

## COVID-19 Facebook live update: November 4, 2020

>> Pat: Good morning.

I'm Pat Living with the department of health and social services and your moderator for the COVID-19 update for Wednesday, November 4th.

Joined by the Yukon premier, but the Honourable Sandy Silver and the Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of health Dr Brendan Hanley.

We're also joined as usual by our sign language interpreter and Andre Bourcier from French language services directorate.

Following our speakers we will go to the phone lines for questions from reporters, and from reporters in the room.

We will call you by name and you will each have two questions.

Before we begin with our speakers I would like to verify that everyone can hear us?

If any reporters are having problems, please e-mail.

>> Thank you for joining us here today on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün first nation and the Taa'an Kwächän Council.

Our government continues to manage the impacts of COVID-19 based upon the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer and his team.

We have no new cases to report here in the Yukon, and I am pleased to share that 20 of our 23 cases have now recovered.

As we move into the eighth month of this pandemic, and winter firmly setting in, it is important that we continue to support each other and to take precautions to keep our territory safe and healthy.

Last week, we did lay two on new charges under the civil emergency measures act, both for failure to self isolate.

I cannot stress how important it is to self isolate as required.

It is not a suggestion, and it is not something you can choose to ignore if it is inconvenient.

The self isolating requirements are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our territory.

When he failed to self isolate, you put your friends, your neighbours, your colleagues, in fellow Yukoners at risk.

We have had a low case count in the Yukon so far due to the great efforts of Yukoners.

But we are not out of the woods yet.

We still absolutely need to stay vigilant.

I know there is a lot of COVID-19 fatigue out there.

Seasonal events like Thanksgiving, Halloween, remembrance Day...

Christmas coming up, you know, these are usually all times of gathering and connecting with people.

But we are not living in usual times, and we absolutely need to stay mindful of this.

We are counting on you.

It is especially important to continue to take precautions as we spend more time indoors.

The best way to stay in touch with your friends and loved ones is by connecting online, over the phone, or in person at a safe distance, one caribou apart.

It is still important to stay connected, absolutely, and to check in on one another as we continue to navigate these extremely challenging times.

We are absolutely all in this together, and together we will get through this.

As you know, on October 30th, Yukon's Chief Medical Officer a pal confirmed the first death in our territory related to COVID-19.

This was one of the five people diagnosed with COVID-19 in Watson Lake late last month.

While the individual was an older you corner with underlying medical conditions, the very short time from when they contracted COVID-19 until their absolutely unfortunate passing should give us all pause.

Our colleagues and I are extremely saddened by the loss and we send our condolences to friends and family of the deceased.

We are all holding the community of Watson Lake in our hearts, and we are sending our love and support to the entire community during this very, very difficult time.

Now more than ever, it is so important for communities to come together and to support each other as we continue to navigate through the pandemic.

I want to take this time to thank the healthcare workers in Watson Lake.

And across the territory, for their extremely incredible work to support Yukoners.

From nurses and doctors, the Chief Medical Officer of health and his team, folks doing extremely important work of contact tracing with Yukon communicable disease control, those who are answering the calls through 811, and working with the COVID-19 testing and assessment centre, the Whitehorse General Hospital, the community hospitals in Watson Lake and in Dawson city, and the healthcare centres in our rural communities.

I can't stress it enough, your work is so essential.

It is essential to the health and safety of Yukoners and I want to express my deep gratitude for all that you continue to do as we manage through this pandemic.

I also want to thank those who are helping administer flu shots this year, including the pharmacists who are providing flu shots for the first time in our territory.

And I also want to thank Yukoners, for all of your sacrifices that you have made and continue-- you're continued efforts to minimize the spread of COVID-19 and to keep our territory healthy and safe.

Thank you for your efforts, and please, continue to be vigilant and take the recommended precautions to keep yourself and your community, and I'll Yukoners safe.

The Chief Medical Officer of health has confirmed that the risk to the communities remains low.

Nevertheless, we all have a role to play to ensure that we minimize the impact of this pandemic in our territory.

Our risks are low because of your actions.

We must continue to be vigilant in our collective work to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Be kind, be patient, be respectful of each other, please.

And make sure to practice the Safe Six.

Wash your hands, maintain physical distancing, stay at home if you're sick, travel respectfully and responsibly.

Self isolate when required, as required, and follow the gathering guidelines including limiting indoor social gatherings to ten people if they are not in your bubble.

Once again, on behalf of all you corners, I send my deepest condolences to the families in the friends of the deceased.

I can't imagine what you're going through in these troubling times.

We stand together in your sadness at this time.

Thank you very much.

>> Thank you, Premier Silver.

Good morning.

Bonjour.

Last Friday, as the premier said, we announced our first death in the territory.

That is still less than a week ago, and I want to echo the premier's sentiments that we are all still grieving with the family and with the town of Watson Lake.

As devastating as this news was for all of us, life, elections, the pandemic, daily activities, all keep moving on, as they should.

This was a moment in time that tested our resilience as Yukoners, and should give us pause to consider whether as a population we're doing everything we can, both to minimize the consequences of COVID-19 in our territory, as well as to maximize our ability to thrive over this winter period.

More on that later.

First, a brief update on where we are with that outbreak.

As the premier said our numbers do remains overall at five cases in that cluster and all other tests to date have come back negative.

We can be confident that there is no added risk of COVID transmission within the community.

We have conducted all the necessary contact tracing and testing.

We will continue to investigate the source of the origin to determine how these individuals came into contact with COVID-19.

However, we do need to be ready not to find a result.

In conclusion, we have identified no further spread.

We are confident the outbreak is contained and that there is no evidence of community transmission of COVID either in Watson Lake or elsewhere in Yukon.

Although we are in a fortunate place as they territory, the recent Watson Lake events I think, helped put things into perspective for us.

We need to be aware of how quickly COVID can come into our lives.

Lake and goal from the current state of a few to no active cases, to a surge of activity and spread in one or more areas of Yukon.

COVID is an opportunist, looking for a way to end her and then a way to spread.

We must avoid giving it any opportunity to take hold and to spread.

How do we do that?

We all know of course, by following the Safe Six rules.

We could easily hold ten major gatherings, and see no consequences and think we have looked this virus.

And that we could do it again.

We got away with that, why not another time?

It is easy to be seduced by chance and good fortune -- fortune and the randomness of spreading events.

Ten times we may be lucky but it might be the 11<sup>th</sup> time that we get into trouble.

Trouble that we have seen an interior BC, in northern Saskatchewan, in many areas of Manitoba, Newfoundland, many places in Ontario and Québec and Alberta.

Prevention is for certain our best medicine against COVID, and we know how to prevent it.

So the Safe Six, one more time.

Maintain physical distancing, keeping two metres away from everyone who is not a member of your social bubble.

Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol.

Stay home if you're feeling sick.

Follow the social and organized gathering guidelines, and respect the limitations on group size.

Limit travelled to rural communities and be respectful when you're there.

Self isolate or quarantine if you have returned to Yukon and have been outside of our bubble in the last 14 days, or if you have been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19.

As Yukoners, we know how to live the winter.

We need to get our share of outdoor activities, and all our gatherings over winter should be careful, small, planned, and deliberate.

Remember the numbers for social gatherings.

Then indoors and preferably sticking to your household and social bubble.

50 outdoors, and always faced.



For formal or organized seated gatherings, we have guidelines and I encourage you to refer to those.

It is in our best interest, and in our community's interest to follow the Safe Six and ensure we are taking the initiative -- necessary precautions to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

When we let our guard down, COVID will enter quietly and before we know it, explode into an outbreak.

We need to continue to avoid that possibility.

And while I am at that, here are six further tips of how to be.

The wise, be careful, be safe, be vigilant, be aware, and don't -- above all, be kind.

As COVID continues, we see our fellow Canadians coping with large spikes in cases.

As people return to work in public areas throughout Canada and started together more, cases increased.

Similarly, I think we all realize that Watson Lake is not the end of COVID in our territory, and I will continue to remind me Yukoners that we need to prepare to see new cases within our territory.

Like our counterparts throughout the country and the world, the risk remains for the coming months.

At the same time, throughout the last eight months, we have become more and more familiar with COVID as we continue to move forward.

Therefore we have learned not to panic or get too upset when the new cases confirmed.

In the spirit of focusing on risk rather than simply case numbers, we will be changing our reporting processes.

Rather than relying on a press release or press conference following a new confirmed case, I ask that you continue to check the Yukon.ca COVID-19 page.

Following any new confirmations, our case count will be updated.

In turn, we will release further information during our weekly press conference unless urgent.

If there is a notice of particular importance such as a public exposure or a concern of community spread, we will release advisories and hold press conferences as required.

However, in the event of a new confirmed case when there is no public risk, we ask that you be patient and wait until further details are discussed as appropriate at the weekly press conference.

As always at this time of year, I have been seeing red poppies on many winter jackets and other apparel.

And it is with pride and warmth that eyewitness this support for our veterans and -- as a remembrance days quickly approaching.

A day that is usually marked by ceremony at the Canada games centre in Whitehorse, and likewise in community centres throughout the territory, but it will look slightly different this year.

Public events will not be held because of the gathering guidelines.

Large events will be replaced with alternative options to remember veterans, and soldiers.

So do showcase your support by buying a poppy, donating to the Legion, attending one of the many virtual events held across the country, and bow your head of course in a moment of silence on November 11th, at 11:00 AM.

COVID will not stop us from remembering those who have made their sacrifices for the country.

But it has altered the way that we commemorate.

If you're looking for alternative ways to pay respect to our veterans and our soldiers, I encourage you to reach out to the local Legion.

That is all for my update.

Thank you.

Take care of each other, stay well.

>> Pat: Thank you, Dr Hanley.

Thank you, Premier Silver.

We will now go to reporters and we will start with John from CKRW in the room.

No questions?

Thank you.

Next to Chuck from the Whitehorse Star.

>> Reporter: Thank you, good morning.

I have a bit of an odd question for Dr Hanley.

We have been told here at the start, or asked here about whether sewage systems, community sewage systems are being tested to detect any sign of COVID.

I guess that wouldn't be very conclusive in Watson Lake or Whitehorse, but I understand and other areas, or people are saying that if you touched the sewage treatment system, you can detect the presence of COVID may be in a community where there has been no cases reported but there may be some asymptomatic cases.

Dr Hanley, can you maybe shine some light on that?

>> Share.

Yeah, it might sound like an odd question, but it is a great question.

It is called wastewater surveillance, and it is something that is being looked at at various locations in the country.

Really, it adds an additional piece of information about early warning surveillance.

Northwest Territories, as you may have heard, has been looking into this and they are piloting and have launched this project.

Or, they are certainly getting close to launching this project, if they haven't officially as yet.

So it is also something that we are learning from our colleagues in Northwest Territories as well as the Public Health Agency of Canada, and looking at that possibility for us too as an additional tool, again in looking at our overall strategy of detecting transmission, detecting spread.

As with anything, it takes its own-- it takes time.

Time to work out, to figure out how it would be done, where it fits in our overall strategy, what the logistics would be, what are the limitations.

Lots and lots of questions still to be answered.

It is still early and new technology and it may provide again an additional tool for us.

So it is something that we are looking at.

I can say for sure if it is something we will implement or not.

We have to compare it to lots of other priorities.

But it does offer some potential.

>> Pat: Chuck, follow-up?

[ Inaudible ]

>> Pat: Chuck?

Okay.

We will move to Haley at the Yukon News.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

I guess my first question was the changing of the reporting process.

Could I get the rationale for why that is being changed?

Releases won't be sent out but they can be looked up on the website?

>> Certainly.

I think there are a couple of aspects to this.

One is that, as I said, I think it is really important for us to communicate risk and to let risk be the focus of our communications, not necessarily case counts.

So when there is a case, a new case, but it is contained and we have no concerns about eight, we will of course add that once that is confirmed to our case count.

But...

But every time we do a press release, or a press briefing of course, that takes diversion from other important work that we are doing.

And as always, we have to try to focus on the priorities.

The real priority for communication, as I say, is giving the public the latest information about risk, and that includes such things as, is there exposure?

Is there exposure?

The numbers themselves don't change that risk.

If they are not in the category of out into public exposure.

So it is just to be more efficient in our reporting processes, to maintain transparency and accountability, but also really to focus on where we really need to communicate and where additional information is really more supplementary.

>> Pat: Follow-up question?

>> Reporter: He and I mean I hear that rationale but it is obviously information people are very interested in.

Isn't that part of the public -- the role of public health to be transparent about that information?

Is there any concern that there will be less trust with the information being put out less quickly through press releases rather than posted online?

>> The posting of information is our effort to be as transparent as possible, and to be is nonetheless possible in turning around information once we process, investigated, and are comfortable with the level of information.

That is the information we will provide.

I think the interface really that we are continually trying to promote is information that is posted and information on the website.

But not every case requires a media briefing.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move now to the Canadian press.

>> Reporter: This is Chuck, that.

I did have a follow-up.

And I quickly ask it?

>> Pat: Can you let us run through and we welcome back to you?

>> Reporter: Roger that.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Canadian press?

>> Reporter: Hi.

>> Pat: Please go ahead.

>> Reporter: I was wondering if Dr Hanley could talk a little bit about this new information coming up saying those who get their flu shots have a better chance at having some kind of protection from COVID?

>> I just want to clarify your question.

Your question is whether people who have the flu shot have better protection against COVID, is that it?

>> Reporter: Yeah.

>> So...

There is some literature.

I think it is pretty scanty, but suggests that if you were to have both infections at the same time, both influenza and COVID-19 infection, that you might be worse off.

Of course that intuitively makes sense.

If you have two viral infections, either of which can potentially serious, even under -- overwhelming for people with underlying medical conditions, you could have a worse outcome.

There is some at least preliminary literature suggesting that the case experience with that is actually pretty low because since we have had active COVID-19 circulation in the country, and in the world, in those areas where we have had COVID circulating and public health measures in place, influenza circulation tends to have been very low.

So we don't have a lot of actual, kind of real experience with coinfection's with influenza and COVID-19.



The reason of course that we are promoting the influenza vaccine and the uptick, by the way, has been really good so far in Yukon, and I would continue to encourage people to get their flu shots at all of those locations, but the reason we are promoting particularly the influenza vaccine this year is one, for that reason.

Lat, at an individual level, we want to ensure people do not have that opportunity to have both infections at once.

But it is also at the population level, where we want to make sure that influenza has a low chance of circulating or being a significant hazard for us.

The last viral illness in general we have in the community, the better we can focus on COVID should it occur in our community.

So COVID prevention but also COVID management.

And certainly in areas which are seeing community spread of COVID, and even having they are hospitals start to fill with patients and ICUs, it is a big worry if you were to see influenza at the same time.

So really, we really want to minimize the risk of influenza introduction and transmission in the territory, this year in particular in of course particularly over these winter months.

>> Pat: Do you have a follow-up question?

>> Reporter: So your saying there is not much literature on it, it is just starting to be researched?

I guess that is what I am trying to understand, why is it that people who get a flu shot have a better chance at being protected from COVID?

>> If there is literature that says people who have a flu shot have a better chance at being protected against COVID, then I am not familiar with that.

I have not seen literature to say that.

So I want to be careful about making any kind of a potentially misleading communication.

Really, the reason we are promoting flu shots again is to prevent influenza.

I can't see any reason why an influenza vaccine would actually protect -- protect against coronavirus, given that the immunology is so different.

But I have certainly interested to look and see what is out there.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Claudiane, Radio-Canada?

>> Reporter: For the premier, wondering if your reported reluctance recently to allow-- not that it is your decision, I understand that, but...

If it has a to do with the cases in Watson Lake.

>> No.

>> Pat: Do you have a follow-up?

>> Reporter: Sorry, I did not hear the answer.

>> Sorry, absolutely not.

They are not related.

>> Reporter: Okay, you can't elaborate?

I am asking because at the beginning of this pandemic, you guys said there was a lot of talks with neighbouring jurisdictions, whether it was Alaska or NWT in knowing whether the cases or people coming through, if there were cases developed in their home jurisdiction, that we would be able to follow through or follow-up and have an idea.

I'm wondering if that worked.

>> Yeah, I mean so with our current provisions as far as travel through the territory for folks that are heading to either Alaska or through to Northwest Territories, our follow through traffic is a lot of the numbers of traffic, but we have done a very good job of monitoring that.

Minister Streicker has done extraordinary work with the federal government to really help people to know if vehicles are safe, if they are from out of territory, that type of thing.

We have managed to do very well with the current guidelines.

When it comes to the Alaska snowbirds, we support the current federal restrictions, it is just that simple on international travel.

We do not consider it essential travel to head south for the winter and we will continue to work with the Canadian border services, that agency, to discuss issues and address concerns as they come through.

But the good work that has been done to allow for successful travel through to Alaska and regular circumstances under the guidelines that are provided is one thing, and to consider this type of travel essential is something that we just disagree with.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up?

>> Reporter: That's okay, thanks.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Maryne, L'Aurore boréale?

>> Reporter:

[ Speaking French ]

>> Interpreter: The question is for the premier.

Are the decisions about the meals at the centre of hope related to the COVID pandemic?

>> Well, yeah it has to do with the guidelines about safe distance saying, physical distancing.

What we see is the department working with other NGOs and the Whitehorse emergency shelter to come up with provisions of to make sure nobody gets turned around.

And they have been working on that throughout the pandemic.

It is easier to get boxed lunches when the weather was better.

Right now, the weather is getting worse.

To say it is related to COVID, it would be related to the guidelines and making sure the folks that are in the Whitehorse emergency shelter and all of our facilities for that matter are safe and the programs and services that are developed through all of our partner organizations and buildings can accommodate people safely as we provide those programs and services.

I hope that answers your question.

>> Pat:

[ Speaking French ]

>> Reporter:

[ Speaking French ]

>> Interpreter: Does it mean that the people that are vulnerable in their families should take more precautions?

>> That's a good question.

I believe that the folks at the Whitehorse emergency shelter have been doing an extraordinary job of staying within the guidelines of people inside.

I think the bigger issue is, of course we would ask everybody that is accessing services to be as safe as the Canon to adhere to the Safe Six.

But I also believe that the staff arrest on unextraordinary job to work within the provisions of those guidelines.

It's just that we are getting in towards winter and it was easier to see a lot more flow-through the ability to go and taken their lunch and eat somewhere outdoors.

That is just not an option now is much as it was in the past.

So a real, heartfelt thank you to the staff at the Whitehorse emergency shelter, but also to all of the NGOs that are helping us with folks that are in need at this time through health and social services and through the NGOs.

We have a really caring community here and I know they take the safety of the clients extremely-- it is extremely important to them, they take it extremely seriously but again, anyone accessing the services, they have been making a big request today to everybody that we must continue to be vigilant.

That is the biggest message today.

Both myself and Doctor Hanley went through the Safe Six again together, and both of our speeches.

There is a reason for that.

We really want everybody, whether you're accessing social services or, you know, just on your regular weekends, making sure that you're maintaining the vigilance, because your actions are going to help keep everybody safe.

It is not just about you as an individual, it is about your actions, making sure you keep our most vulnerable people, people with immuno compromising diseases, our elderly safe.

So again, be vigilant, and everybody practice the Safe Six police.

>> Pat: Thank you, Premier Silver.

We will go back now to Chuck.

>> Reporter: Thank you, sorry.

I was asking my question but I forgot to take my phone off mute so you could not hear me.

Premier Silver, -- Dr Hanley, I was just wondering, what is the risk or likelihood of having an asymptomatic case in one of the communities going undetected?

>> Thanks for that question.

There is always a risk of that, but that is the reason for doing the type of testing that we do.

So the risk becomes, the risk of a random, asymptomatic case being present when there is no other signal of infection is low.

That is the reason that we are encouraging the testing that we do of people with symptoms, a wide variety of symptoms, and with even mild symptoms.

So as you know, that is one of the things that we emphasize, is that symptoms do not have to be severe in order to need criteria to be tested.

So by maintaining that low threshold for testing, even in people with no travel history, no known exposure, that is our action, that is kind of our radar.

For detecting signals otherwise undetectable transmission of COVID within the community.

We have numerous other methods of doing surveillance.

So we follow emergency visits at the Whitehorse hospital, as well as the other two hospitals.

We follow calls to 811.

We maintain that kind of surveillance of respiratory illness and respiratory presentation.

So we are looking for signals in a number of different areas as well as managing the cases that pop up as detected, you know, in the emergency department for in...

So that means, therefore, that yes, that chance is always there.

But we are actively looking for signals and that helps us give that assurance that the likelihood of that happening is, just on its own with no other signals of disease, is pretty low.

>> Pat: Thank you.

I would like to thank everyone for their time today.

Our next COVID-19 update will take place on Tuesday, November 10th, at 9:00 AM.

The time and date have been changed in recognition of the remembrance Day holiday on November 11th.

That is Tuesday, November 10th, at 9:00 AM.