



SASKATCHEWAN
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



SASKATCHEWAN
UNION OF NURSES

NEWS RELEASE

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Saskatchewan's physicians and nurses join to demand increased health measures to combat the pandemic

The Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN) are demanding stronger action by the provincial government to blunt the fourth wave of the pandemic.

As record-high COVID-19 case numbers exhaust health-care workers and strain hospital capacity to the limits, the SMA and SUN are imploring the government to enact the following three measures:

1. A reinstatement of limits on indoor gatherings for both private and public events.
2. Daily, community-level public reporting that indicates percentage of population who are partially and fully vaccinated by age groups as well as case counts, hospitalizations and ICU admissions.
3. Sufficient contact tracing with appropriately trained staff to ensure rapid case detection and to limit community spread. Too much of this critical function is being left in the hands of those who test positive for COVID-19.

SMA president Dr. Eben Strydom said reinstating gathering limits on indoor private functions and community events will help to mitigate the fourth wave of the pandemic.

"Mask mandates and vaccination requirements are essential but are not enough against the spread of the more transmissible Delta variant," he said. "With the approach of colder weather, gatherings will move indoors, creating the potential for surges in cases."

"Without indoor gathering limits, COVID-19 will spread, and people will die," added SUN president Tracy Zambory. "Registered nurses are disheartened to see preventable hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19. They are upset. They are weary. I have heard their stories borne of anger, frustration, and fear for their patients. The government cannot ignore the pleas of the province's health care community any longer."

Ms. Zambory stressed that now is the time for strong leadership, noting that the health system risks being completely overwhelmed within weeks. "We are at a critical moment in this fourth wave. We have already had to make heartbreaking decisions on cancelling surgeries and suspending organ donations."

The SMA and SUN are also calling for more transparency from a government that has resisted making public its modelling of COVID-19 projections. "Modelling information should be widely available as it is essential for physicians to proactively plan and respond to an ever-changing environment," said Dr. Strydom.

Physicians and nurses are also united in asking for routine, regular public reporting of vaccination data at the local level. The Ministry of Health's website dashboard only reports COVID-19 case numbers and the number of vaccinations for each zone and subzone, and not for small geographic areas. Reporting should include the percentage of the population fully and partially immunized in local areas, plus data such as hospitalizations and ICU admissions, deaths by age group and deaths by the percentage of unvaccinated, partially and fully vaccinated.

"Physicians need to have information from the community in which they work," said Dr. Strydom. "The absence of local information makes the job of a physician that much more difficult in the best of times, let alone in the midst of an all-consuming pandemic."

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For more information or to arrange interviews, contact

Girard Hengen, Communications Advisor
Saskatchewan Medical Association
Phone: 306-230-2673
Email: girard.hengen@sma.sk.ca

Lars Murrin, Public Relations Officer
Saskatchewan Union of Nurses
Phone: 306-525-1566
Cell: 306-529-4624
www.sun-nurses.sk.ca