

September 29, 2021

Letter to Albertans from the Alberta Medical Association Section of Emergency Medicine:

Dear People of Alberta,

On behalf of the approximately 450 emergency physicians across the province, we feel compelled to add our voice to the increasing calls and pleas for an immediate firebreak to reduce the spread of COVID-19 across our province.

Simply put, our system is on the verge of collapse. Throughout the entire acute care system our team members and colleagues have continued to give more and more. They have performed heroic efforts to expand capacity, but their efforts are not infinite, and expansion of critical care beds cannot continue endlessly.

Our healthcare system has taken drastic measures to do everything we can: operating our ICU capacity on a provincial basis, cancellation of scheduled surgeries for more than three consecutive weeks, stretching our nursing workloads to the absolute extreme, and caring for extremely sick Albertans in more and more non-traditional environments. We have reached maximal efforts that can be added. If the raging fire of infectious COVID-19 cases is not met with a meaningful and effective firebreak, our system will be overwhelmed and cease to be effective for ALL Albertans - whether they suffer from COVID-19 related severe outcomes or not.

Those of us who work on the frontlines of the health care system will continue to show up every day and will continue to work our hardest to care for every single Albertan in need. If you or a loved one are ill or in pain, you should still seek care at your nearest emergency department. We are here for you. Our team of skilled allied health care professionals are doing our absolute best in these extraordinary times, but we need your help. We need every Albertan to continue to mask, to avoid mass gatherings, to get vaccinated, and most importantly to add their voices to call on the government to implement an immediate firebreak.

We understand that implementing province wide public health restrictions should be a last resort measure, used only in the direst of times. As we face the largest wave of COVID-19 infections ever seen in our province during this pandemic, we cannot understate how dire the times have become. Our health care system is on the verge of being pushed over the edge of the cliff. There have been concerns raised that restrictions will only punish those who have already done their part, but it is important to emphasize that the absence of a functional acute care medical system will impact every Albertan in the most drastic of ways. At the absolute extreme, it could mean life or death for many Albertans.

/2

Some province wide restrictions have been implemented by our government. Unfortunately, they are currently easy to circumvent and are not being supported by any meaningful enforcement. As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase, and as our government insists on a watch and wait approach, the entire medical profession is sending out an SOS. Physicians of every specialty are pleading for an immediate firebreak. We need help to preserve safe and timely acute care delivery for all Albertans.

Please call on government to take action. As Albertans, we're all doing our best. It's time they do the same.

The time to act is now. Dire times call for drastic measures.

Dr. Paul Parks
President, Section of Emergency Medicine, Alberta Medical Association

Co-signed Section of Emergency Medicine Executive (representing all regions within Alberta):

Dr. Arun Abbi - Calgary
Dr. Deji Akintola – Grand Prairie
Dr. Stephanie Brass - Lethbridge
Dr. John Colebrook – Red Deer
Dr. Timothy Gash – Red Deer
Dr. Shazma Mithani - Edmonton
Dr. Dave Murray – Fort McMurray
Dr. Angela Naismith - Edmonton
Dr. Ryan Oland – Stony Plain
Dr. Warren Thirsk – Edmonton

cc: Premier Jason Kenney
Minister of Health, Jason Copping
AMA President, Dr. Michelle Warren

,