | +6.0%              |
| <b>North</b>    | 813                              | 1,009                           | -19.4%             |
| <b>South</b>    | 438                              | 326                             | +34.4%             |
| <b>Central</b>  | 431                              | 545                             | -20.9%             |
| <b>Unknown</b>  | 5                                | 6                               | -16.7%             |

The average number of daily new cases also remained stable this past week, with an average of 340 daily new cases for the seven-day period ending March 10, compared to 337 cases the previous week (Feb. 25 to March 3). The Calgary Zone had the largest number of new cases this week with 837, representing slightly more than a third of all new cases in the province. Over the same period, there were 1,181 new cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, representing half of all new cases.

### Hospitalizations and admissions

After nine weeks of declining hospitalizations, the total number of individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta’s hospitals climbed slightly this week. On March 10, there were 259 individuals in hospitals across the province compared to 256 on March 3, a 1.2 per cent increase. There were 38 individuals in ICUs on March 10 compared to 45 on March 3, a 15.6 per cent decrease.



The breakdown of hospitalizations by zone as of March 10 is as follows:

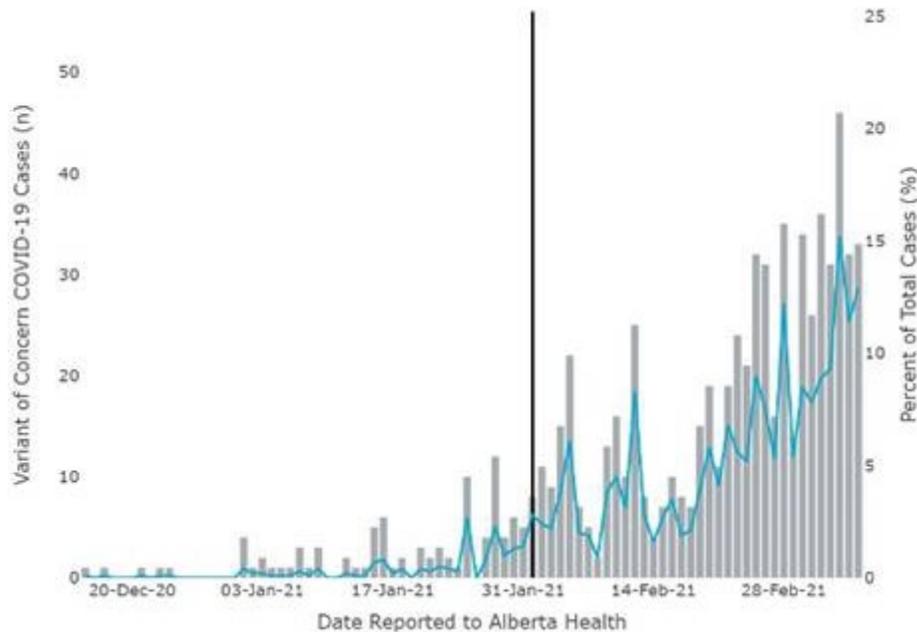
|                 | Hospitalizations | ICUs |
|-----------------|------------------|------|
| <b>Calgary</b>  | 93               | 15   |
| <b>Edmonton</b> | 75               | 11   |
| <b>Central</b>  | 32               | 7    |
| <b>South</b>    | 31               | 4    |
| <b>North</b>    | 28               | 1    |

### Variants of concern

Alberta Health has now reported 775 cases of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC): 760 are B.1.1.7 variant (U.K. variant) and 15 are B.1.351 variant (South African variant). This represents a 34.6 per cent increase from one week earlier on March 3 when there were 576 VOC cases. VOCs have been detected in all zones, with the

South Zone reporting its first cases this week.

The figure below shows new VOC cases by bar (grey bars) and the percentage of VOC cases identified compared to other cases of COVID-19 (blue line); between March 2 and March 8, the percentage of VOC cases ranged from 7.8 per cent to 15.2 per cent.



*(Note: People are identified as COVID-19 cases prior to VOC identification. As such, VOC reporting is delayed compared to date the case was reported to Alberta Health.)*

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

- As of March 10, a total of 137,137 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 6,127 individuals have been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.5 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 130,716 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of March 10, 1,933 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 22 new deaths between March 4 and March 10. 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 March 4 to March 10, 58,305 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 8,329 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 3.73 per cent to 4.60 per cent. As of March 10, a total of 3.5 million tests have been conducted and more than 1.84 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 March 1 to March 7 was 0.95.

- For the winter school term, as of March 10, AHS has confirmed 1,886 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 644 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 Vaccination Update

#### *By the Numbers*

As of 10 a.m. today (March 12), more than 313,300 total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered by AHS, including:

- 97,300+ doses to Albertans 75 years of age and older.
- 85,400+ doses to healthcare workers other than LTC/DSL.
- 57,300+ doses to long-term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) residents.
- 54,000+ doses to LTC/DSL staff.
- 13,300+ doses in other congregate living environments.
- 4,500+ doses Covishield/AstraZeneca
- 1,200+ doses for others (including non-healthcare essential service workers and spouses of Albertans 75+)

Percentage of eligible individuals identified in Phase 1, have received at least one dose:

- Healthcare workers: 98 per cent.
- LTC/DSL staff: 81 per cent.
- LTC/DSL residents: 79 per cent.
- Albertans 75 years of age and older: 48 per cent.

In total, about 90,000 Albertans have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2, and more than 133,200 have received Dose 1 only.

#### *Covishield/AstraZeneca Rollout*

Appointments to receive the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine are now available for Albertans born in 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people born in 1972, 1973, 1974 and 1975. Beginning 8 a.m. Saturday, March 13, additional years are being added to include 1961 for all Albertans and 1976 for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

As of 4 p.m. today (March 12), more than 43,000 eligible Albertans have been booked to receive COVID-19 immunization with the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine.

Eligible Albertans, including healthcare workers, can choose to receive the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine now or wait until their sequenced phase to receive one of the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer or Moderna), which we anticipate will be sometime in May.

In general, Alberta Health is recommending Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine for Albertans, 18 to 64 without a contraindication, such as a severe reaction to a vaccine ingredient.

#### *Rollout of Phase 2A*

[Phase 2A](#) of the COVID-19 vaccine program will begin March 15.

Phase 2A will include Albertans between the ages of 65 and 74, and First Nations, Inuit and Métis people ages 50 and older.

More than 437,000 Albertans will be offered the vaccine in this upcoming phase.

To reduce wait times, avoid overwhelming the AHS booking tool, and vaccinate people as quickly as possible, AHS will be offering appointment bookings by age group. Immunizations will also be offered to the entire Phase 2A cohort through pharmacies across the province. Participating pharmacies are listed on the [Alberta Blue Cross](#) website.

Starting March 15 at 8 a.m., all Albertans born in 1947 will be eligible to book an appointment. These individuals can book through both the AHS online booking tool or through Health Link at 811 if they need help booking an appointment.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit people born in 1962 will also be eligible to book an appointment on March 15.

Those living on reserve and on Métis Settlements who are aged 50 and older will have access to immunization within their communities.

For both cohorts, more appointments will open by year of birth, adding one additional year at a time, as vaccine is available.

We recommend all healthcare workers who become eligible in Phase 2A due to age, or other eligibility criteria, get their vaccine as soon as possible.

Once someone becomes eligible, they remain eligible.

The faster individuals get vaccinated, the more quickly our communities will have protection against continued spread of the virus, and reduce the chances of hospitalization. Widespread vaccination will help all Albertans return to a more

normal way of life, sooner.

We encourage everyone to review [current evidence](#) in order to make the best and most informed decision about your health, the health of your loved ones and the greater community.

The [Alberta Health Services](#) and [Alberta Health](#) websites will continue to provide information to Albertans on the next eligible cohort as we expand one year at a time to include more Albertans.

Also watch for more information on the AHS Twitter account, @AHS\_media, and our website, where the latest information on the next eligible cohort will be released each afternoon in advance of the 8 a.m. launch the following day.

### **Second-Dose Spacing Clarification**

As part of ongoing efforts to reduce community transmission of COVID-19, Alberta is offering second doses of the COVID-19 vaccine approximately 16 weeks after the first dose.

This aligns with the approach recommended by the [National Advisory Committee on Immunization](#) (NACI) and will allow as many Albertans as possible to receive at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine in the coming weeks.

All Albertans who have received a first dose or who booked a first-dose appointment prior to March 10 will have their second doses provided according to the previous timeline (within 42 days).

Current evidence suggests high vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic disease and hospitalization for several weeks after the first dose, including among older populations. Evidence also shows longer spacing between doses does not reduce protection or duration of immunity for multi-dose products.

While the vast majority of long-term care (LTC), designated supportive living (DSL) and licensed supportive living facility residents will have received one or both doses of COVID-19 vaccine prior to this change, residents of seniors congregate care receiving their first dose on or after March 10 will be offered their second doses at the 16-week interval in alignment with the new recommendations.

- The previous distinction in vaccine spacing recommendations for the LTC/DSL population is no longer recommended.
- Data from studies in healthcare workers, LTC residents, elderly populations and the general public show vaccine effectiveness is approximately 80 per cent after a single vaccine dose with sustained high levels of protection.
- Real-world vaccine effectiveness is typically lower than what you would see in clinical trials, which report 92 per cent protection from symptomatic disease two weeks after a single dose.

It remains important to have both doses of COVID-19 vaccine to ensure long-lasting protection. Immunization recommendations, including spacing, will continue to be assessed based on the most up-to-date information available.

### **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 March 10:

- 77,967 employees (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,769 (or 6.1 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 2,123 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 519 (or 24.4 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,646 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 5,015 physicians (AHS, APL and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 201 (or 4.0 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 80 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 11 (or 13.8 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 121 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](#).

### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — Looking Back on a Year of COVID-19**

Last Friday marked the one-year anniversary of Alberta's first confirmed case of COVID-19. It's astounding to consider where we started and where we are now.

Alberta has been a leader in the COVID-19 response from Day 1 and we couldn't have done any of this without the support of our staff and physicians. You have responded to the challenge with a level of commitment and teamwork that continues to inspire.

Throughout the pandemic, AHS has brought additional equipment online, expanded testing capacity, created new supply chains and processes, trained more staff to bolster care capacity, and devised innovative solutions to meet the new demands on our healthcare system. This is just the tip of the iceberg of what's been accomplished, all thanks to your hard work and dedication.

Joining me (Verna) [to share their thoughts on what's been an eventful year are:](#)

- Dr. Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health.
- Nancy Guebert, Emergency Coordination Centre Director.

Laura and Nancy discuss how things have evolved since the pandemic started, the biggest challenges we faced, and what they are most proud of about our pandemic response.

Visit [ahs.ca/covidoneyear](https://ahs.ca/covidoneyear) to view some of your exceptional work in response to COVID-19.



### **Photo of the Week**

Every week, we normally 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. This week, we'd like to share two photos: from Covishield/AstraZeneca immunization sites in Calgary and Edmonton, which opened yesterday (March 11).



Monique Prud'homme, 63, celebrates after becoming one of the first Albertans to receive the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine in Calgary on March 11.



Normita Bonifacio, 63, was first in line to receive the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine in Edmonton on March 11.

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

### **Participants Sought for Vaccine Safety Survey**

The Canadian National Vaccine Safety (CANVAS) Network is seeking participants to participate in a web-based survey to track any potential adverse reactions to COVID-19 vaccines. To assess events that are related to the vaccines, the network is looking for both persons who have been immunized as well as persons who have not been

immunized to be in a control group.

Investigators across Canada, including here in Alberta, are working to monitor the safety of COVID-19 vaccines in large numbers of people in real time.

Participants can join the monitoring program in multiple ways, including through the CANVAS website, through the online booking tool, or where they are immunized. Participants will be asked to complete online surveys eight days after they receive the first COVID-19 vaccine, another eight days after the second dose – if they receive a two-dose vaccine – and then a final survey six months after that.

Unimmunized control participants will complete the same survey either one or three times. The CANVAS Network conducts active safety surveillance for pandemic vaccines (e.g., H1N1 influenza vaccine in 2009), seasonal influenza vaccines (2010-2020) and other new vaccines (e.g., meningococcal B vaccine in Quebec in 2014) to inform Canadians about their safety.

Please visit [canvas-covid.ca](https://canvas-covid.ca) to learn more

### **Influenza Immunization Update**

As of March 6, 1.56 million doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. Immunizations are up by more than 147,000 doses compared to the same time last year.

For the 18th week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta. Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) has tested 102,555 respiratory swabs for influenza from Aug. 23, 2020, to March 6, 2021.

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

[Click here](#) for more information on the influenza immunization clinics for the public. And if you got your influenza vaccine at a [public health clinic](#), pharmacy or doctor's office, please complete the [Got My Flu Shot Form](#).

### **Virtual Nursing Mentorship Network launches at AHS**

COVID-19 has led us to reimagine the way we do many things at AHS, including how we offer opportunities for growth, collaboration and mentorship.

A virtual Nursing Mentorship Network has launched at AHS, offering nurses at any stage in their careers a safe space to connect, collaborate and join discussions about mentorship.

Since launching in mid-February, more than 300 nurses have already joined the

network, including 115 mentors.

Visit [Insite](#) to learn more about the network and how to join.

### **AHS Recognized for 2021 Top Employer Awards**

Thanks to you, AHS has once again been recognized as a top employer in multiple categories:

- Canada's Best Diversity Employers.
- Canada's Top 100 Employers.
- Alberta's Top Employers.
- Canada's Top Employers for Young People.

Thank you for your continued commitment and dedication to your colleagues, patients, families and all Albertans. Your resilience and strength shown during this past year further proves why we were selected for these awards.

See some of the great work you've done across the province through the most recent publication of [Our People Story](#).

We look forward to continuing our journey to be stronger, together.

Learn more about these awards on [Insite](#).

### **National Day of Observance**

Flags at AHS sites were lowered to half-mast from sunrise to sunset on March 11 to acknowledge the National Day of Observance for COVID-19. The Government of Canada has designated March 11 as a National Day of Observance to commemorate those who lost their lives and the significant impacts we have all felt because of COVID-19. More than 1,900 Albertans and 22,000 Canadians have died from COVID-19. We remember all those who have lost their lives and we extend our deepest condolences to the loved ones of these individuals.

## **Be Well - Be Kind**

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### **Get Set to Spring Forward for Daylight Savings Time**

Being prepared for daylight savings time on Sunday, March 14, will help you better manage fatigue. Fatigue can impact your health, safety and productivity. Statistics show workplace injuries and motor vehicle incidents increase the day following the daylight savings time change.

Remember to take care of yourself. Here's what you can do:

- Please take advantage of our sleep and fatigue resources on the [Health and Wellness Insite page](#).
- You can also call the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP: 1-877-

273-3134) to speak with someone about healthy sleep habits. [Shift worker support](#) is also available. EFAP is free, confidential and available 24/7.

- If you are experiencing symptoms of fatigue, talk to your doctor.

Check out 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.

*Being born in 1957 and anticipating a scrum-like event such as I experienced when trying to obtain Elton John concert tickets, last night I set my alarm clock and coffeemaker to ensure I was ready to beat the crowd to an appointment time for a COVID-19 vaccination. Ready to vacillate between my iPad and my phone, I sat down at the breakfast table determined to get through. Much to my amazement, and by only having to press “enter” once, I had my appointment all fixed up within 15 minutes. What a wonderful process! Please, please, please pass along my sincere appreciation to (whoever) developed the AHS program! And, while you’re at it, could you please pass along our gratitude for the wonderful work AHS has been doing, and continues to do, on behalf our province in this pandemic fight. It’s nice to know they have our backs.*

— Dorcas Kilduff

*I had my COVID-19 vaccination this week and my experience was fantastic. From arrival to (immunization), it was 15 minutes. The site is so well-organized, as I'm sure all (immunization) sites are, and so well-staffed. Parking was readily available and there were no lineups. Thank you to the AHS teams. Just think: one year ago, this all started and the world has come together, focused on solutions. And here I am, one year later, with my first immunization. That's an amazing team effort worldwide and here in Alberta. Thank you for all you have done to keep Albertans safe. I am so thankful for the healthcare you provide and for this first step in being protected from COVID-19. It's a day to celebrate!*

— Vicki K

*Thank you for all your hard work and care. You are so appreciated. We may not understand fully how difficult the last year has been, but we will always remember your sacrifices and courage.*

— Anonymous

## **Wrapping Up — We Are a Learning Organization**

Laura and I (Verna) often talk about Alberta Health Services in terms of being a learning organization. Sometimes we're asked: what does that mean exactly? This week provided an excellent example.

At 8 a.m. on Wednesday, all Albertans born in 1957, as well as First Nations, Métis and Inuit people born in 1972, were invited to book an appointment to receive the Covishield/AstraZeneca vaccine. The process went smoothly and, by the end of the day, more than 12,000 people had booked their first doses through Health Link and the online booking tool.

A secret to this success? We took what we learned from last month's launch of the 75-and-over bookings and applied those learnings to this week's launch. We bring this up for two reasons. First, we want to thank everyone involved in booking immunization appointments for these individuals, as well as those involved in administering the actual vaccinations. We know how much work went on behind the scenes to make this happen and ensure the process unfolded as planned. As you may have read in the preceding item, Albertans are recognizing and appreciating the fruits of your efforts.

That brings us to a second takeaway. Although we always strive for excellence, sometimes our endeavours will initially fall short of that standard. And that's OK. We're human. We do our best. We strive for perfection — and when our efforts fall short, we always look at that as an opportunity to refine and improve. Because that's what learning organizations do. And because that's who we are. Thank you for everything you do, each and every day.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

### **Dr. Verna Yiu**

AHS President & CEO

### **Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health

