



Message from
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AHS Update: Minister and AHS leaders tour communities, MyLearningLink introduces course catalogue, monkeypox immunization appointments expanded, Moderna for children six months to five years now available

Please print and share with your teams as needed

Dear staff, physicians and volunteers,

Today's Update

- **Our Priorities**
- **Supports When You Need Them**
- **COVID-19 Cases in Alberta**
- **Monkeypox Immunization Appointments Available Across all Zones**
- **Moderna for Children Six Months to Five Years Now Available**
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We would like to recognize that our work takes place on historical and contemporary Indigenous lands, including the territories of Treaties 6, 7 & 8, and the homeland of the Métis. We also acknowledge the many Indigenous communities that have been forged in urban centres across Alberta.

Our Priorities

The AHS Update message includes the latest information on our COVID-19 response, as well as updates on the progress AHS is making on its 10 priority areas. Each edition will include updates on specific initiatives connected to some of the 10 priorities. We have much to accomplish together in these areas, so we want to make sure our teams have the most current information on the work underway and the work ahead.

Priority: Rural Initiatives and Engagement

This work is designed to strengthen partnerships with rural communities, to enhance and better support the rural healthcare workforce and to better meet the unique needs of Albertans living in non-urban communities.

Minister, AHS leaders tour three AHS zones

AHS leadership joined Health Minister Jason Copping at a series of engagement events in South, Central and North zones in June and July. In each community, there were events with internal and community stakeholders to discuss three questions:

- What is the healthcare system doing well?
- What are the current challenges within the healthcare system?
- What opportunities exist to address challenges?

Events were held in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, Cold Lake, Lloydminster, Peace River, Slave Lake, Grande Prairie and Whitecourt. Additional sessions are being planned for the fall.

Throughout, internal and community stakeholders highlighted the quality of the care being delivered across Alberta. Many external stakeholders applauded AHS front-line staff for their dedication and commitment throughout the pandemic and acknowledged the toll that has taken on many. There was significant support and respect for healthcare workers. Other successes commonly raised were Connect Care, Netcare, the provincial healthcare system and its advantages, and the excellent care delivered once someone is “in” the acute care system.

Challenges focused on key areas such as workforce and the shortage of physicians and front-line caregivers in many communities, which is impacting service delivery and resulting in service disruptions. Access, wait times, organizational structure and the desire for more local decision-making were other key themes identified by participants. In terms of solutions or opportunities, many communities identified community partnerships, hiring incentives, more promotion of the benefits of a rural lifestyle, and “growing our own” programs or initiatives that bring the training to communities rather than requiring youth leave their homes to learn and train.

Overall, about 500 Albertans have participated in the engagement sessions and evaluations have been largely positive. Many Albertans expressed appreciation to the minister and AHS leadership for coming to their communities to host these conversations. Further sessions are planned later this summer.

Priority: Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI)

The ASI will improve timely access to surgical care in Alberta. The goal of ASI is to ensure adult and pediatric patients receive scheduled surgeries within clinically appropriate timeframes.

Surgical wait-list status update

We continue to work diligently to recover to pre-pandemic surgical status. Over the past four weeks, the average weekly volume for surgical activity is 97 per cent of our pre-pandemic surgical volumes. It is important to note that AHS is now using summer weekly baselines, which are lower than standard baselines. This is typically done over the summer months to account for summer vacation schedules.

Our total surgical wait-list for adults sits at approximately 71,400, compared to approximately 72,800 at the beginning of May. In February 2020, before the pandemic, the total wait-list was 68,000.

Approximately 80,300 surgeries have been completed in the 2022/23 fiscal year.

Partnering with Health Link for a surgical wait-list management project

AHS is expanding a wait-list validation and surgical confirmation project initially piloted in Edmonton Zone to support surgical wait-list management strategies across the province. By validating provincial and zone surgical wait-lists through surgical confirmation with patients, wait-lists are expected to improve by up to 10 per cent across the province.

Through this project, patients scheduled for surgery will receive an automated phone call or voicemail from Health Link. Patients will be asked to confirm AHS has contacted the correct person and to follow up with the message centre.

As part of the process to confirm wait-list status, patients will be asked for their provincial personal health number and birthdate to confirm their identity. Patients who hang up or do not call the number back will not see their position on the wait-list affected.

Over the next few months, Health Link and the Surgical Wait-list Management team are working with the zones to develop zone-specific implementation plans.

For more information and updates on the ASI, please visit ahs.ca/asi.

Supports When You Need Them

Maintain Balance with Caregiver Support

Caring for an elderly or sick family member while juggling other commitments can be challenging. [Elder and Family Care](#) can help you find your family member housing, coordinate care from a distance, set up palliative or respite care, and more.

When you call the client services centre, you will be asked some questions to ensure you receive personalized support. A caregiving specialist will help you navigate the options and resources available to you.

If you feel overwhelmed about any issue, call the [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#) (EFAP) intake line any time at 1-877-273-3134. Physicians can contact the [AMA Physician and Family Support Program](#), a confidential 24/7 support line, at 1-877-SOS-4MDS for options and support.

See the [Resilience, Wellness and Mental Health Resource Guide](#) for a comprehensive list of health and wellness supports. You can also download [Headversity](#), the resilience app, to learn skills to proactively build your mental health. Questions? Contact wellness@ahs.ca.

MyLearning Link Introduces Course Catalogue

[MyLearningLink](#) — AHS's learning management system — hosts more than 2,500 classroom, virtual and online learning opportunities.

To improve your access to these opportunities, MyLearningLink's new [course catalogue](#) is now available to search on Insite. Each title now includes a brief course description to help you identify courses to support your personal interests or professional goals. You can find self-directed or instructor-led courses on a variety of topics, as well as all [required organizational learning](#) and competency-related courses.

You can also check out the [Learning Navigator](#), where a comprehensive list of employee and leadership development courses and resources have been categorized into a learning continuum from beginning to mastering levels that support our AHS values and [competencies](#) and [LEADS framework](#). There are documents, wikis, podcasts, videos, as well as links to courses available on MyLearningLink, exploring a variety of topics to support development of your skills as an employee and leader.

The [‘Your Learning. Your Way’](#) portal organizes learning resources and allows you to engage with other learners on specific topics, including accountability, coaching, communication, conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, leadership and team effectiveness.

There’s something for everyone. Visit the [Learning homepage](#) to find other educational opportunities that may interest you.

COVID-19 Status

Hospitalizations and ICUs

On Aug. 8:

- 720 individuals were in non-ICU hospital beds with COVID-19 compared to 623 individuals in non-ICU hospital beds on July 25, a 15.6 per cent increase.
- 28 individuals were in ICU hospital beds with COVID-19 compared to 26 individuals in ICU hospital beds on July 25, a 7.7 per cent increase.

Variants of Concern

Alberta Precision Laboratories (APL) continues to closely monitor SARS-CoV-2 variants.

From Aug. 2-8, an average of 72 per cent of positive samples were strain-typed. Of those, the seven-day rolling average was five per cent Omicron BA.2 lineage, eight per cent Omicron BA.4 lineage, and 87 per cent Omicron BA.5 lineage.

As global data is updated, sub-lineage designations are refined which may affect lineage calls in Alberta. We continue to monitor our data and adjust as information becomes available. While BA.4 and BA.5 appear to transmit more readily than BA.2 due to their ability to evade immunity from immunization or prior infection, there is no evidence that they cause more severe disease than other Omicron lineages.

Wastewater Surveillance

Wastewater can provide an early indication of infection trends in a community. For wastewater surveillance comparing weekly averages:

- Ten sites increased by more than 25 percent compared to the weekly average two weeks ago. These sites were Lethbridge, Brooks, Strathmore, Lacombe, and all locations in North and Edmonton zones. The other 10 sites decreased or had no significant changes. These observations were from Aug. 8 at noon.

Frequency of reporting updates varies by sampling site. The Alberta Wastewater Surveillance Program is a collaboration between the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, APL and Alberta Health.

Other Notable COVID-19-related Information

- As of Aug 8, 4,694 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 29 since the last report. We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
- As of Aug 8, 28,619 individuals have been hospitalized with COVID-19 in Alberta.
- From July 26 to Aug 8, 15,516 COVID-19 tests were completed, a 14-day average of 1,108 tests per day. During this period, the daily positivity rate ranged from 19.2 per cent to 29.5 per cent.

Things You Need to Know

Monkeypox Immunization Appointments Available Across all Zones

Albertans 18 and older who self-identify as meeting the [eligibility criteria](#) for targeted prevention of monkeypox, prior to an exposure, can book an appointment to receive monkeypox vaccine in nine cities across the province: Calgary, Edmonton, Edson, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and St. Paul.

Appointments are required. Anyone who is eligible and interested in receiving the monkeypox vaccine must call Health Link at 1-866-301-2668 to review eligibility and book an appointment.

AHS is further enhancing the opportunity for more eligible people in Alberta to receive the vaccine. Learn more at ahs.ca/monkeypox

Moderna for Children Six Months to Five Years Now Available

Moderna vaccine for children 6 months to under five years of age started rolling out on Aug. 2. While Health Canada approved this product for use in children six months to five years of age, the pediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine continues to be available to children 5 to 11 years.

Bookings are now available through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#) and Health Link 811. AHS will administer all doses for this age group as the scope of practice for pharmacists for administering immunization is five years of age and older. Clinics are available in First Nations using their current booking and infrastructure.

Informed consent will be required from a parent or guardian of children in this age group who wish to have their children immunized.

If parents haven't already, they can register their child online through the [Alberta Vaccine Booking System](#). To ensure parents, guardians and families have current, reliable information and resources to help them make an informed decision about immunizing their children, an AHS webpage is available.

Designed to help parents, guardians and families make the best decision about the COVID-19 vaccine for their children, the ahs.ca/vaccinekids webpage features videos that provide advice from top pediatric specialists, [frequently asked questions](#), and [resources to help fearful children cope with needles](#).

As we roll out the vaccine to this important population, we encourage parents who have questions about childhood immunization to visit the site, talk to your pediatrician or family physician, or call Health Link at 811 to speak to a registered nurse.

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 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. The testing data does not include rapid antigen test results for healthcare workers.

As of Aug. 9:

- 96,414 employees (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 32,352 (or 33.6 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 15,724 employees who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 931 (or 5.9 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 2,799 employees who have tested positive are still under investigation as to the source of infection.
- 6,917 physicians (AHS and APL combined) have been tested for COVID-19 and, of those tested, 1,813 (or 26.2 per cent) have tested positive.
- Of the 651 physicians who have tested positive and whose source of infection has been determined, 30 (or 4.6 per cent) acquired their infection through a workplace exposure. An additional 216 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](#).

NHL Champs Bring Stanley Cup to Alberta Children’s Hospital

Patients and families at Alberta Children’s Hospital got a close-up view of the Stanley Cup this past Tuesday, thanks to Colorado Avalanche players (and former Calgarians) Cale Makar and Logan O’Connor. The Stanley Cup champions paid a visit to the Alberta Children’s Hospital, bringing smiles to the faces of dozens of young patients. The visit was arranged through the Alberta Children’s Hospital Foundation.



Evelyn, a patient at the Alberta Children’s Hospital, gets a close-up look at the Stanley Cup thanks to a hospital visit from Colorado Avalanche players Logan O’Connor, left, and Cale Makar.

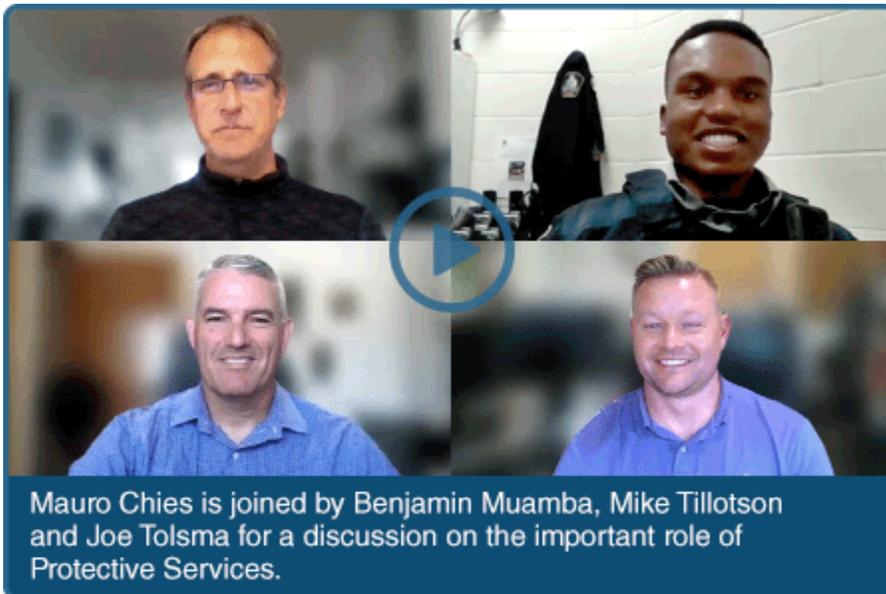
Interim CEO Video Message — Spotlight on Protective Services

[Protective Services](#) is a true partner in care. Its staff are critical to ensuring the safety and security of our people, our patients and their families, and our community.

They play a key role to prevent and mitigate safety risks to ensure our people are safe from harm and able to provide quality, patient- and family-centred care to Albertans. We know the past couple of years have been difficult and AHS has seen a corresponding increase in incidents in our facilities across the province. Every day, our peace officers respond to these calls swiftly and respectfully. Their training and compassion for all those involved enables them to help create peaceful resolutions that keep everyone safe.

Joining the [AHS Vlog to tell us more about their role and how they support our people](#) are:

- Benjamin Muamba, Protective Services Officer and rural mobile peace officer.
- Mike Tillotson, Protective Services Executive Director.
- Joe Tolsma, Team Leader for the Protective Services Communication Centre.



Be Well - Be Kind

Gratitude from Albertans

Everything you and your colleagues do every day to provide safe quality care to Albertans is being noticed. Messages of gratitude keep coming in from across the province and beyond during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can read a recent message of gratitude below — and you can see more on our [Sharing the Love](#) webpage.

I wanted to thank the AHS mental health and addictions sectors for having free supports for people dealing with mental health problems. I realize the amount of energy and time that goes into trying to help our society function and save people's lives. Thank you for your dedication and programs!
— Anonymous

Wrapping Up

There are just over three weeks until Labour Day. We hope most of you have had a chance to take some time off, get outside and enjoy the sun. We know many of you have been working extra hard, and working extra hours, to cover for colleagues who are taking vacation time. So we'd like to close this week's message with a note of appreciation for both practising self-care by taking time off and for your commitment when at work, making sure others can enjoy time off, too. We hope you have been, or will be, making summer memories that will last a lifetime.

With enduring gratitude and appreciation,

Mauro Chies

Interim AHS President & CEO

Dr. Laura McDougall

Senior Medical Officer of Health

