

Council of Atlantic Premiers' Communiqué

Atlantic Premiers Urge Caution to Prevent Further Spread of COVID-19

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 20, 2021 - Atlantic Premiers today urged all Atlantic Canadians to exercise caution during the holiday season to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus across the region.

Premier Blaine Higgs of New Brunswick chaired a teleconference of the Council of Atlantic Premiers. He was joined by Premier Tim Houston of Nova Scotia, Premier Dennis King of Prince Edward Island, and Premier Andrew Furey of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Premiers were joined by their Ministers of Health and senior Public Health officials: Minister Dorothy Shephard and Dr. Jennifer Russell of New Brunswick, Minister Michelle Thompson and Dr. Robert Strang of Nova Scotia, Minister Ernie Hudson and Dr. Heather Morrison of Prince Edward Island and Minister John Haggie and Dr. Janice Fitzgerald of Newfoundland and Labrador. They discussed the recent surge in COVID-19 infections, driven by the highly contagious Omicron variant.

Premiers stressed the importance of individuals' actions in limiting the spread of the virus. They urged all Atlantic Canadians to follow Public Health guidance and advice to protect themselves, their families and communities.

Premiers agreed that Atlantic Canadians should limit holiday gatherings to a small and consistent circle of friends and family members. This will help limit the spread of the virus and support timely tracing of contacts when infections are reported. Avoiding large gatherings, wearing a well-fitting mask in public places, maintaining two metres of physical distance in public settings and seeking testing when symptoms emerge will also help reduce the spread of infection.

Testing is an important aspect of the COVID-19 response in all Atlantic provinces. Premiers urged Atlantic Canadians to follow the testing guidance of local Public Health authorities, whether that be getting tested at the first sign of symptoms or making use of rapid tests as appropriate. Early detection of infections will help slow the spread of the virus and protect vulnerable Atlantic Canadians.

Premiers also stressed the importance of becoming fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccination remains the most effective protection available against severe illness, hospitalization and death due to COVID-19. They urged parents to ensure their children are vaccinated and that Atlantic Canadians eligible for a booster dose receive it as soon as possible.

The goal of taking these actions, and following local Public Health restrictions, is to reduce the threat of the region's hospitals becoming overwhelmed by seriously ill COVID-19 patients. Premiers expressed their appreciation for the efforts of front-line health care workers and first responders, who have

worked tirelessly to protect the health of Atlantic Canadians since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic almost two years ago. Premiers will continue to work together to maintain viable health care services while addressing the threat of the ongoing pandemic.

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