

November 9, 2020

The Honourable Jason Kenney MLA
Premier, Province of Alberta
Office of the Premier
307 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Re: Response to increasing COVID-19 infection rates.

Dear Premier Kenney,

We are intensive care physicians, emergency physicians, general internists, pulmonologists, infectious disease specialists and family physicians serving the people of Alberta. We are deeply concerned over the state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta. Over the last three weeks, we have watched the numbers of cases, hospitalizations and ICU admissions dramatically increase. Epidemiologic data have suggested exponential growth of COVID-19 cases over the past month and the daily new cases, hospitalizations and ICU admissions are at an all-time high as of November 7, 2020. If this rate of increase continues unabated, our acute care health system will be overrun in the near future.

There have been advances in the care of critically ill COVID-19 patients based on research over the last 9 months that have resulted in significant reductions in mortality and time to recovery. However, if the rate of COVID-19 spread continues, the consequences to the people of Alberta will be catastrophic. Acute care beds now used to treat patients with cancers, heart disease and other serious conditions will be occupied by COVID-19 patients. Operating rooms will be converted to overflow ICUs and health care professionals will struggle to provide an acceptable quality of care. While other hospital units can be converted to provide intensive care, there is a very finite number of healthcare professionals with the necessary skills to provide this level of care. Hard experience elsewhere in Europe and in the USA has shown that when these resources are overwhelmed, mortality rates from COVID-19 and other potentially treatable conditions increase dramatically.

Lockdowns and restrictions have an immense impact on individuals' ability to earn an income and on their ability to meet and socialize with family and friends. However, it is clear that a minimal impairment approach and requests to the people of Alberta to voluntarily stop holding social gatherings in their homes is unlikely to significantly slow the rate of spread of the disease in our communities. More rigorous public health measures previously enacted in Ontario and Quebec have been inadequate to address surge in COVID-19 cases during this second wave.

We believe that the conversation should not be framed as a choice between "lockdown" akin to the prolonged experience in April-June, or no mandatory restrictions. Instead, the province should consider a 2-week short, sharp lockdown, or "circuit-breaker", to drop the effective reproductive number and allow contact tracing to catch up, then turn to targeted regional control measures similar to Manitoba, Ontario and British Columbia, which have a sliding scale of restrictions based on the number of cases, hospital

admissions and ICU capacity. We believe it is time we had clear direction from our provincial government. We need rules not suggestions.

Therefore, we are imploring you to show the leadership the moment requires in order to save the people of Alberta from further crisis and loss of life.

C.C. Honourable Tyler Shandro MLA, Minister for Health
Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Mr. David Shepherd MLA

Yours sincerely,

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Dr. Lynora Saxinger, Infectious Diseases, Edmonton
Dr. Darren Markland, Critical Care Medicine, Edmonton
Dr. Karen Doucette, Infectious Diseases, Edmonton
Dr. Sean M. Bagshaw, Critical Care Medicine, Edmonton
Dr. Shelley Duggan, Critical Care Medicine and Nephrology, Edmonton
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Dr. Surinder Khinda, Critical Care Medicine and General Internal Medicine, Fort McMurray
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Dr. Rebeccah Rosenblum, Emergency Medicine, Edmonton
Dr. Bill Sevcik, Emergency Medicine, Edmonton
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