



A Message from the AUPE Executive Committee **Current pandemic restrictions remain in place**

Current restrictions on in-person AUPE meetings, events, and gatherings will remain in place at least until the end of September.

Back in March of 2020, when SARS-Cov2 was first detected in Alberta, we all became rapidly familiar with the province's Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH). After analyzing the spread of COVID-19, she and Premier Kenney implemented several public health measures and restrictions to control the spread of the virus throughout the province. AUPE followed suit, as required by law, and we immediately terminated in-person meetings, events and gatherings, and switched to virtual interactions.

Over the next 14 months Alberta would experience not one, not two, but three COVID waves – each worse than the one before. Still, the CMOH prematurely eased restrictions, making it clear that she was taking direction from the UCP government at the expense of working Albertans.

At AUPE, we grew leery of the revolving door of COVID restrictions and started treating the CMOH's orders for what they were: a minimum standard that we could improve upon. We owed it to our members and staff to treat them with the utmost respect and to establish a level of Health and Safety that was commensurate with the seriousness of the COVID pandemic.

To this end, on April 22 this year, AUPE became a signatory of the ZERO COVID policies of ZERO COVID CANADA, a national advocacy group of researchers, physicians, engineers, lawyers, educators, activists, and concerned citizens demanding COVID elimination policies (versus control policies), including a financially supported lockdown. The decision to sign on to ZERO COVID was made by your Provincial Executive, whose members represent every local in AUPE.

This action brings us to today. Alberta is currently in Stage 2 of the reopening plan and will soon move into Stage 3 with all restrictions lifted. It is anticipated that Alberta will move into stage 3 by early July, just in time for the Calgary Stampede and the resumption of professional sports league games, such as the CFL.

AUPE however, will continue to host AGMs and other meetings online until they are completed at the end of September. In addition, Convention 2021 will be held virtually over the first four days of December.

The CMOH's orders are the minimum requirements. To use an analogy, if the speed limit is 100 km per hour, and it starts blizzarding, it's recommended you drive 80 km per hour, or slower.

COVID must be treated with the same caution. Despite the rapid increase in vaccinations in Alberta, we are still nowhere near where we ought to be to safely open up again. As Great Britain and other major countries that are further ahead than us in vaccinations are finding, the new Delta variant is much more transmissible and deadlier than its predecessors, so we need to delay lifting all restrictions. The Delta COVID strain will be the dominant variant in Alberta by mid-July at the latest, and it's not as easily controlled by a single vaccine shot.

The Alberta government is claiming (again) that COVID is on its last legs, and that we can open up again. But remember, this is the same government that also said it supports frontline workers and wouldn't make cuts. If you can't trust Kenney and the UCP with your careers and financial well-being, you certainly can't trust them with your life, or the lives of your precious loved ones.

We know that this pandemic has taken an immeasurable toll on everyone's mental health and social wellbeing. We have all felt the pain of fear and uncertainty, disconnection and isolation. Many of us have experienced the loss of a loved one, acquaintance, or co-worker. We all want it to be over, and eventually it will be. But rushing too quickly into reopening will only prolong the uncertainty and will likely lead to a fourth wave with the potential for more serious illness and deaths.

The Executive Committee will reassess the situation at the end of September to provide some direction regarding in-person AUPE meetings, events and gatherings. Until then, take care, stay safe, and please take the opportunity to get fully vaccinated.

In Solidarity, Your AUPE Executive Committee

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