



We All Need to Do Our Part to Stop the Spread of COVID-19

Dear Albertans,

On behalf of Alberta's physicians, I implore you to follow all the newly announced and existing COVID-19 protocols: your safety and the safety of ones you love depends on it. The restrictions announced this week by government were necessary as we are at a critical point in this pandemic. The daily actions of every Albertan will dictate what happens next. Our COVID case counts are surging, as are hospitalizations and deaths. Our health care system is under strain and this is about to get worse. I know I speak for all members of the health care team when I say that all we want is to be able to look after those who fall ill, effectively and safely. If the case numbers keep rising, we will reach a point where that won't be possible.

For at least the next four weeks, we will all stay home and there will be no social gatherings. When we must leave home for permissible reasons, the formula for keeping ourselves and our more vulnerable safe is not a complicated one. Wear a mask in public spaces, adhere to restrictions on public spaces and respect enforcement efforts. Keep your distance from others and give others the courtesy of distance from you. Wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer, avoid all in-person contact with those who don't live in your household, and self-isolate when you are sick.

Just because something sounds simple, however, doesn't mean it's easy. While these measures are an inconvenience for some, for others it is much more than that. The economic, social, psychological and physical hardships are very real. This is particularly true on dark winter days when our wish is to celebrate with friends and family.

The difficulty is that these preventative measures only work well when we all do them – and do them all of the time.

Public health restrictions are intrusive and limiting by design. We accept these temporary measures under exceptional situations for the wellbeing of others. I hope that the civic altruism we experienced early in the pandemic has not faded. This problem is real and it is here now.

We are experiencing a "care deficit" in Alberta as patients have put off much of their regular health needs or had the system put off their treatment to redeploy resources. This will have significant implications in the months and years to come. The health of the economy and the health of Albertans are inseparable. The implementation of restrictions must strike a balance and implementing measures in a progressive fashion was a reasonable approach. They have not been as effective as hoped and we are now faced with trying to avert disaster.

What is disaster exactly? It is the lack of resources to effectively care for the sick, those with COVID infection and others with serious illness from other causes. This is what keeps many of us

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in health care awake at night. We will increase acute care and ICU capacity, but it will have a limit. Most importantly there will be people in those beds and some will be fighting for their lives. Who are these people? They are our parents, grandparents, friends and neighbours. With the holiday season just days away, please remember every decision you make to not follow the restrictions, puts others at risk. Please stay safe Alberta.

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