

Via Email

September 30, 2020

Dr. Verna Yiu  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Alberta Health Services  
Seventh Street Plaza  
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Dear Dr. Verna Yiu,

I am writing to you today to discuss a situation facing our members at Foothills Medical Centre (FMC) and other centres throughout the province as the pandemic continues to evolve. I would like to start by saying that the COVID-19 pandemic is first and foremost on everyone's mind. As such, the Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA) and its members agreed in good faith to put off bargaining because our collaborative focus must be on protecting Albertans during this time of crisis. I take such pride and honour in serving our frontline workers and health-care professionals who are going above and beyond each day, putting themselves in harm's way to protect us all. I am sure you feel the same way. However, as the pandemic seems to worsen and as we look ahead on how to deal with the potential of a second wave, we are finding out that our members are now being asked to provide the support needed but are not being compensated appropriately through no fault of their own.

As I am sure you can agree, HSAA members are the first and best line of defence against COVID-19 in Alberta. Our members, your employees, have been making extraordinary efforts; working long hours, taking on extra shifts and responsibilities all while dealing with the extra efforts required to care for their loved ones. Just this week, the Minister of Health and the Board Chair for Alberta Precision Labs called their efforts 'critical', 'crucial' and 'remarkable'. They described these professionals as dedicated, ingenious experts who have made a huge difference in the battle against COVID-19.

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But now, these workers, who are working tirelessly, are being sent to do their jobs knowing they will not receive the pay they deserve and need to support their families should they be required to isolate. This is not acceptable to HSAA. This issue extends well beyond casuals and part-time hires. Right now, we have members at FMC who are caught up in the single site restriction placed on Unit 71/81. These members have been ordered to isolate. It is our understanding if Unit 71/81 is their home base, members can access their sick leave banks should adequate time be available. This is not ideal, but at least it is an option. However, we have members whose home base was not unit 71 or 81 that have been impacted by the single site restriction who are being denied access to sick leave. They are being told they, at their supervisor's discretion, may be able to access vacation entitlements or otherwise go unpaid during isolation. Clearly, this is not the intended use of that important time-off bank.

Dr. Yiu, we must do better for these people. These are unique times that call for unique outside-the-box solutions to the problems we are facing as we fight to bring this pandemic under control. We need to work together to resolve this situation as soon as possible. Given the fact COVID is a long way from being behind us, and as we enter another flu season, it must happen now. HSAA is ready to meet with you at your earliest convenience to resolve this situation and assure our essential professionals their employer has their backs. I know we have a quarterly meeting coming up and know that I deeply appreciate and value our relationship and your willingness to meet with us on a regular basis, but these people are being denied supports right now.

I hope we can meet at your earliest convenience.

I appreciate your attention to this issue.

Yours truly,



Mike Parker  
President

JT/nb