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**ATTN: First Nation community members across Saskatchewan**

Saskatchewan is in the midst of a fourth wave of COVID-19 that is more dangerous than previous waves. Our province is seeing record high rates of daily new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and ICU admissions. The Delta variant and low rates of vaccination are the two main factors driving the growth of these new cases.

The Delta variant is the dominant variant of concern circulating in Saskatchewan. This variant is transmitting more quickly and to more people within communities than previous variants. It often results in more severe outcomes, particularly in those individuals who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated. Vaccination levels in many communities have not yet reached the targeted levels needed to keep the virus from circulating. This is what is making this wave so threatening.

There is an increased risk of the Delta variant with children under 12 years of age. They remain our largest unvaccinated cohort as they are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. All eligible youth and adults should get fully vaccinated to provide the best circle of protection around them.

**Household gatherings remain the biggest source of transmission of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan.** Close quarters and sharing food are high risk activities for transmitting the virus. As Medical Health Officers, we urge you to take precautions this long weekend to stop the transmission of the virus and prevent further pressures on our health care system. We strongly recommend the following:

- If you are unvaccinated, you should not gather with family and friends this long weekend, as you are putting them at risk. Meet and greet others outdoors as much as possible as the risk of transmission is lower.
- If gathering indoors, be aware of the vaccination status of all your guests. Children under 12 are at elevated risk of transmission as they cannot be vaccinated at this time.
- If gathering in a public place or enjoying long weekend activities, follow the masking and/or proof of vaccination or test requirements of that location. These requirements are in place for everyone's safety.

We cannot let our guards down this long weekend. The virus is very smart and will spread at any chance it gets. We all have a role to play to curb this fourth wave and these short-term measures can help stop further transmission of COVID-19 to protect children, families and communities.

Respectfully,

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