

# CMO SMOH Weekly Notice for AHS Medical Staff

March 19, 2021

## This week:

- Highlighted Resources
  - COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy Factsheet for Practitioners
  - Counselling of Immunocompromised Individuals on the use of COVID-19 Vaccines
  - University of Calgary COVID Corner
- AMA's COVID-19 Talks for Docs - Managing chronic symptoms of COVID-19 **New**
- MD Culture **New**
- Doc of the Week **New**
- Nutrition Month: Keeping Healthy During COVID-19 **New**
- Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update
  - COVID-19 Case Status in Alberta **Update**
  - COVID-19 Testing for Healthcare Workers — the Latest Numbers **Update**
  - COVID-19 Immunization **Update**
    - By the Numbers
    - Update on Covishield/AstraZeneca Rollout
    - Update on Pfizer/Moderna Phase 2A Rollout
    - Update on Phase 2B and 2C
    - Community Physicians to Administer Vaccine Soon
  - Update Regarding Critical Worker Benefit **New**
  - Influenza Immunization **Update**
- Beyond COVID-19: Clinical Stipend **Update**
- Additional Resources for Physicians

## Highlighted Resources

- **COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy Factsheet for Practitioners** - Please see the new information resource from the Maternal Newborn Child & Youth (MNCY) SCN – [Alberta COVID-19 Vaccination in Pregnancy Factsheet for Practitioners](#). This new resource document was prepared with consultation from the MNCY SCN Maternal Newborn COVID-19 Working Group.
- **Counselling of Immunocompromised Individuals on the use of COVID-19 Vaccines** - Please see this [guidance](#) developed to provide information about counselling of immunocompromised individuals on the use of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. This document is intended for healthcare providers and is a brief summary of considerations to inform pre-immunization assessment.
- **University of Calgary COVID Corner** - COVID Corner, hosted by the University of Calgary, offers updates on various topics and aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Each of these sessions are recorded and available on the [University of Calgary website](#).

## AMA's COVID-19 Talks for Docs - Managing chronic symptoms of COVID-19

The Alberta Medical Association's (AMA) latest webinar is focused on common and emerging questions from primary care and other generalist physicians (i.e., pediatricians, internal medicine) about potential long-term health effects of a COVID-19 infection.

Participants will have time to ask questions related to managing patients and practice needs during COVID-19, including:

- What are patients reporting as common lingering or chronic symptoms of COVID-19
- How to manage patients suffering from these symptoms in primary care & when to refer

**Date:** March 31

**Time:** 12-1 p.m.

**Registration information:** [Here](#)

This series is hosted by physicians from Alberta Health Services, College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association with support from the Primary Care Networks and the Alberta College of Family Physicians.

## **MD Culture**

### **Physician Wellness Zoom Rooms**

The positive effects of poetry and music on wellness during the pandemic

- **Date:** Tues. March 23, 5-6 p.m.
- **Zoom Link:** [Here](#)

Self-compassion

- **Date:** Tues. April 6, 2021, 5-6 p.m.
- **Zoom Link:** [Here](#)

Anti-racism

- **Date:** Tues. April 20, 2021, 5-6 p.m.
- **Zoom Link:** [Here](#)

### **Livestream Concert Series for patients, families and healthcare workers**

**Date:** Sun. March 21, 2 p.m.

**Visit:** [wintersolace.ca](http://wintersolace.ca) for this live streamed concert and prior recorded concerts.

### **MD Culture Resources:**

- In follow up to our discussion on March 9, we are sharing this [CMA resource on Moral Distress](#)
- Infographics from past Physician Wellness Zoom rooms can be found at [www.ahs.ca/mdwellness](http://www.ahs.ca/mdwellness).
- Check out our newsletter, MD Culture Shift Winter edition, [here](#).

### **Doc of the Week – Dr. Christine East**

Dr. Christine East, Emergency Medicine Physician in Calgary, leads the development of care plans for individuals that present frequently to the Emergency Department in Calgary. She brings together a multidisciplinary team across various departments to collaboratively develop plans so care is consistent, safer and these individuals are treated with dignity and respect. One of these plans included a team of nephrology, EMS, other nursing staff from the ED, ethics and primary care, all working together.

Thank you, Dr. East, for your time and dedication to your colleagues and for Albertans.

### **Doc of the Week Call for Nominations**

*Do you know a physician who has gone above and beyond during the pandemic to shape and drive improvements for patients? Perhaps a physician colleague has gone above and beyond to help support others during a difficult day?*

*Each week, we would like to take a moment to celebrate and thank the amazing physicians working across the province to provide high-quality care to patients, staff and colleagues across the province. If you know someone who deserves to be celebrated, please email [CMO@ahs.ca](mailto:CMO@ahs.ca) with your suggestion, and a brief description of why.*

### **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. Take a few minutes to share your thoughts in this [survey](#).

Additional support for your health and wellness resources can be found through your [Physician and Family Support Program](#).

### **Highlights from the CEO All Staff Update**

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

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 March 17, compared to 338 cases the previous week (March 3-10).

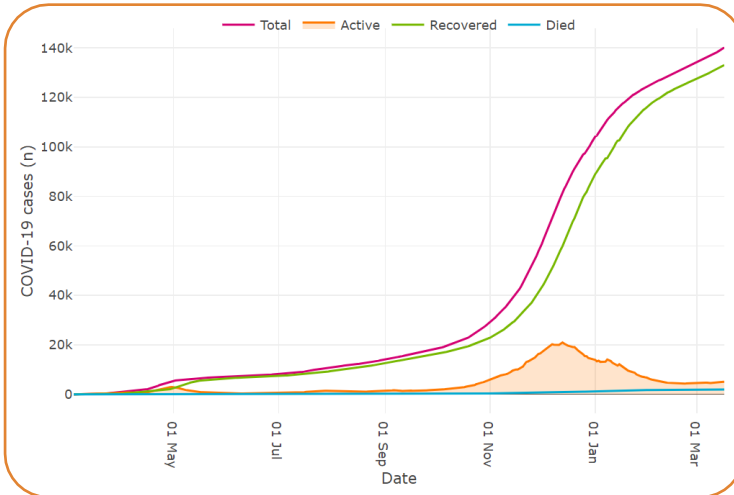
From March 11-17, there were 1,552 cases among individuals aged 20 to 49 years, which is about 51 per cent of new cases during that time period. However, cases continue to occur in every age group. For instance, this week, 637 new cases were reported among school aged children (5 to 19 years) and 355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

As of March 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 March 17 to the week previous is below:

	<b>Active Cases (as of March 17)</b>	<b>Active Cases (as of March 10)</b>	<b>Per cent Change</b>
<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%

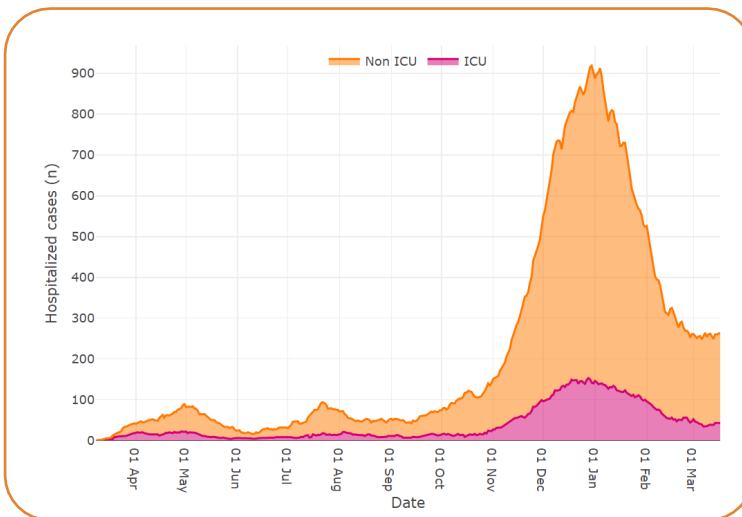
The total number of individuals being treated for COVID-19 in Alberta's hospitals was relatively stable again this week, though the number of individuals in intensive care units (ICUs) increased slightly. On March 17, there were 264 individuals in hospitals across the province, compared to 260 hospitalizations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



### Hospitalizations and admissions

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

Zone	Hospitalizations	In ICU
Calgary	90	15
Edmonton	87	11
Central	30	6
North	30	4
South	27	7



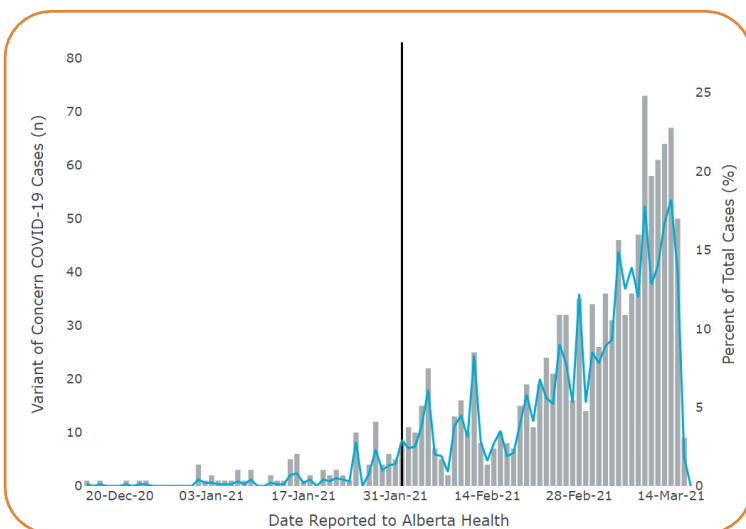
### Variants of concern

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 March 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 March 9 and 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 March 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.
  - 1,957 individuals have passed away from COVID-19, including 24 deaths over the past seven days (March 11-17). We extend our condolences to the families of these individuals, and to all who have lost loved ones from any cause during this time.
  - For the winter school term, 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.
  - A total of 3,564,100 tests have been conducted and 1,863,885 individuals have ever been tested. From March 11-17, 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.
  - 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 March 8-14 was 1.07, whereas R value the previous week was 0.95.

#### **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 Immunization Updates**

#### ***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
- Albertans 75 years of age and older: 59 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 around 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 Pfizer/Moderna Phase 2A Rollout***

[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 86,000.

Albertans eligible to book through AHS [online](#) or through HealthLink 811 include Albertans born in 1956 or earlier and First Nations, Metis 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 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 as completion of 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 honours' system. 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 healthcare professionals and their office or support staff.

- This includes AHS, Covenant Health, Alberta Precision Laboratories 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 [FAQs](#) and 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 the [alberta.ca website](#) 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.

### **Influenza Immunization Update**

As of March 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 March 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](#).



## Beyond COVID-19

### AHS Review: Clinical Stipend Update

AHS is working towards ending payments to physicians that are supplemental to fee for service (FFS) billings. These changes were identified in the [AHS Review Report](#) and the Alberta Health (AH) [Physician Funding Framework](#). For physicians moving to alternative relationship plans, start dates will be staggered over the next weeks and months as all parties work together to develop the new arrangements. Given the timing of the ratification process, in order to minimize uncertainty for physicians, implementation timelines will be extended as outlined below.

1. Stipends to be transitioned to Alternative Relationship Plans (ARPs). We have consulted with Alberta Health regarding these prospective ARP arrangements and soon expect to begin engaging physicians more actively for these programs. Alberta Health will be providing information sessions starting as soon as possible, with the expectation that all programs identified to transition to a clinical ARP will be completed no later than Dec. 31, 2021. Stipends associated with these programs will be extended until the clinical ARP is implemented.
2. Stipends requiring additional time to transition to an alternate compensation model. Communication with affected physician groups will begin as soon as possible and transition will occur on or before Dec. 31, 2021. This will allow time for AHS to consult with each program specific physician group to identify if any further support is required before the stipend ends.
3. Stipends that will transition to the Physician On Call Program on or before Dec. 31, 2021.
4. Stipends that have been identified to end without transition to another compensation model. Communication with affected physician groups will begin as soon as possible and transition will occur on or before Dec. 31, 2021. This will allow time for AHS to consult with each program specific physician group to identify if any further support is required before the stipend ends.

Please visit the [AHS Medical Staff website](#) for FAQs and more information.

### Additional Resources for Physicians:

- [Acute Care Outbreak Prevention & Management Task Force](#)
- [AHS Immunization Information](#)
- [AHS Virtual Health](#)
- [COVID-19 FAQ for Clinicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources for Community Physicians](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing and Self-Isolation Criteria](#)
- [CPSA's physician portal](#)
- [Cumming School of Medicine Continuing Medical Education \(CME\) Resources](#)
- [Government of Alberta Vaccination Updates](#)
- [How to Access AHS Insite and Email](#)
- [How to do a Nasopharyngeal \(NP\) Swab](#) (New England Journal of Medicine)
- [IPC Emerging Issues](#)
- [Online Healthcare Worker Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Physician & Family Support Program](#) - 1-877-SOS-4MDS (767-4637)
- [Physician Wellness Educational Resources: Well Doc Alberta](#)
- [Spectrum](#): A mobile app customized to deliver local antimicrobial stewardship guidelines, resistance data, dosing information, and AHS COVID-19 related content.
- COVID-19 Questions? Contact your local Zone Emergency Operations Centre (ZEOC):
  - [ZEOC.South@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.South@ahs.ca)
  - [ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.Calgary@ahs.ca)
  - [ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.Central@ahs.ca)
  - [ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca](mailto:ZEOC.Edmonton@ahs.ca)
  - [PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca](mailto:PCH.ZEOCNorth@ahs.ca)

**For more information**

- Visit the [COVID-19 Healthcare Professional information page](#) on the AHS website for more information or contact [AHS.ECC@ahs.ca](mailto:AHS.ECC@ahs.ca).
- Additional updates and information are being shared through the [College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta \(CPSA\)](#).

*This update, provided every Friday, is intended to provide a summary of the key action items, information and decisions for AHS Medical Staff in relation to clinical policies and practices, and for the COVID-19 pandemic response. It is forwarded to physicians' preferred email inbox.*

*Do you have COVID-19 questions, information, or a physician or team who have gone above and beyond during the pandemic, that you would like to see covered in an upcoming edition of the COVID-19 CMO update? Let us know at [CMO@ahs.ca](mailto:CMO@ahs.ca).*

Sincerely,

**Dr. Debrah Wirtzfeld on behalf of Dr. Francois Belanger**

Associate Chief Medical Officer

**Dr. Laura McDougall**

Senior Medical Officer of Health



**Alberta Health  
Services**

Physical  
distancing  
works