



After a year of unprecedented upheaval in every aspect of our lives caused by this pandemic. It is a welcome sign that a vaccine for COVID-19 has been developed. With the arrival of the vaccine the Government has started to distribute the vaccine across the country and has begun the vaccination program. There is the glimmer of light at the end of this incredibly difficult time. As exciting as this news is it will be many months possibly longer for this vaccine to be distributed and people to be immunized. The vaccine being distribute currently requires 2 shots to be 90 to 95% effective. This means that the end to COVID-19 may be in sight, it is still many months before we see any positive effects of this vaccine.

Now is **not** the time to let our guard down - this is Flu season our Canadian winter environment is great for this virus to thrive in. It is important for everyone to remain COVID-19 vigilant, hand washing and physical distancing and staying in your contact group are still the best tools to prevent contracting and spreading the virus. The use of face masks is required across the country now, it is important to remember this as it does not replace hand washing and physical distancing.

We are quickly approaching the time of year when we come together as family and friends to celebrate and enjoy some well-deserved rest. This year we are being told that we should not do this - we need to stay in that close group of people that we have been with for the last few months. After spending much of the year not being connected to these people this is almost impossible to accept. It is unrealistic to believe that everyone will abide by the recommendations to stay apart. If you chose to meet with family and friends outside of your regular group it is important to remember the requirement of interaction between non connected groups to prevent COVID-19 transmission. As difficult as this may be, try to maintain your physical distance wash your hands often and use face masks.

For some people this can be a very difficult time of year without a pandemic. This year there will be many more people who will struggle. Please take a moment to think about anyone you may know who maybe alone and give them a call. There are also many more people in need of assistance this year. If you are able there are many agencies looking for donations to providing assistance.

If we can maintain COVID-19 Virus protocols and limit our exposure and with the help of the vaccine hopefully by summer next year we can return to a more normal way of life.

To all our members and their families enjoy the holidays but please do it safely and we can all enjoy a New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Kent".

Ed Kent
USW District 3 Health, Safety & Environment Coordinator

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