



MARCH 11, 2021 | 12PM

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF COVID-19

COMMEMORATING THE
LIVES THAT DIDN'T NEED
TO BE LOST

March 11 marks one year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. Since then, seniors have paid the highest price.

We stand in commemoration of all the lives that didn't need to be lost, and in recognition of the work that yet to be done to ensure this tragedy is never repeated.

Visual demonstration at the Federal Building (Edmonton) & livestreamed on Facebook March 11 at 12:00 pm.

Follow all COVID-19 restrictions: Wear a mask, social distance.



SALT Alberta
Seniors' Action and Liaison Team



1,928 roses laid for each COVID-19 death in Alberta on pandemic anniversary
CTV News Edmonton March 11, 2021

EDMONTON -- People from labour, seniors and health advocacy organizations gathered on the Alberta legislature grounds Thursday to recognize the impact of the pandemic on Albertans.

On the one-year anniversary of the WHO's pandemic declaration, the groups including Friends of Medicare, United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) and Seniors' Action and Liaison Team (SALT) Alberta said the number of lives lost in Alberta is unacceptable.

[According to AHS](#), of the 1,928 people who have died from the disease, 1,813 – or about 94 per cent – were aged 60 and up.

The groups laid out coloured-coded handmade roses symbolizing each victim and their age. "We look at these flowers today and it is obvious our seniors have paid a very high price," said UNA president Heather Smith. "Will we in Alberta learn from what we have experienced over the last year?"

The groups are calling for "real change" from governments to protect seniors in the future. "Seniors deserve better," said Terry Price, president of Public Interest Alberta. "We want higher standards of care governed by regulations that are enforced."

Meantime, the flags at all city buildings are at half mast and the High Level Bridge will be lit up in white Thursday night to honour COVID-19 victims.

In a statement, mayor Don Iveson thanked Edmontonians for their sacrifices over the last 12 months.

"As we weather what we all hope are the last months of this pandemic, I have no doubt Edmontonians will continue to manifest the strength, heroism and community spirit that has seen us through thus far," he said.





**Alberta Federation of Labour News March 12, 2021
1,928 roses laid for each COVID-19 death in Alberta on the pandemic anniversary.**

Yesterday was the one-year anniversary of the WHO's pandemic declaration, and people from labour, seniors and health advocacy organizations gathered on the Alberta legislature grounds to recognize the impact of the pandemic on Albertans.

The Alberta Federation of Labour joined the United Nurses of Alberta, Friends of Medicare, Public Interest Alberta, Alberta Arts Action and Seniors' Action and Liaison Team on the one-year anniversary of the WHO's pandemic declaration to commemorate all the lives that didn't need to be lost, and in recognition of the work that is yet to be done. Placed on the ground were nearly 2000 roses — one for each person we have lost, colour coded for the age of each person, gold, silver and white for seniors, purple for people in their 50s, yellow 40s, blue 30s and pink 20s to show how seniors have been impacted.

Each flower was handcrafted by UCFW 401's Erin Alyward, her daughters, Kaylian Alyward, Kamrynn Alyward, Jakoby Alyward and Colleen Ewen (top photo). We thank them for this powerful tribute to remember each person we have lost.

"We look at these flowers today and it is obvious our seniors have paid a very high price," said UNA president Heather Smith. "Will we in Alberta learn from what we have experienced over the last year?"

Watch the broadcast on the [Friends of Medicare Facebook page](#). View more images on our [Facebook Page](#). [Read the news story](#).

Sandra Azocar, Executive Director, Friends of Medicare, Arch 11, 2021



Today marks the 1-year anniversary of the day that the World Health Organization declared a world wide pandemic, and as we go back to that day when we all realized that our lives would never be the same. We are here to remember all those that have died as a result of this pandemic.

We are here in recognition of all essential workers who put their own health at risk by going to work every day.

Essential workers, front line staff who lost their lives.

We are here to remind those under the dome and in this building (Fed Building) of the importance of our public health care – the role that it has played in the past year, and to remind them that any attack on our public health care is an attack on all of us.

We are here to remind them that the lives of those that we have lost in this pandemic have a name, a family and community behind each one.

We are here to remind them that failures in public health policies have consequences.

Commemoration of the one year anniversary of COVID-19 shows the disproportionate toll the pandemic has taken on Alberta's seniors

EDMONTON - March 11, 2021 marks the one year anniversary of the declaration of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, and seniors groups, labour groups, and advocacy groups are gathering outside of the Federal Building at the Legislature to install an visual representation of the lives we have lost to COVID-19, especially those of Alberta's seniors who have been disproportionately affected. The visual will be a collection of roses, made by Erin Alyward, each one colour coded to show the age of the person we lost. The advocates and activists will also be joined by members of Alberta Arts Action Group, a group which blends arts and activism, who will sing and recite poetry as we mark this solemn occasion.

Terry Price, president of Public Interest Alberta, highlighted the seniors' care system's failures which have led to disproportionate deaths among seniors in care. "The issues facing the seniors' care sector are nothing new, the pandemic has just made it worse and displayed the deficiencies Alberta seniors were already suffering to disastrous results," said Price. "Over [64% of the deaths all over Alberta](#) for this pandemic have been in continuing care; this avoidable tragedy is visually represented by the large number of white, silver, and gold roses in our visual display, each representing one death of an Albertan over the age of 60."

Sandra Azocar, executive director of Friends of Medicare, urged policymakers to take action on behalf of Alberta seniors. "Friends of Medicare have been ringing the alarm when it comes to the long-standing issues in our seniors' care for over 40 years," said Azocar. "COVID-19's toll on Alberta's continuing care system has exposed many of the cracks that have been formed as a result of decades of privatization, and the inequity that perpetual cost-cutting has wrought. We have an urgent responsibility to learn the difficult lessons of this pandemic to ensure that nothing like this tragedy will ever occur again."

Heather Smith, president of the United Nurses of Alberta, echoed Azocar's comments. "Advocates have called for changes to seniors' care for decades. We could have done better. We must do better in the future," said Smith.

John Wodak, chairman of the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team, reiterated how the glacial pace of improvements to the seniors care system has wreaked havoc on the quality of life of Alberta seniors. "Everyone who has or has had a family member in Long Term Care knows what the system is like," said Wodak. "Those who have tried to improve the system have found it to be a very frustrating endeavour."

The powerful visual display of roses representing each life lost to COVID-19 as well as poetry and song performances demonstrate the power of combining arts and activism. "Studies show that actively participating in art, whatever the medium, can keep us engaged in life in positive, healthy and fulfilling ways," said Karen Bishop, co-founder of the Alberta Arts Action Group. "COVID-19 has affected seniors, especially those in care, in profound ways. Their ability to create and express art has been severely limited to the point of being almost non-existent. Restrictions on gatherings and visitations as well as challenges in staffing has made participation in such activities extremely difficult. A system that was already strained is now completely broken and the psychological and physiological health of seniors has been massively impacted. Seniors and their families patiently waited for help and relief. We join them and advocate for significant improvements to their quality of care—the time is now."

This powerful display and the tragedy that it represents should serve as a stark reminder of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on vulnerable Albertans, and a clear indication that the Alberta government must do better in seniors' care, both during this pandemic and beyond. [Alberta seniors deserve better.](#)

Friends of Medicare, March 11, 2021

Once upon a time, before COVID:

An elderly woman was admitted to hospital, somewhere in Alberta.

She was diagnosed with severe malnutrition and untreated bedsores.

Unfortunately, despite all efforts to save her, she died after a few days.

There are two possible beginnings to this hypothetical story:

In the first, the woman was living in a private home.

In the second, she had been a resident of a nursing home.

And there are two possible endings to the story:

In the first, the owners were tried under the Criminal Code of Canada and sent to prison.

In the second, nothing happened to the operator of the nursing home.

If you are looking for a silver lining in the past year of COVID-19, it's that now everyone knows what happens to residents in many (not all) long term care facilities, what some of us have known from observing friends and family members there.

There is a desperate need for improvement and accountability.

We inspect day care centres and close them if they break the rules.

We shut down puppy mills because animals are in distress.

When a small girl named Serenity died in care, people did not rest until she had justice.

Very simply, society should be providing the same care to our aging friends and family members that we give to children and animals.



John Wodak, Chair, the Seniors' Action and Liaison Team
[S.A.L.T.]. March 11, 2021



Commemorative poem to remember those who died from Covid 19. Presented at the Federal Building, Edmonton, Alberta on the first anniversary of the WHO declaration of an international pandemic on March 11, 2020, Jannie Edwards.

For the Roses

When I was a child, a man drove twenty miles on country roads to bring my doctor father his ruined hand, his index finger severed. It was Sunday. We were eating pot roast, the dog growling, wild because of the blood on the towel cradling the man's hand. My father gave the man a vial of penicillin, told him to go find his finger in the manure pile.

It took, the man said, meaning the sewed-on finger grew back, healed into the man's hand, into his working life.

This virus, this pandemic has cut us off from the lives we were used to, rendered our *befores* into *afters* that ripple like aftershocks, shake us to our heart's cores.

How will we grow back into our lives?

We've been cut off from our elders, our aging loved ones locked down and solitary in institutions

Our caregivers, essential workers, our teachers—heroes that they continue to be—are deeply weary. Everyone is frayed.

We have been cut off from gathering for the sweet rituals of joy—birthdays, weddings, graduations – that celebrate our rites of passage through years and lives.

We have been cut off from the comfort of shared grief, shared mourning as the virus metastasizes, carrying death like a thief in the night, stealing breath in a storm of fever.

How will we grow back into our lives?

Today we see here laid before us a ceremony of remembrance, a field of delicate artistry—one rose to symbolize, to commemorate each person who has died in our province from this insidious virus, a virus that has affected every human being on our planet.

This ceremony reminds us, piercingly, through the symbol of the rose, of life's incredible beauty, and also of life's fragility.

How will we grow back into our lives?

I call on each of us here today to speak for those whose voices have been severed from living, to speak for those severed from speaking by death.

In their memory, let us call out those who privilege their rights above responsibility. In their memory, let us call out those who practice politics without compassion, without moral compass, those who see human beings as cogs in corporate machines whose relentless pursuit of profit depends on exploitation and yields poverty and death. In their memory, let us call out those whose power comes from lies. In their memory, let us use our anger wisely, as a force for repair, for resilience, for reinvention.

This pandemic has split open the fault lines of ingrained, inherited systems of inequality that demean and diminish dignity, the dignity and safety of workers, of the elderly, of migrant workers, of people of colour, indigenous people, that leave the most vulnerable of our communities at greater risk.

This pandemic reminds us that some trillionaires make \$150,000 a minute while businesses are shuttered, some bankrupted.

How will we grow back into our lives?

When something moves us emotionally, we say we are *moved*, we are *touched*. Paradoxically, in a year where we are craving touch, where we yearn for the simple reassuring sweetness of holding hands, hugging, hanging out, for the shared hush of full theatres and concerts, for crowded dance floors, for maskless singing, for contact sport, we have, we say, been *touched*, we have, we say, been *moved* by acts of kindness, bravery, compassion, by art and music and poetry ingeniously delivered to our computers.

These roses touch us, they move us with their cargo of beauty and sorrow. Let us grow that capacity to be touched, let us grow that movement in ways that listen and respond to each other's dignity, in ways that beautify each other's lives.

Let these roses remind us to grow the courage to raise our expectations of our leaders. Let these roses grow our belief in our collective capacity, in our collective creativity to fix what hurts us, to fix what harms our planet.

Let these roses laid out here in the memory of those we have lost touch us, move us. Let them remind us that love outshines hate; that compassion outshines exploitation, that our planet's and our collective fragility can become a catalyst for burgeoning imagination, for creative solutions and a shared commitment to build, to rebuild a better world.

Let us be touched. Let us be moved.

Good afternoon everyone.

One year ago – that is just 366 days ago – no one in Alberta imagined how much our world would change, and how quickly that change would occur.

I'm proud to be here today with Friends of Medicare, Public Interest Alberta and SALT – Seniors Action Liaison Team to look back on the year we have been through, and to prepare for what is ahead.

This has been a year of heartbreak for many Albertans.

Loved ones lost who could not be mourned.

Jobs lost.

Lives changed forever.

This has been a year of profound impact for working people and their families.

Certainly the pandemic has impacted health care workers. But there are thousands and thousands of other workers – “heroes,” or “warriors,” who have not been able to work from home.

Workers who kept food on our tables and gas in our vehicles, workers who did essential jobs that never seemed essential before COVID-19, because they seemed so ordinary, so much a part of our lives.

For all workers this has been a very, very difficult year.

They have gone to work every day fearing for their own safety and the safety of those they love.

In health care, we know of six workers who have lost their lives.

But there are many others who were left vulnerable and unprotected in their workplaces and who paid the ultimate price – with their lives.

Many workers still struggle with the residual health effects after surviving COVID-19.

Yes vaccines bring us hope, but the normal of pre-COVID is still many months away.

Maybe it will never fully return.

We look at these flowers today and it is obvious that our seniors have paid a very high price.

For decades health care workers and health care advocates have called for change to seniors care. Seniors Deserve Better

We got change, but not the kind we need.

We all know how we got here.

It was at best by neglect. ...

But I suggest to you that way the present state of seniors' care came about was neither benign nor unavoidable.

It was a predictable outcome of funding and policy decisions.

Funding and policy decisions intended to benefit a few, not to help the many.

Lack of transparency and accountability have made things worse everywhere in seniors' care.

But the question I have today – this most important question, is this:

Will we in Alberta learn from what we have experienced over the last year?

Real change has always been and always will be dependent on one thing ... *political will!*

We must remain vigilant! We must mask up, wash out hands, physically distance from one another.

We must *all* take the vaccine as soon as it's made available to us.

But we must also be vigilant for more changes to our health care system that will make things worse, not better.

We must be vigilant for those in our society who would use the pandemic crisis to implement changes to our health care that will benefit the few and make things worse for the many.

Today we commemorate the one year anniversary of COVID-19 and mourn – especially for lives that need not have been lost. Tomorrow we must demand change that will preserve and improve our health care system.



**Heather Smith, President
United Nurses of Alberta
March 11, 2021**

Commemorating the Lives that Did Not Need to be Lost!

Who would have thought that we would be standing here a full year, 365 days, after the World Health Organization declared COVID – 19 a global pandemic? But we are here, wearing our masks, keeping ourselves safely apart from each other to honour the almost two thousand Albertans who have been lost to this terrible disease. We are honouring them today through a beautiful, visual display of hand- made, colourful flowers. Flowers made slowly and deliberately by Erin, the artist, while she thought about the many lives lost here and around the globe.

My name is Terry Price and, in addition to being the President of Public Interest Alberta, I also chair the Seniors' Task Force of the same organization. As I look at the flowers, the hugely disproportionate impact of this pandemic on seniors becomes crystal clear. Every white, silver and gold rose in this display represents the death of an Albertan over the age of 60. The vast majority of these senior Albertans died in one of the many congregate care facilities we all expected would be their final safe havens on earth and where we, and they, expected them to receive physical and emotional care and social supports.

Each of these individuals was loved by spouses, siblings, children, grandchildren, possibly great grandchildren, and multiple other family members and friends. Unfortunately, most of them would have died alone having been isolated from their families, friends and others for days, weeks and maybe months before they left us for a better place. The care workers in the facilities would have been completely overwhelmed in their efforts to protect them from infection and to comfort them when they did become infected.

I believe our seniors deserve better than this!

Seniors' organizations, advocates, journalists, researchers and health care workers have been sounding alarms about conditions in facilities-based congregate care settings for seniors in this province for more than three decades. Successive governments commissioned reviews at public expense and then ignored the recommendations made. Academic researchers found alarming conditions for the seniors and the workers but their findings were ignored. Investigative journalists exposed atrocities when they followed up on complaints or tips from concerned citizens and family members. Yet, nothing changed. Surely, our seniors deserved better!

Successive conservative governments offloaded more and more of the care for seniors to privately-owned and operated facilities, providing public funds but little scrutiny over how these funds were spent. To ensure their profits, their workers were seldom protected by unions and most have to work in several different facilities just to support their own families. The profits were paid out to shareholders personal accounts – very few of whom are Albertans.

Didn't our seniors deserve better care?

If we truly treasured our seniors, this would never have been allowed to happen. COVID laid bare the agism in our communities. Unlike our indigenous peoples, we do not truly respect our elders. We seldom view them as our knowledge keepers, as our sources of wisdom for the next seven generations. This must change.

Our seniors deserve better.

Let's tell Kenney and the government of this province that we do care about our seniors. We want higher standards of care governed by regulations that are enforced! We want public accountability for every care facility – accountability for their actions and their spending! We want every penny of taxpayer dollars to go to the care for our seniors – not to shareholders!

Our seniors deserve better and it's up to us to make it happen!



March 11 2021

Terry Price, Chair of Public Interest Alberta
and the PIA Seniors Task Force





Tyler Shandro
@shandroPDI



Today is the Day of Observance for [#COVID19](#).

1,928 Albertans have died as a result of [#COVID19AB](#) this past year, including 5 staff in our continuing care facilities.

My deepest sympathies to the families & friends who continue to grieve. 1/4

[2021-03-11, 14:14](#)

Statement by the Speaker, Alberta Hansard, March 11, 2021 National Day of Observance for COVID-19

The Speaker: Over the past year Albertans have faced many challenges and endured tremendous loss due to COVID-19. More than 136,000 Albertans have fought COVID-19 during the past 12 months, and sadly 1,926 people in our province lost that fight. Today our flags fly at half-mast in recognition of March 11, 2021, as the national day of observance for those who lost their lives as well as for all Albertans who have been significantly impacted by the global pandemic. We're all anxious for life to return to what we once knew as normal, but it is essential that we remember those for whom that will not be possible. Until then, we recognize the strength, commitment, and resiliency of Albertans as we continue to face this crisis and carry the burdens for others.

A moment of silence.

Thank you. Please be seated.

Members' Statements Alberta Hansard, March 11, 2021 COVID-19 Anniversary

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, today marks the one-year anniversary since the World Health Organization declared that we were in a pandemic. This COVID-19 public health crisis has impacted every facet of our lives. It has kept us apart. It has caused us to miss major milestones. It has been hard, no doubt.

I want to extend the deepest condolences of Alberta's NDP to the families and friends of 1,928 souls who have died as a result of this virus. The loss of these Albertans touched every corner of our province. The pain and suffering has been unimaginable. Let us all in this Legislature pledge to honour their lives with a commitment to do better as we move forward and to never let something like this happen again.

Mr. Speaker, I must say, too, though, that it is in the most difficult circumstances that we see Albertans rise to the occasion, we see the very best that this province has to offer. I am so thankful for the tens of thousands of front-line health care heroes who headed into chaos and put their own lives on the line to save others. I'm thankful for the grocery store workers who helped us keep food on our tables. I'm thankful for the people who worked in shelters, who drove buses, who taught our kids. The list goes on and on.

On a personal note, I'm thankful to be alive, I'm thankful my family is healthy after our battle with COVID-19. We must live on with the lessons of the past year. We must commit to never allow the loss of life we've seen to happen again. And we must continue to support each other. This pandemic is far from over. So, Mr. Speaker, I encourage every member of this House and every Albertan to take a moment to think of the lives lost, to think of the heroes that emerged, and to focus on the hope on the horizon.

Thank you.

COVID-19 and Overdose Deaths

Alberta Hansard, March 11, 2021

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks one year since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. We've lost more than 1,900 Albertans, and our condolences go to their families. A new report shows that while fatalities were contained in the first wave, they were not in the second. In fact, the data shows that last fall Alberta led the country in the rate of what they call excess deaths. To the Premier: can he tell the House how he will ensure that the mistakes of the fall will never be repeated?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health has risen.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, before I answer the question, just as you did, Mr. Speaker, I note that today is the national day of remembrance for those that we've lost to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of March 9, as you said, 1,928 Albertans have died in the pandemic, including five staff members in our continuing care facilities. Their loved ones will hold each of them in their hearts, and as a province we will honour them by working to protect Albertans and by working to strengthen our continuing care system as well as the health system as a whole.

[Update 200: COVID-19 pandemic in Alberta \(March 11, 4:30 p.m.\) | alberta.ca](#)

Latest updates

- Over the last 24 hours, 364 new cases were identified.
- There are 259 people in hospital due to COVID-19, including 38 in intensive care.
- There are 4,488 active cases in the province.
- To date, 130,716 Albertans have recovered from COVID-19.
- In the last 24 hours, there were five additional COVID-related deaths reported: one on Jan. 15, one on March 9, and three on March 10.
- The testing positivity rate was four per cent.
- There was an increase of 10,167 tests (3,502,457 total) for a total of 1,846,200 people tested.
- All zones across the province have cases:
 - Calgary Zone: 1,654 active cases and 50,159 recovered
 - South Zone: 438 active cases and 6,350 recovered
 - Edmonton Zone: 1,147 active cases and 52,524 recovered
 - North Zone: 813 active cases and 11,612 recovered
 - Central Zone: 431 active cases and 9,978 recovered
 - Five active cases and 93 recovered cases in zones to be confirmed
 - Additional information, including case totals, is [online](#).
- Alberta has identified 41 additional cases of variants of concern, bringing the provincial total to 775.
 - B.1.1.7 U.K. variant: 760 cases
 - B.1.351 South African variant: 15 cases
- Currently, 256 schools, about 11 per cent, are on alert or have outbreaks, with 1,017 cases in total.
 - 188 schools are on alert, with 371 total cases.
 - Outbreaks are declared in 68 schools, with a total of 646 cases.
 - In-school transmission has likely occurred in 194 schools. Of these, 105 have had only one new case occur as a result.
- There are currently 114 active and 9,150 recovered cases at long-term care facilities and supportive/home living sites.
- To date, 1,223 of the 1,933 reported deaths (63 per cent) have been in long-term care facilities or supportive/home living sites...

Mayor Don Iveson on National Day of Observance for COVID-19

March 11, 2021
Edmonton, Alberta

Mayor Don Iveson issued the following statement on the National Day of Observance for COVID-19:

“This has been an incredibly hard year for Edmontonians. A year that has required incredible sacrifices to keep COVID-19 under control and save lives.

“This past year will likely be the toughest many of us have experienced: Edmontonians have missed key life events, been separated from our friends and family, lost livelihoods, and suffered deaths.

“As we weather what we all hope are the last months of this pandemic, I have no doubt Edmontonians will continue to manifest the strength, heroism and community spirit that has seen us through thus far. I thank Edmontonians for the sacrifices they've made and continue to make — to keep their loved ones and our community safe. This could have been a lot worse without our collective sacrifices.

“As we commemorate this day, I am reflecting on the Albertans who aren't with us today because of this virus. My heart goes out to the friends and family of the close to 2,000 Albertans who have lost their lives to COVID-19. 810 of those deaths were here in our city, which was hit disproportionately hard in spite of all our collective care and diligence.

“To honour the legacies of those whom we lost, all City of Edmonton buildings will fly flags at half-mast until sunset this evening, and the High-Level Bridge will be lit in white lights this evening.

“I'm also reflecting on my overbrimming gratitude for all the front-line workers, including so many civic employees, as well as health care professionals who have put themselves in harm's way to protect life and help keep our essential services running. Thank you all for your ongoing work, your courage and your inspiring resiliency.

“This pandemic is still not over — we're not out of the woods yet. Our continued strict adherence to public health measures is necessary if we're to continue saving lives. We're still in the fight against COVID-19, and the variants have made adherence to the measures all the more urgent, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are winning our final battle against the virus as more and more Edmontonians get vaccinated.

“Edmonton has been tested as a community during this past year —but COVID-19 has not and will not break us. As we look towards the recovery out of this pandemic, I want Edmontonians to rest assured that City Council will continue to work together with our regional, provincial and federal counterparts to ensure no Edmontonian is left behind in our recovery goals. It is our goal that Edmonton emerge from this pandemic stronger and more resilient than it was going in.

“Love and our strong community spirit has seen us through this pandemic so far — and those values will also see us out of it.”

WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 - 11 March 2020

Good afternoon.

In the past two weeks, the number of cases of COVID-19 outside China has increased 13-fold, and the number of affected countries has tripled.

There are now more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries, and 4,291 people have lost their lives.

Thousands more are fighting for their lives in hospitals.

In the days and weeks ahead, we expect to see the number of cases, the number of deaths, and the number of affected countries climb even higher.

WHO has been assessing this outbreak around the clock and we are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction.

We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic.

Pandemic is not a word to use lightly or carelessly. It is a word that, if misused, can cause unreasonable fear, or unjustified acceptance that the fight is over, leading to unnecessary suffering and death.

Describing the situation as a pandemic does not change WHO's assessment of the threat posed by this virus. It doesn't change what WHO is doing, and it doesn't change what countries should do.

We have never before seen a pandemic sparked by a coronavirus. This is the first pandemic caused by a coronavirus.

And we have never before seen a pandemic that can be controlled, at the same time.

WHO has been in full response mode since we were notified of the first cases.

And we have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action.

We have rung the alarm bell loud and clear.

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As I said on Monday, just looking at the number of cases and the number of countries affected does not tell the full story.

Of the 118,000 cases reported globally in 114 countries, more than 90 percent of cases are in just four countries, and two of those – China and the Republic of Korea - have significantly declining epidemics.

81 countries have not reported any cases, and 57 countries have reported 10 cases or less.

We cannot say this loudly enough, or clearly enough, or often enough: all countries can still change the course of this pandemic.

If countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace, and mobilize their people in the response, those with a handful of cases can prevent those cases becoming clusters, and those clusters becoming community transmission.

Even those countries with community transmission or large clusters can turn the tide on this virus.

Several countries have demonstrated that this virus can be suppressed and controlled.

The challenge for many countries who are now dealing with large clusters or community transmission is not whether they can do the same – it's whether they will.

Some countries are struggling with a lack of capacity.

Some countries are struggling with a lack of resources.

Some countries are struggling with a lack of resolve.

We are grateful for the measures being taken in Iran, Italy and the Republic of Korea to slow the virus and control their epidemics.

We know that these measures are taking a heavy toll on societies and economies, just as they did in China.

All countries must strike a fine balance between protecting health, minimizing economic and social disruption, and respecting human rights.

WHO's mandate is public health. But we're working with many partners across all sectors to mitigate the social and economic consequences of this pandemic.

This is not just a public health crisis, it is a crisis that will touch every sector – so every sector and every individual must be involved in the fight.

I have said from the beginning that countries must take a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, built around a comprehensive strategy to prevent infections, save lives and minimize impact.

Let me summarize it in four key areas.

First, prepare and be ready.

Second, detect, protect and treat.

Third, reduce transmission.

Fourth, innovate and learn.

I remind all countries that we are calling on you to activate and scale up your emergency response mechanisms;

Communicate with your people about the risks and how they can protect themselves – this is everybody's business;

Find, isolate, test and treat every case and trace every contact;

Ready your hospitals;

Protect and train your health workers.

And let's all look out for each other, because we need each other.

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There's been so much attention on one word.

Let me give you some other words that matter much more, and that are much more actionable.

Prevention.

Preparedness.

Public health.

Political leadership.

And most of all, people.

We're in this together, to do the right things with calm and protect the citizens of the world. It's doable.

I thank you.



[WHO Director-General](#) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

First Ministers mark the first anniversary of the global COVID-19 pandemic
March 11, 2021 Ottawa, Ontario

Today marks one-year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Following a teleconference, First Ministers issued the following statement to recognize this anniversary:

“First Ministers honoured Canadians and others around the world who lost their lives to the pandemic. They acknowledged the tremendous personal sacrifices Canadians have made to keep themselves and their neighbours safe. This pandemic has disrupted our lives and livelihoods, and it is thanks to this personal sacrifice that Canadians have been able to reduce the spread of the virus and its variants.

“First Ministers expressed their deep appreciation for all health and other essential front line workers, who ensured Canadians had continued access to care, reliable supply chains, and support for their loved ones and our children. These workers are the heroes of the pandemic.

“They also noted the unprecedented collaboration between both orders of government, including the largest immunization campaign in Canada’s history. First Ministers agreed to continue these and all other efforts necessary to end the pandemic. Through these efforts, and through the continued vigilance of Canadians in following public health measures, First Ministers are hopeful Canada is on the path to recovery. The past year has been difficult but better days are ahead.

“First Ministers agreed to continue to work together to protect Canadians, end the pandemic, and promote recovery of our economy and our public health care systems to benefit all Canadians.”

Newfoundland and Labrador is operating in a caretaker period due to a provincial election.



Statement by the Prime Minister announcing a National Day of Observance for COVID-19

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement to announce the Government of Canada is designating March 11, 2021, as a National Day of Observance to commemorate the people who lost their lives and the significant impacts we have all felt because of COVID-19:

“Early last year, our lives, and the lives of everyone around the world, were forever changed by the emergence of COVID-19. Today – one year after the first known death of a Canadian to the disease – we now mourn the tragic loss of more than 22,000 parents, siblings, friends, and loved ones.

“COVID-19 has infected over 864,000 other Canadians, and has had an immeasurable impact on how we all work and learn, connect with friends and family, and live our daily lives. All Canadians have experienced sacrifice and loss over the past year. Our kids have missed birthday parties, seniors have felt isolated from the ones they love, and for far too many, this virus has meant the loss of their job or the closure of their business.

“Our health care and other essential workers have put themselves at risk, working long hours, so we could get the services and care we needed. And as efforts continue to get vaccines to every Canadian as quickly as possible, we thank them now more than ever.

“During this crisis, Canadians have remained resilient. They have helped neighbours, given to organizations, put signs in their windows to support our health care workers, and lent a hand wherever possible. As we continue to deal with the impacts of the global pandemic, your government will continue to do whatever it takes, for however long it takes, to support you – because here in Canada, we help each other through challenging times.

“We all have a role to play in ending this pandemic, and the crisis is not over yet. In recognition of how far we have come and how far we still have to go, the Government of Canada is designating March 11, 2021, as a National Day of Observance. On this day, I invite all Canadians to join together in honouring the memory of those we have lost, and the people they left behind. We will also recognize everyone who has been impacted by COVID-19, and pay tribute to all those who continue to work hard and make incredible sacrifices in our fight against the virus. Together, we will beat COVID-19.”

