



Dear Alberta Hutterite Communities:

Alberta Health and the Hutterian Safety Council (HSC) have been working collaboratively since March 2020 to help guide Alberta Hutterite communities through the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure accurate and pertinent information gets disseminated to all Hutterite communities.

Alberta Health and HSC would like to acknowledge the tremendous challenges faced by all Albertans, particularly regarding funerals and other faith-based activities. We are grateful for all fellow Albertans who have made tremendous sacrifices during these times. Like the rest of society, we understand that Hutterite Communities also feel that the need to adapt to public health order measures strongly infringes on and disrupts routines and traditions.

We recognize the importance the Hutterite communities place on their social, spiritual, and mental health support networks, especially during times of tragedy, such as the loss of the three young Spring Valley Hutterite community members in Alberta.

While keeping the magnitude of this tragic event in focus, we emphasize the seriousness of the risk that this and similar gatherings pose to other Albertans. Alberta Health Services (AHS) has confirmed that there were positive COVID-19 cases at the recent event, and there is an exposure risk for those in attendance.

For colonies with confirmed COVID-19 cases, it is necessary to implement protocols such as 14 days of mandatory self-isolation/quarantine and curbing of non-essential travel. Any breach of this quarantine required by public health orders may result in fines to each individual.

Individuals or colonies placed on quarantine refers to a minimum 14 day period which includes remaining at home, not attending work, school, social events or any public gatherings, not taking public transportation and watching for symptoms of COVID-19, in themselves or in any family member.

A strong agriculture sector in Alberta requires Hutterite communities to maintain their integral part of the local food network and economy. Hutterites, being largely agriculture-based communities, understand that consumer confidence must be maintained. Adhering to additional precautions helps protect consumers and the economy alike. We encourage leaders to aggressively collaborate in allowing the safe reopening of local economies and keeping the agriculture sector in Alberta vibrant.

Since June 12, the Alberta pandemic response has moved into phase 2 of the relaunch strategy. This is largely due to the fact that most Albertans have done their part in flattening the

curve. The plan to move forward requires careful monitoring and respecting all guidelines outlined by Alberta's chief medical officer of health. As such, Alberta Health, in collaboration with the Hutterian Safety Council, would like to reiterate the importance of adhering to public health guidelines as outlined below.

As communities or individuals, there are many ways to prevent or slow the spread of COVID-19. Some highly effective preventative measures are as follows:

Large gatherings in indoor/outdoor spaces

- Maintaining a two metres spacing (six feet) between people or groups of people at all indoor or outdoor events.
- Wear facemasks when appropriate.
- If you have a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat (even if they appear mild or resemble a cold), get tested and stay home until you are feeling better.
- Promote practices like coughing and sneezing into your elbow as well as frequent handwashing.
- Public health restrictions limit the number of people attending weddings or funerals to 100 people. To help reduce the chance of spreading the virus, people from the same household or community should sit together and practice social distancing from other groups.
- Outdoor gatherings are also limited to 200 people. However, outdoor events present a much lower risk than indoor events because it is easier to maintain social distancing and because there are fewer common or high-touch surfaces. Outdoor events also allow for good air movement that reduces the likelihood of respiratory droplets remaining suspended in the air for any significant amount of time.
- Church groups can now offer in-person, unlimited attendance services as long as proper physical distancing is maintained between families and/or household groups. At the present time, congregational singing is still considered a high-risk activity and is discouraged.
- Follow Public Health guidelines and reduce the number of people taking part in events or change to a larger location to ensure physical distancing is practiced.
- For public gatherings, stagger the time of arrivals and departures to limit the number of people gathered in one space.
- To reduce risk, people who are 60 years of age or older or those with underlying health issues should consider not attending public events. Explore alternative methods for hosting events such as using a public address system or some other pertinent technology.

Community Kitchens

- Shared meals at indoor or outdoor events significantly increase the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- Sharing food and drink using common serving utensils greatly increase the likelihood of spreading the virus.
- Sanitizer stations should be established at each entrance and signs posted encouraging people to practice good hand hygiene.
- High-touch surfaces should be cleaned regularly.
- Alberta Health greatly values Hutterite contributions of food and services, particularly in conjunction with local charities. Before doing any volunteer projects, please contact [Alberta Health Services Environmental Public Health](#) so that they can ensure that all necessary steps are taken to reduce the risk of spreading COVID- 19.

COVID testing is available for all Albertans, both for those with symptoms and without. A test can be booked by contacting Health Link at 811. Registered Nurses are available 24/7 at Health Link to help guide you to the right care provider at the right time and place, and make appropriate arrangements to care for you safely.

Sincerely,



Tyler Shandro, QC.
Minister of Health



Devin Dreeshen
Minister of Agriculture and
Forestry



Dr. Deena Hinshaw
Chief Medical Officer of
Health



David Tschetter
Hutterian Safety Council
COVID-19 Taskforce

cc: Dr. Laura McDougall, Senior Medical Officer of Health, Alberta Health Services