

June 15, 2021

**I am having a hard time being hopeful and I'm so tired. Is this pandemic ever going to end?**

A Letter to Albertans:

Last week I received a letter from a fellow Albertan struggling, like all of us, to cope with this pandemic. He wrote he is having a hard time being hopeful and being positive for his wife and son. He told me how it felt as though the pandemic was never going to end. With one variant after another are we ever going to have our lives back again, he asked? Maybe not in a week, or in a month. But at some point, will it finally be over?

In answering his question, I realized that I too needed to start thinking about the positives to come. In answering his question, I realized that there are likely many more of us who feel much the same – people are struggling with all the negative, and need to begin to think more about the positives.

I hope you find my reply to him helpful. Thanks. James Talbot.

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Dear Friend:

No one can predict the future with certainty, but I believe the answer to your question is that there are many reasons to be positive, have hope, and to believe that there will be an end to COVID. Here are my reasons for believing this.

Vaccine response

Canada should have two doses of vaccine for everyone who wants it by the fall or early winter. We know that the most vulnerable by age will be protected from dying or going to hospital. We also know that all three vaccines (Pfizer, Moderna, Astra Zeneca) provide major immunity to the original strain, as well as all the variants. This means, by the fall we will see the following:

- Mortality due to COVID will remain low.
- Transmission of COVID in the community will stay low.
- Pressure on hospitals and ICUs will stay low.
- Schools and businesses will return to normal.

There is further good news:

- The vaccines are showing better immunity than if you contracted COVID, and that immunity is longer lasting than the influenza vaccine. This means people are likely to stay protected until at least the fall of 2022.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are easy to update, and if we need to modify the vaccine as a booster for future variants that can be done very easily.

### Our most likely future for this coming fall and beyond

By this coming fall, assuming vaccine uptake is as we hope, return to schools and workplaces will be safe. I do think people should still not go to work or to school if they are feeling sick for any reason and that, like the Japanese have for decades, we will use masks to protect ourselves and others more often than we did before COVID.

And for beyond ...

- For the next few years, we must ensure that all residents and staff in long term care have proof of immunity. This will keep mortality low.
- We may need a vaccine booster every year for the next few years, just as we do for influenza, but here again there is good news because COVID vaccines are many times more effective than influenza vaccine and much longer lasting.
- We may want to ensure that we have proof of immunity when we travel because it is going to be awhile before the rest of the world catches up to Canada's immunization rates, or that of other countries such as the UK and the US.

To each of you who are tired and losing hope we will ever be past this, please remember you have so many reasons to be positive

- You and the people you care about are alive and well.
- Your sacrifices have been meaningful and have made a difference. Your friends, neighbours, and Albertans who you never met did not get sick, hospitalized or die because of the actions you took to protect yourself and others. You made a difference.
- The sacrifices you made meant that we beat the virus three times in Alberta - stopping the spread. As a result, we have only one-third of the mortality per capita of the US, the UK or Sweden.

You have walked the walk in doing for others as you would have them do unto you. Come the fall of 2021, it is likely that we will be most of the way back to normal. After that it is likely that we will be able to go on enjoying our lives, with the minor inconvenience of getting a booster shot every so often. Not so bad.

Gratefully,



Dr. James Talbot

Co-Chair, Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee  
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