



September 8, 2021

Dear Family Physicians,

Alberta's most recent COVID-19 numbers, released yesterday after the September long weekend, were alarming. Over the course of four days, Alberta reported 4903 new COVID cases and 17 new deaths, with 602 people in hospital, including 137 in ICU. Although those numbers are shocking, they are not surprising – especially for the many Alberta physicians who have been tireless in sounding the alarm about the impending fourth wave of the pandemic.

Many of you were the first ones to raise serious concerns in late July, when the government announced they intended to lift all of the remaining public health measures as of August 16, close provincial testing centres, and direct symptomatic individuals to their family physicians. You shared your worries and predictions on social media, and attended the town halls hosted by the CMOH, where you asked pointed questions and repeatedly asked to see the evidence that informed the province's initial decision to lift public health measures. In mid-August, the efforts of physicians and Albertans led the province to pause lifting those public health measures for six weeks. This past Friday, the continued outcry helped push the province to finally reinstitute a province-wide masking mandate – [and release the long-awaited data](#).

I am immensely grateful to all of you for raising your voice to protect your patients, your staff, and the entire health care system. While there are still many concerns with the province's measures, including providing cash incentives to encourage the unvaccinated to get their first dose and a refusal to institute the vaccine passports other jurisdictions have implemented, you have demonstrated the power of speaking up and speaking out on the issues that matter. I am hoping you will consider other ways to be heard as well. SFM Executive members will continue to advocate alongside you and do what we can to influence future health decisions.

### **Opportunities to be Heard**

Over the past few weeks, the Section of Family Medicine along with the Section of Rural Medicine and the Primary Care Network Physician Leads Executive, has undertaken an engagement strategy that hosted informal member conversations in zones across the province. Each 90-minute virtual conversation invited members to share personal stories and experiences, to help us understand the challenges you are facing surrounding practice survivability so we can better focus our advocacy efforts. We thank all who attended the sessions to date. If you were unable to attend a previously scheduled session in your own zone, you are invited to join **the final session, which is in the Edmonton Zone, on Thursday, September 16, 5:30 to 7:00 p.m.** This session was originally scheduled for September 9. The AMA has called a Special RF for September 9, and we want to ensure we have the latest news from the Association prior to meeting with you. **Registration to the Edmonton Zone session is required, so please click this [link](#) to register.**

We also created a confidential member survey to help gather experiences about the issues impacting your practice survivability. The [survey will remain open until September 15](#), and we hope you will take the time to share your feedback. The ideas that emerge from this

engagement initiative will help inform our advocacy efforts and ensure we focus on the most important issues for you and your patients.

In the coming weeks, the Section of Family Medicine will be involved in several events that will allow for us to share your ideas and observations with our colleagues throughout the AMA. Although these events, other than the SFM AGM, are not open to all members, as your President, I welcome the opportunity to ensure our collective voice is heard on the issues that are most important to family physicians.

- September 9: Special Representative Forum
- September 16: SFM Executive Meeting
- September 21: SFM AGM and Family Medicine Meeting
- September 24 & 25: Representative Forum
- October 21-23: SFM Executive Strategic Planning Retreat

If there are concerns you would like me and/or other Family Medicine leaders to raise or matters you believe should be discussed, please reach out to me directly at [sfmpres@albertadoctors.org](mailto:sfmpres@albertadoctors.org).

Best regards,



Dr. Craig Hodgson  
President, AMA Section of Family Medicine



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12230 106 Ave NW  
Edmonton AB T5N 3Z1  
Canada*

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