



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

### *AHS Update: More than 380,000 COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Administered by AHS; Cases Increase in Alberta*

*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**
- **Update regarding Critical Worker Benefit**
- **PPE Question of the Week — Joint Agreement with Unions on PPE**
- **Verna's Weekly Video Message — An Update on Capital Projects**
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- **Influenza Update**
- **Nutrition Month: Keeping Healthy During COVID-19**
- **Sharing the Love**
- **Wrapping Up — Another Extraordinary Week**

## COVID-19 Status

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*For the period March 11 to Wednesday, March 17*

The average number of daily new cases increased this week for Alberta as a whole, with 436 cases for the seven-day period ending on Mar. 17, compared to 338 cases the previous week (Mar. 3 to Mar. 10).

From Mar. 11 to Mar. 17, there were 1,552 cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, which is about 51 per cent of new cases during that time period. However, cases continue to occur in every age group. For instance, this week, 637 new cases were reported among school aged children (5 to 19 years) and 355 new cases were reported among older adults (aged 60 years and older).

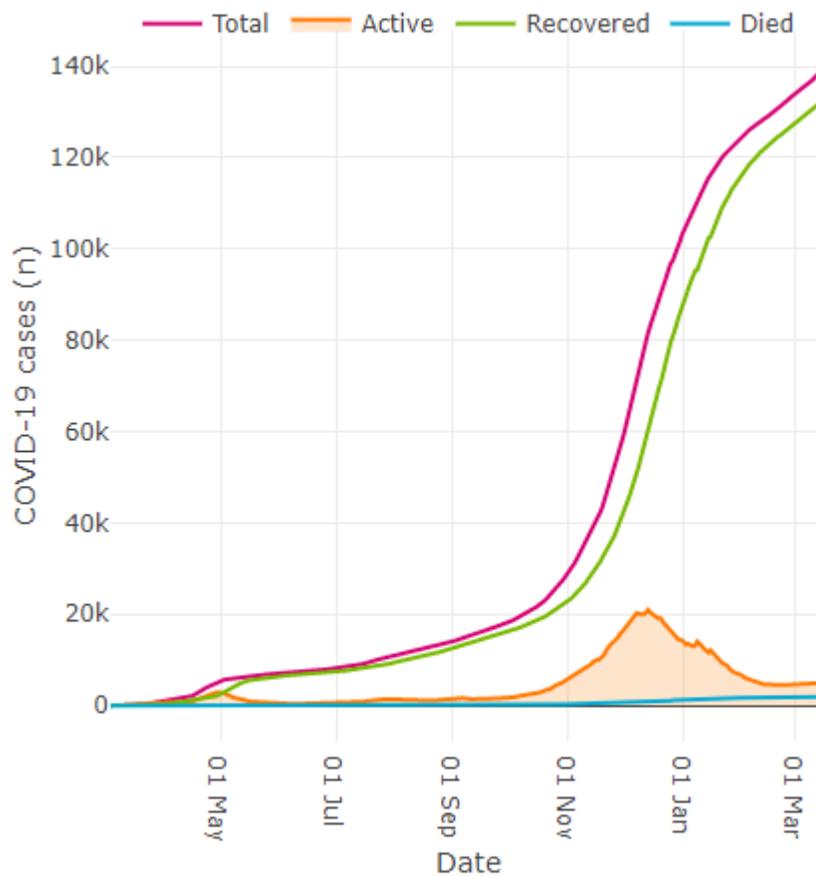
As of Mar. 17, there were 5,084 active cases, which is 596 more active cases than the previous week. With the exception of the North Zone, all zones saw increases in their active case counts this week. The South Zone had a particularly large spike in active cases this week, up 47.7 per cent from the previous

period. The Calgary Zone had the largest number of new cases this week at 1,231, which is 40.4 per cent of all new cases in the province, with an average of 176 new cases per day.

The full breakdown of the number of active cases by zone comparing Mar. 17 to the week previous is below:

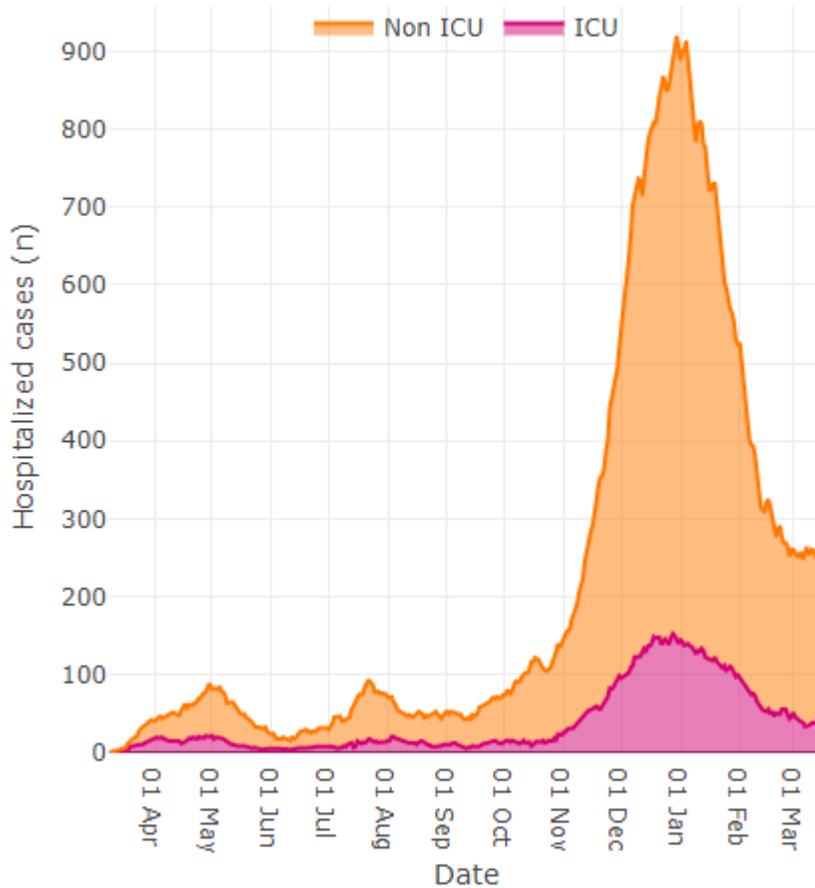
	Active Cases (as of Mar. 17)	Active Cases (as of Mar. 10)	Per cent Change
<b>Calgary</b>	1,972	1,654	+19.2%
<b>Edmonton</b>	1,231	1,147	+7.3%
<b>North</b>	750	813	-7.7%
<b>South</b>	647	438	+47.7%
<b>Central</b>	475	431	+10.2
<b>Unknown</b>	9	5	+80.0%

The total number of individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta’s hospitals was relatively stable again this week, though the number of individuals in intensive care units (ICUs) increased slightly. On Mar. 17, there were 264 individuals in hospitals across the province, compared to 260 hospitalizations on Mar. 10. There were 43 individuals in ICUs on Mar. 17 compared to 37 in ICUs on Mar. 10, a 16.2 per cent increase.



The breakdown of hospitalizations by Zone as of Mar. 17 is as follows:

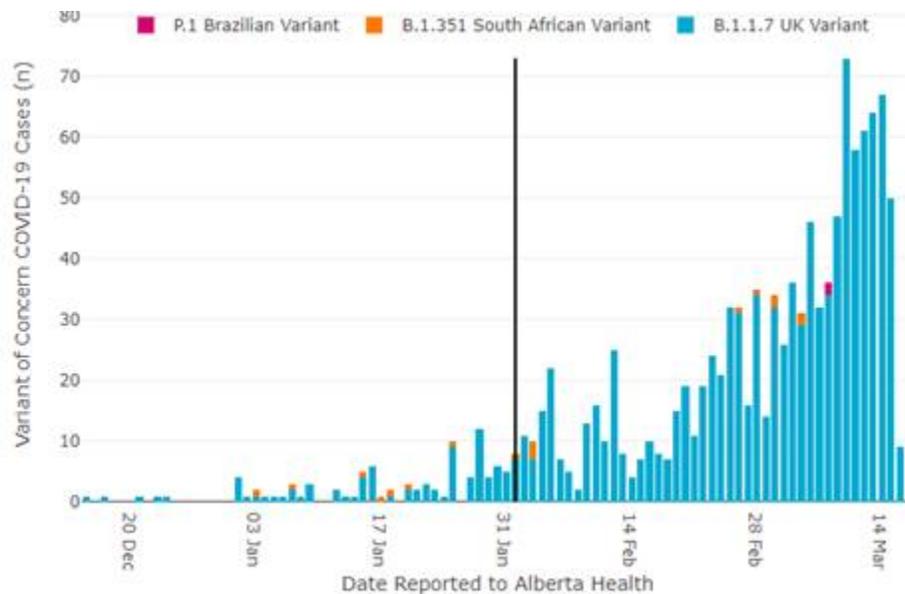
- 90 hospitalizations with 15 of those in ICUs in the Calgary Zone
- 87 hospitalizations with 11 of those in ICUs in the Edmonton Zone
- 30 hospitalizations with 6 of those in ICUs in the Central Zone
- 30 hospitalizations with 4 of those in ICUs in the North Zone
- 27 hospitalizations with 7 of those in ICUs in the South Zone



### Variants of Concern

Alberta Health has now reported 1,188 cases of COVID-19 variants of concern (VOC): 1,169 are B.1.1.7 variant (U.K. variant), 17 are B.1.351 variant (South African variant) and two are P.1 (Brazilian variant). The Brazilian variant was identified for the first time in Alberta this week. As of Mar. 17, there were 599 (11.8 per cent of total) active VOC cases.

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 Mar. 9 and Mar. 15, the percentage of VOC cases ranged from 12.0 to 17.8 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. Changes in case counts can occur due to the nature of the screening and sequencing process.*

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

- As of Mar. 17, a total of 140,127 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Alberta and a total of 6,272 individuals have ever been hospitalized, which amounts to 4.5 individuals for every 100 cases. In all, 133,086 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- As of Mar. 17, 1,957 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 24 deaths over the past seven days (Mar. 11 to Mar. 17). 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 Mar. 11 to Mar. 17, 61,557 COVID-19 tests were completed, an average of 8,794 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity ranged from 4.57 per cent to 5.95 per cent. As of Mar. 17, a total of 3,564,100 tests have been conducted and 1,863,885 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 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 Mar. 8 to Mar. 14 was 1.07, whereas R value the previous week was 0.95.
- For the winter school term, as of Mar. 17, AHS has confirmed 2,183 individuals with COVID-19 were present at schools while infectious, or acquired the disease in the school setting. A total of 691 out of 2,415 schools in the province have reported that an individual has attended their school while infectious, or had in-school transmission.

#### **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 17:

- 78,264 employees (AHS, APL, and Covenant combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 4,826 (or 6.17 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 2,469 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 557 (or 22.6 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,357 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 4.01 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 104 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 11 (or 10.6 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 97 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**

### *By the Numbers*

As of 10 a.m. today (March 19), more than 381,000 total doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered by AHS, including:

- 122,500+ doses to Albertans 75 years of age and older living in the community
- 86,700+ doses to healthcare workers (excluding LTC/DSL)
- 57,800+ doses to long-term care (LTC) and designated supportive living (DSL) residents
- 54,700+ doses to LTC/DSL staff
- 42,100+ doses Covishield/AstraZeneca
- 13,600+ doses in other congregate living environments
- 3,600+ doses for others

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

- Healthcare workers: 100 per cent
- LTC/DSL staff: 82 per cent
- LTC/DSL residents: 79 per cent

In total, more than 199,500 Albertans have received at least one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and more than 90,800 have received both Dose 1 and Dose 2.

### *Update on Covishield/AstraZeneca Rollout*

As of 10 a.m. today (March 19), there are approximately 500 Covishield/AstraZeneca appointments remaining throughout the province, with the exception of Calgary Zone, where all Covishield/AstraZeneca appointments have been booked.

Covishield/AstraZeneca appointments can only be booked through HealthLink at 811.

We encourage anyone who is currently eligible for Covishield/AstraZeneca – Albertans born between 1957 and 1961 (inclusive) and First Nations, Inuit and Métis born between 1972 and 1976 (inclusive) – to book by calling HealthLink.

More appointments and birth years will be added as supply becomes available.

Individuals may need to travel outside their home community if they choose this vaccine.

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.

#### *Update on Rollout of Phase 2A*

[Phase 2A](#) of the COVID-19 immunization program began March 15.

As of 3 p.m. today (March 19), an additional 18,800 Albertans booked their COVID-19 immunization appointments in Phase 2A through AHS. This brings the total bookings through AHS since launch on Monday morning to over 86,000.

Albertans eligible to book through the [AHS online immunization booking tool](#) or through Health Link 811 include Albertans born in 1956 or earlier and First Nations, Métis and Inuit people born in 1971 or earlier. Immunizations are also being offered to these same Phase 2A groups through [participating pharmacies](#) across the province.

We encourage all healthcare workers who become eligible in Phase 2A due to age, or other eligibility criteria, to get their vaccine as soon as possible. Updates will continue to be communicated by [Alberta Health Services](#) and [Alberta Health](#) by website, [news release](#) and social media ([@AHS\\_media](#)).

#### *Phase 2B and 2C, Expected to Begin in April*

We expect to begin Phase 2B and 2C in April, once vaccinations in Phase 2A are complete.

**Please note**, appointment bookings are not yet available for either of these groups.

Exact timing will depend on vaccine supply and will be announced closer to the start of each phase.

We are very hopeful that vaccine supply will increase in the next month or two and we can move quickly into these next phases. We continue to target the month of June to complete first doses for all Albertans who wish to have the vaccine. We thank you for your enthusiasm to get immunized and for your patience as we continue the rollout.

#### *Phase 2B eligibility*

In [Phase 2B](#), vaccine will be available to Albertans with underlying conditions as they are most at risk of severe outcomes. You can refer to this list for a [detailed clinical breakdown of these conditions and who is eligible](#).

Underlying conditions included in Phase 2B were chosen by Alberta Health as they are associated with a higher risk of death or hospitalization for those under the age of 64.

Alberta will operate on the honour system, and a doctor's note or other proof of an underlying condition will **not** be required.

### *Phase 2C eligibility*

The following groups will be eligible to receive the vaccine in [Phase 2C](#):

- Healthcare workers working in patient care facilities or providing direct patient care in the community, in order to limit spread to high-risk individuals, including: physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists and all other regulated health care professionals and their office or support staff. This includes:
  - AHS, Covenant, Alberta Precision Labs and DynaLife staff who work in patient care facilities or provide services directly to clients in the community
  - Healthcare workers on First Nation reserves
  - Students undertaking their placement practicums in clinical areas
- Residents and support staff at eligible congregate living and work settings at risk for large outbreaks, including: correctional facilities, homeless shelters, group homes including disability, mental health and other types of licensed supportive living.
- Caregivers of Albertans who are most at risk of severe outcomes.

Please see the [Vaccine Sequencing for Healthcare Workers](#) page for more information on Phase 2C eligibility.

### *Community Physicians to Administer Vaccine Soon*

On March 16, the [Government of Alberta announced](#), in partnership with the Alberta Medical Association (AMA), that community physicians will soon begin administering COVID-19 vaccines. This announcement follows the release of an [Expression of Interest \(EOI\) from AMA](#), requesting community physicians and their partners express interest in participating in the Alberta effort to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations. This EOI resulted in over 500 responses from Alberta physicians.

The Government of Alberta will post more details on [alberta.ca](#) about this opportunity in the coming days.

### **Update regarding Critical Worker Benefit**

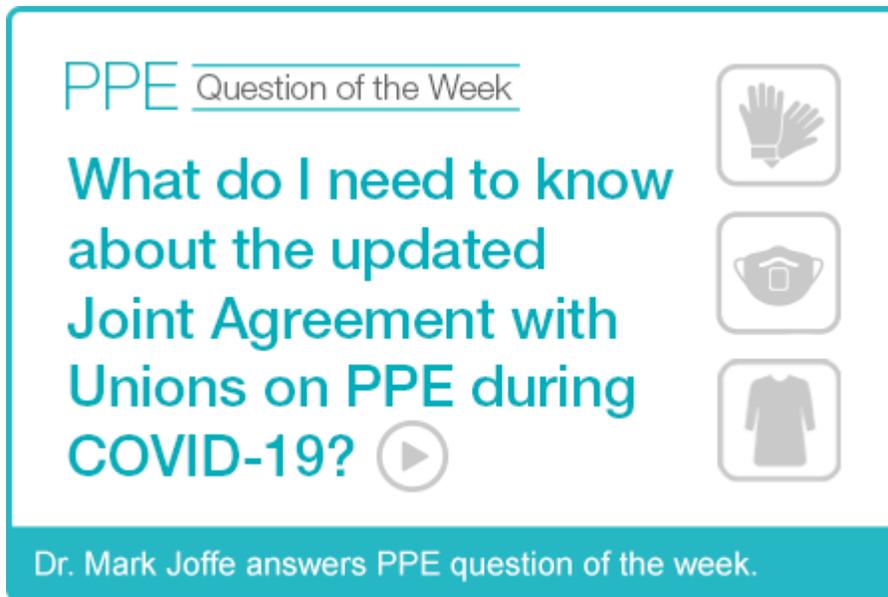
On Feb. 10, the Government of Alberta announced a one-time [Critical Worker Benefit](#) of \$1,200 for eligible workers. AHS has been working with the Government of Alberta on the application of the Critical Worker Benefit for AHS staff.

We appreciate your patience as we continue to work with Alberta Health to establish a new process to issue these payments. More information about the Critical Worker Benefit will be provided soon. Staff are asked to watch their AHS email for important information about how and when the payment will be processed.

### **PPE Question of the Week – What do I need to know about the updated Joint Agreement with Unions on PPE during COVID-19?**

Throughout the pandemic, personal protective equipment (PPE) has been a key factor in protecting the health and safety of healthcare workers by helping to prevent exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 as they provide high-quality care to Albertans.

In the latest [instalment of PPE Question of the Week](#), Vice President and Medical Director of Cancer Care Alberta and Clinical Support Services, Dr. Mark Joffe talks about what we know about the updated joint statement with unions and the safe and effective use of PPE.



The image is a video thumbnail for a 'PPE Question of the Week' video. It features a teal border and a teal bar at the bottom. The text on the left reads: 'PPE Question of the Week' in a light teal font, followed by 'What do I need to know about the updated Joint Agreement with Unions on PPE during COVID-19?' in a larger, bold teal font. A play button icon is located at the end of the text. To the right of the text are three icons: a pair of gloves, a face mask, and a long-sleeved shirt, all in a light teal color. The bottom teal bar contains the text 'Dr. Mark Joffe answers PPE question of the week.' in white.

#### **Verna's Weekly Video Message — An Update on Capital Projects**

Every year, AHS sends Alberta Health and Alberta Infrastructure our Capital Submission list, which identifies our top priority major capital projects.

The submission provides advice to government to help inform funding decisions, and these projects help us build a high-quality, stable health system which supports the well-being of Albertans.

The government's 2021 budget provides \$2.2 billion for health infrastructure projects, including continued investment to complete ongoing projects such as the Calgary Cancer Centre, the Gene Zwozdesky Centre at Norwood and the new Edmonton hospital. It also provides funding for new projects, both urban and rural.

Joining me (Verna) to [tell us more about some of these projects](#) are:

- Michael Suddes, Executive Director, Foothills Medical Centre
- Mauro Chies, Vice President, Cancer Care Alberta & Clinical Support Services, and
- Dean Olmstead, Acting Chief Program Officer, Capital Management.

Michael, Mauro and Dean discuss how we decide which capital projects to move forward and highlight some of the new urban and rural capital projects.



### 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.



“I don’t want to die yet. I’d like to live to be 100,” says Louise Smyth, 97. She received her first COVID-19 vaccine in Calgary this month. A world traveller and avid quilter, Smyth has been to England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, New Zealand and Australia. From a family of 10 girls, she has spent the last year working on several quilts and FaceTiming with friends and family, who have dropped off her groceries for her all year. She lost a family member a few years ago to H1NI, and she has some words for people who aren’t wearing masks or practicing safe distancing. “They’re playing around with death...I’m protecting you. Why aren’t you protecting me?” She misses hugs.

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

### **Influenza Immunization Update – March 20**

As of Mar. 13, 2021, 1,565,155 doses of influenza vaccine have been administered in Alberta. Immunizations are up by more than 150,000 compared to the same time last year.

For the 19th week in row, there are no reported cases of seasonal influenza in Alberta.

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) have tested 105,443 respiratory swabs for influenza from Aug. 23, 2020 to Mar. 13, 2021.

We continue to make exceptional progress this season. Let's continue to protect each other from this vaccine-preventable illness and reduce the strain on our healthcare system.

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, including your families. 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](#).

## Be Well - Be Kind

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### **Nutrition Month: Keeping Healthy During COVID-19**

For the past year, the pandemic has changed many things, including health priorities and eating habits. As March is Nutrition month – it's a great time to think about the importance of healthy eating.

Here's what you can do to support your well-being:

- Take a few minutes to share your thoughts in this [survey](#) through Your Voice Matters. Your answers will help shape how AHS supports the health and wellness of AHS workers.
- Check out the resources below:
  - [Orientation to Healthy Eating](#)
  - [Make a Change: One Meal at a Time](#)
  - [Work Safe Blog](#): Dietitians help find your healthy!
- Work with a [nutritional counsellor](#) through your [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP).

See [Insite](#) for more health and wellness resources.

### **Sharing the Love**

Appreciation for your efforts is continually being shared by the public, patients and AHS team members across the province. Each week we share a selection of the submissions we receive to recognize your compassion and commitment. Please be heartened by the gratitude expressed in the messages below.

*As a front line worker, I just wanted you to know how much you are appreciated. You put yourself out there selflessly. You work so hard to make sure others are comforted. Now it is our*

*turn to comfort you. Please know you are watched and admired day in and day out by people like me. I could never do what you do... You have been given a very special gift. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.*

*-Anonymous*

*Thank you so much for all your hard work and support during this difficult time. Your kindness and strength are greatly appreciated. Thank you for your sacrifices...you are a light in the face of this adversity.*

*-Anonymous*

*We just want you to know that we say thank you for giving your strength to so many. I am thankful for your commitment to caring for our community. Your dedication and skills are making a difference. Sending warm thoughts and our thanks to all of you who are working through these challenging times.*

*-Members of the Edmonton Glenora Rotary Club*

*Thank you all Carewest Front Line staff throughout Calgary for bringing your heart to work each and every shift! You've helped our residents adjust to many new protocols that could certainly cause fear, uncertainty, and doubt. However, your care and thoughtfulness have made these adjustments much easier. Families trust that we are taking the best of care of their loved ones throughout this COVID journey. Thank you.*

*-Jody Ireland, Education*

### **Wrapping Up – Another Extraordinary Week for Vaccine Rollout**

This week began with Phase 2A of vaccine rollout, in which more than 437,000 Albertans are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. With more than 86,000 appointments booked since Monday morning, we swiftly moved through all 10 eligible birth years for all Albertans and the 15 eligible birth years for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people this week, to get as many Albertans immunized, as quickly as possible.

We want to express how grateful we are for the incredible commitment, dedication and effort all teams involved in the vaccine rollout have displayed. We know the road to get here hasn't been easy: it's required a massive and masterfully coordinated effort across the organization, but as more vaccine is available and administered, there is great hope for the weeks and months to come.

At this point in the pandemic, between COVID-19 restrictions and people anxiously awaiting their turn to get the vaccine, we know emotions are running high. But despite the pressures, setbacks and frustrations, you have stepped up again and again to support each other and pulled together to ensure Albertans have the care they need. Once again, your work has been extraordinary and we are exceptionally proud of you.

Thank you for your patience, your tireless focus, forward thinking and perseverance. These characteristics are not only admirable, they are making a difference in the lives of Albertans, every day.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

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

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



Physical  
distancing  
works