

May 4, 2021

An open letter to Manitobans,

We know you're tired.

Tired of restrictions. Tired of "following the fundamentals." Tired of being separated from friends and family. Tired of being tired.

COVID-19 has taken the lives of nearly 1,000 Manitobans over the past 14 months. It has also stolen important moments, occasions and experiences with friends and loved ones that we'll never get back.

Meanwhile, more than 11,000 Manitobans are waiting in increasingly long lines for surgery and treatment that is crucial to improving their quality and enjoyment of life. Why? Because health systems have limits on the care we are able to provide and over the past year COVID-19 has tested and strained ours.

We know everyone's patience has worn thin. We see what you -- our patients and our neighbours -- have given up to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We see the efforts you have made to follow public health advice to prevent our health system from being overwhelmed.

We know you want to get back to living life the way you did before this virus existed. So *do we*. Every health care provider wants to get back to delivering Manitobans the care they need, when they need it.

We are worried. Our health system cannot manage the potential volume of what is coming our way if we do not do everything possible to limit the spread of this virus. Manitoba case numbers are rising far too quickly. Hospital beds are starting to fill.

Wave Three is here and we need your help one more time.

We are ramping up preparation to care for more COVID-19 patients in our hospitals. But we must also continue to meet the other health care needs of Manitobans. **Without your help**, our capacity to do both is limited.

This third wave is different from what we have experienced so far. The variants are spreading quickly and they are affecting younger people, a group that until now has felt largely invincible to the most serious effects of this virus. Our patients are younger than those we treated during Wave Two but they are just as sick. And while we hope their

chances of survival are better, these patients will still require prolonged care, placing even more pressure on a health system that has been stretched to the limits for more than a year.

We are tired, too. Health-care workers have been pushed to their limits during this pandemic and are exhausted. We are tired of delivering devastating news to families across a video screen instead of supporting them in person. Tired of explaining to patients why they must continue to wait, in distress, while their surgeries are again cancelled or delayed. Tired of the overwhelming sadness we feel with every preventable loss. Regardless, we are preparing to again make every possible effort to care for you and for your loved ones.

Our health system is at serious risk of being overwhelmed. We risk having to again stop providing important services in order to care for the high number of COVID patients. Surgeries to replace hips and knees, retain sight, help children and preserve and maintain quality of life following accidents or related to illness. Services like organ transplantation, diagnostic procedures and cancer treatments.

We have a duty and an obligation to care for you and we are doing everything we can to prepare for what is coming, but **we cannot do it without you.**

The next four weeks of public health restrictions are critical. How Manitobans follow these restrictions will determine the care we will be able to maintain and the health services we must shut down.

If nothing changes, we may very well not be able to give you the care you need and deserve.

If nothing changes, we may soon find ourselves without the ability or capacity to provide the appropriate care to you or someone you love.

On behalf of your exhausted health system, we are asking you to follow the public health orders, to stay home, to limit your contacts, to wear a mask. We are asking you to sacrifice your activities for a little longer. Not forever, but for now so that we aren't forced to sacrifice some of the services that keep Manitobans healthy – and alive.

Please remember that every day we get closer to vaccinating our community. Another 300,000 Manitobans will be vaccinated over the next four weeks. With every shot, we get closer to a return to some sort of “normal.” **We are close.** But our work to fight this virus is not yet done.

Manitobans have risen to this challenge before and we know we can do it again but it needs every one of us to be vigilant. Public health restrictions may not be welcome but they are necessary. We would not support them if they were not.

We must work together to reduce the burden of COVID-19 on the health-care system. To maintain the vital health services needed for all Manitobans. To save lives.

Signed,

Manitoba's Provincial Medical Specialty Leads

Dr. Perry Gray

Provincial Lead, Medical Specialist Services
Chief Medical Officer, Shared Health

Dr. Chris Christodoulou

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Anesthesia

Dr. Edward Buchel

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Surgery

Dr. Mary-Jane Seager

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Women's Health

Dr. Piotr Czaykowski

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Oncology & Hematology

Dr. Mauro Verrelli

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Renal Health

Dr. Amin Kabani

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Provincial Laboratory Diagnostic Services

Dr. Jose Francois

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Primary Care
Emergency Medicine (Acting)

Dr. Bojan Paunovic

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Critical Care

Dr. Eberhard Renner

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Medicine

Dr. Jitender Sareen

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Mental Health & Addiction

Dr. Patricia Birk

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Pediatrics & Child Health

Dr. Ross Feldman

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Cardiac Sciences

Dr. Marco Essig

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Diagnostic Imaging

Dr. Lesley Graff

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Clinical Health Psychology

Dr. Rob Grierson

Provincial Medical Specialty Lead
Emergency Response Services