

February 26, 2021

Public Statement:

We strongly recommend that the province not move forward with any further easing of COVID-19 restrictions on March 1st

As the co-chairs of the Committee, we strongly recommend that the province not move forward with any further easing of COVID-19 restrictions on March 1st and that, instead, it should either close bars, restaurants and pubs to indoor service or, at least, re-institute meaningful maximum capacity limits and enforcement of the current restrictions.

Our reasons for this are:

1. New active COVID-19 cases per day have stopped decreasing. Currently cases are at a level higher than the peak of the first wave and where exponential growth began in the second wave. Also, the R value is increasing and above 1 in parts of the province.
2. The more highly transmissible COVID-19 UK variant, which may also cause more serious disease, is being detected across communities and if it became established as our dominant strain would be predicted to cause more rapid increases than the original strain did in the last surge. It would do so in spite of the same high level of restrictions.
3. It is clear that many bars, pubs and restaurants are not obeying the current restrictions that are in place. They are overcrowded, not enforcing same household rules and are over safe capacity at peak times. This is an extreme risk for a third wave with the original COVID-19 strain and is even higher risk for the more transmissible UK variant.
4. Despite the projected improvement in vaccine supply, it will still be months before all Albertans who are at high risk will be vaccinated.

The health care system and the population, after having been stressed for so long, really can't tolerate another surge before the end of our vaccination campaign.

Any further easing of COVID-19 restrictions should only be undertaken when all high-risk individuals in the province have been immunized- we have a short window remaining to prevent another surge and protect Albertans, but it is rapidly closing.

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