



The Honourable Jason Kenney
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
10800 97 Avenue
Edmonton AB T5K 2B6

April 1, 2021

EZMSA Office
Suite 201 12315 Stony Plain Road NW
Edmonton, AB
T5N 3Y8

Dear Premier Kenney:

Re: Urgent Need to Reinstigate Enhanced Public Health Restrictions

The recent rapid increase in active COVID cases in Alberta represents the predicted third wave which will dwarf what we saw in December if urgent and competent action is not taken. This is being driven by the more rapidly transmissible UK variant which causes more serious consequences, bad decisions by individuals and organizations not to obey public health guidelines, a lack of enforcement of public health regulations and the government's premature relaxation of existing COVID-19 precautions which has encouraged super-spreader events.

As has been seen wherever the UK variant has taken hold, it causes up to 60% more serious disease and deaths, more critically affects younger people and is transmitted faster than the original variant. This means the stress on the health care system and exhausted health care professionals will be greater than the second wave. This endangers anyone who will need to be treated in a hospital for COVID or for any other serious health condition. As we have warned for months the continued increase in community spread of this variant was entirely predictable with premature reductions in COVID-19 protective measures.

To date, the average age of people admitted to hospital or ICU because of COVID is 58 years and, over the last year, 40% of COVID admissions to hospital were in those less than 60 years of age. Thankfully, many of the people at highest risk for death from COVID have been immunized. Unfortunately, not enough people in this middle-aged category will be immunized in time to have a significant effect on reducing them being infected by COVID-19, becoming seriously ill and increasing the stress on the health care system.



We strongly recommend:

1. Immediately moving to a lockdown or circuit breaker, advising people to only leave their homes for essential services or outdoor exercise and minimizing the number of people outside of their household members they have contact with indoors.
2. Instructing Alberta Health Services (AHS) environmental health inspectors and their enforcement partners that they are to vigorously inspect, enforce and prosecute individuals and organizations that breach public health protective measures.
3. Accelerate the immunization of health care staff, especially non-AHS staff in the community, and who directly interact with patients including those that immunize, e.g, blood drawing staff, community physicians, nurse practitioners, pharmacists, medical radiology technologists, etc. This should be possible with increasing availability of vaccines in coming weeks.
4. Accelerate, when supplies allow, the immunization of the entire population at risk for hospital admission.

A rapid and effective response by the Province is vital. Even if public health protective measures were strengthened today, we will still see more than double the number of cases per day two weeks from now. Every day we delay in taking effective individual and government action will ensure that the peak gets higher and the recovery to normality takes longer.

We recognize the impact this will have on businesses and individuals. However, without a timely public health response to the rapidly increasing numbers of new COVID cases caused by the UK variant, our hospitals and ICUs will be overwhelmed before the end of April. Without action by the Province, it is possible, as suggested by Minister Shandro in his press conference at the end of January, that we could see between 8,000 and 10,000 new cases per day by the beginning of May. This would be devastating, not only from suffering and death involved, but also from its dramatic impact on the economy. It will be even more devastating because prompt and competent government action can reduce this needless suffering.

Sincerely,

Dr. Noel Gibney

Dr. James Talbot

Co-Chairs, Strategic COVID-19 Pandemic Committee
Edmonton Zone Medical Staff Association

CC: Hon. Tyler Shandro, Minister, Alberta Health
Ms. Lorna Rosen, Deputy Minister, Alberta Health
Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health
Dr. Verna Yiu, President & CEO, AHS
Dr. Paul Boucher, President, Alberta Medical Association
Dr. Erika McIntyre, President, EZMSA
Dr. Scott Beach, President, Calgary and Area Medical Staff Society