

COVID-19 Facebook live update: May 26, 2021

>> Pat: I am Pat Living with the Department of Health and social services.

We are joined by Yukon Premier the honourable Sandy Silver energy Medical Officer of Health Doctor Brendan Hanley.

Our smiling which interpretation is provided by Kevin Klein and translation services by Andre Bourcier.

We will go to the phone lines for questions from reporters and will call you by name and you will each have two questions.

I would like to verify everyone can hear us create if any reporters have an issue please e-mail last.

>> It's great to be here with Doctor Hanley on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Taa'an Kwächän Council.

Yesterday marked a turning point as we look to emerge from the pandemic and get onto the path of recovery.

The vaccine uptake to date has been very great .

As of yesterday 77 percent of eligible Yukoners have reserved their first dose and 69 percent have received their second dose.

Because of our rollout we have been able to safely start lifting restrictions as part of the path forward plan.

Fully vaccinated people known need -- no longer need to self isolate upon entering a territory but must sign a declaration they have been fully vaccinated and need to provide consent for the verification of their vaccine status to be exempt from requirements.

We can verify the status of those in the Yukon and in BC and are working with health officials for the rest.

If an individual provides consent for the verification personal health information will only be accessed by health and social services who were authorized under the health information protection and management acts.

-- act if an individual does not want to consent to providing that information they can still enter the territory as long as they self isolate.

Other changes include bars and restaurants returning to full capacity for table services, social bubbles can increase to 20 individuals, social gathering sciences.

Indoor gatherings.

Outdoor gatherings, up to 100.

And it can increase to 200 individuals with physical distancing with the venue or space funerals sweating and faith-based services can increase to 200 individuals with physical distancing provided the venue can accommodate.

Jams and recreational centres can increase to 200 individuals with physical distancing provided the venue our space can accommodate and camps and recreational programs can increase to 20 individuals indoor with physical distancing and mask use and 100 individuals outdoors with physical distancing.

These changes are based upon the recommendations from Doctor Hanley band are guided by our path forward plan.

We continued to take a careful and measured approach to these restrictions.

Our top priority is protecting the health and safety of the Yukon people and asked why we will extend the state of emergency which will expire at the end of the month.

By extending the state of emergency we remain flexible and able to adapt to potential rapid changes in the COVID-19 situation including monitoring the third wave in Canada and reviewing emerging data on variant spread to inform our decisions.

Ministerial orders issued under this act are what allow us to set requirements for entry to the Yukon and mandatory self-isolation.

These measures have helped keep the Yukon safe.

We need to keep them in place for now.

COVID-19 is a major threat in our country but we're hopeful as vaccines rollout and provinces that case numbers will steadily decline in the coming weeks and months.

We are encouraged to see the progress in British Columbia.

Yesterday they announced their plans to lift restrictions if things continue to go well.

We are well ahead of British Columbia.

If things go well they look to lift travel restrictions in mid June and increase gathering sizes modestly.

They are in the process of building their foundational restart.

We have already established not foundation and thanks to the strong immunization rates.

When our youth clinics open next week I hope to see those numbers continue.

We are in a fortunate position and the amazing public servants at half delivered critical services including immunized nations over the course of the pandemic.

We need to keep it up.

Candidates chief public health officer recently called the Yukon a model we are all looking towards for success which is high praise but we also take that responsibility seriously.

While we have lifted restrictions we still need to keep our guard up.

Our thoughts are with our friends in Manitoba as they deal with their most intense wave yet.

Yukoners are still required to follow the save six plus one, masking up.

You can also still receive your vaccination if you haven't already.

I encourage all Yukoners who have not received a shot to get one.

The more people that got vaccinated the safer the territory will be.

To book an appointment and find out more info please visit Yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot.

Before I hand things over, it is tourism week in Canada and I know whispering in the air we are thinking about travel and lifting self-isolation requirements for fully vaccinated people is welcome news for our tourism operators.

This recognizes the impact the tourism industry has on every community from coast to coast to coast and throughout the pandemic Yukon tourism and businesses have put the health and

safety of Yukoners above their own interests and at great cost and sacrifice.

This week is a great time to recognize and thank the tourism industry.

The tourism sector enriches the Yukon and so many ways beyond just our GDP.

To call the Yukon home is an exceptional privilege and for our friends and neighbours this feeling has also become their calling.

I encourage Yukoners to make this your summer.

Tomorrow we will be unveiling more information about the great Yukon summer campaign.

You might be surprised by the toys and experiences that are offered here in our own backyards.

Whether the trip you been putting off for years, the Sunday trip or revisiting these local attractions just down the road this is the moment to do so.

This tourism week and all summer long that celebrate the people and experiences and events that make our corner of the world a beautiful place.

As you return to your favourite spots remember to travel safely and respectfully.

Thank you very much for your time.

I will not pass it to Doctor Hanley.

>> You certainly have me all excited about the summer plans now!

There are no new cases of COVID-19.

And the reduction in new cases compared to a few weeks ago is likely a reflection of reduced in poor taste and risk as COVID activity and most regions including BC and Alberta the clients.

This is certainly encouraging news.

This is also not the end of the pandemic.

We will see new cases from time to time and we could still see clusters or outbreaks associated with case importations.

If we were lack our public health measures too quickly.

The expected impact of any single case or cluster is undoubtedly much less from what we what is seen even a few short months ago.

When we had first begun to see cases diagnosed in Yukon COVID-19 had many unknowns.

Our goal is to minimize cases in order to minimize spread and the potential to affect people in large numbers and cause severe illness and death and strain our healthcare system.

We are now in a different place with high and still climb a vaccination rates as long as we don't see a major shift in viral strains.

We should be protected from those more severe impacts.

I feel and welcome a new scents of calm.

There is not the fear that was palpable before.

I think there will be growing acceptance that it is much more usual to communicates estimates of risk rather than simple case updates.

I'd like to think we will at some point get to a stage where we won't need to announce every case of COVID just as we don't report on every case of influenza.

As we move into this major reopening week we are on the path to recovery.

We should see that COVID eventually becomes one more disease we need to live with and adapts to you what that will look like could still take on a number of different forms.

Will BC outbreaks of new variants or occasional cases and clusters?

Cases where vaccine immunity begins to wane?

Until the global situation is under control much of this unpredictability will remain.

That is why we will need to keep our eyes on this disease for years.

We will need to keep testing when symptoms occur.

We will want to maintain strong surveillance to the tax new cases outbreak surveillance -- variants.

Although our transition should continue to progress COVID-19 will remain with us and we will live with that.

As long as the world is grappling with community spread and large outbreaks this will continue to be a pandemic even though we may ourselves feel insulated.

Eventually the world will get over this and COVID-19 will move from pandemic to endemic.

And may continue to pop up from time to time.

Or circulate regularly.

Variants will continue to rise particularly as high COVID activity hits the world.

Vaccines maybe adapted and we may need regular vaccine updates.

As we learn more about variants of concern and how vaccines work we can be cautiously more confident in our ability to manage COVID-19 even in the face of these new varieties.

Speaking of variants, all of our recent cases have been variants.

>> Pat., B.1.1.7 and most recently B.1.617.

Our case management approach has always the same the presence of variants.

Just as we have done from the beginning of these cases were capably managed first by the individuals and second by our skilled and seasoned communicable disease team.

One of our longer-term tools will be testing for COVID infection.

Testing has always been a key part of our strategy to identify and contact trays.

Testing will protect us well into the future.

It will be more accessible as rapid testing becomes more available.

Testing continues to be vital.

Even if you are experiencing any symptoms, please do get tested.

Over the months to come COVID-19 will slowly cease to dominate our lives as we continue to get vaccinated seek testing in practice

the safe six plus one we can feel confident Yukon will remain in a stable position.

I phased and carefully managed reopening help us maintain our confidence and stability and eventually put this pandemic to rest.

Yesterday's package of reopening measures included relaxed self-isolation requirements.

Adjustments including weathers, faceplate gatherings and funerals and changes to social brothers easing our self-isolation restrictions has perhaps been the most dramatic change where those fully vaccinated are exempt.

If you have received a does of the Health Canada approved at least 14 full days before you enter Yukon you are considered fully vaccinated.

I hope the news will allow people to resume planning what might have been previously postponed, weddings and traditional ceremonies and visits to see family members and attend social gatherings.

And we need to move with Canada and our 12 sister jurisdictions being mindful of what travel guidance are in place.

I hope Yukoners are able to return the things that have been on hold.

Without Yukoners care and vigilance we may not have been able to announce such changes at this time.

We are in a curious position where the COVID situation is so varied.

Although we talk about progressive reopening in many places plans have been published for the near future.

Many places are still imposing restrictions or lockdowns.

It is now Manitoba's turn to fight the peak of COVID activity with ICU so full some patients have to be diverted out of province.

Once again we can only be grateful for how well we have done and how much loss and tragedy we have managed to avoid.

As the premier says we continue to see progress.

And now at 77 percent uptake of first dose and 69 percent second dose amongst the 18 plus populations and we see with each age group that creeping up of numbers.

It's now 68, all the other categories are now about 70 percent.

40 to 49, 76 percent.

50 to 59, 78 percent.

60 townhome 69, 84 percent and 70 plus, 91 percent with the second dose uptake and we are now in that phase of slower uptake and it sees us increase our overall first.

And we begin our quest in vaccinated 12 to 17 -year-olds.

Many people have put long hours into working out for special program to protect our youth.

And there be one clinic for first doses and a return visit three weeks later.

While appointments can be made for community immunizations walk-ins will also be accommodated.

These clinics are only for youth and other members should get there vaccines at other opportunities.

For those parents are questioning FIs there is the best option and also for those that are asking for Pfizer for themselves instead of modernity at, at these messenger RNA vaccines are basically different variations.

Even though there are slight differences they have both vaccines that passes RNA inside a lipid fatty envelope that delivers it to a destination and blueprint instructions are pounced on and the body's cellular machinery gets to work and they are so similar they can be considered equivalent both of them in the end due to 95 percent effectiveness range in study after study with similar results against currently known variants.

When circumstances dictate one mRNA can be substituted for the other.

Some people have been requesting Pfizer because of individual preference or because they have received the first dose of Pfizer elsewhere.

I want to clarify the Pfizer vaccine is solely for 12 to 17 -year-olds.

We are not in a position to administer it to individuals who fall outside of this age group.

We have a limited supply that has been specifically allocated.

We have offered Moderna to several people who have moved to the Yukon after receiving a Pfizer vaccine elsewhere and I am confident their immunity is just as good as with two doses of either vaccine.

I mentioned a slowing down of the vaccine uptake curve which is also where we address the age-old question of vaccine hesitancy.

Lectins to be the first in line is normal and expected with always a rapid uptake and a slowing down which has nothing to do with the effectiveness of the vaccine rollout.

That's why I'm gratified to see the continued rise in vaccine uptake from week to week even though the relative rise is small.

It means we can address the questions and concerns in engaging with leaders through working with and supporting our doctors and nurses.

And with incentive eyes in people with the ability to forgo travel vaccine hesitancy is considered part of any vaccination campaign.

Although we have vaccinated a greater portion of the population we will work alongside our partners communities and individuals to listen learn and answer any questions.

Vaccination is an exciting way out of the pandemic reaching everyone is a long process and requires many conversations and tremendous collaboration.

And I want to ensure all the various communities phase or ethnic or cultural are heard and their questions are answered.

As each person has the opportunity, to have their concerns heard in their questions addressed.

That's it for today.

I hope we have a good rest of the week and please continue to take care of each other and remember to be grateful.

>> Pat: Thank you Premier Silver and thank you Doctor Hanley.

We will begin with Luke from CK RW.

>> Reporter: I've got a question for Premier Silver.

What is the process if someone who was fully vaccinated coming from a jurisdiction other than BC or someone return in to the Yukon, what the process is because there is no specific protocol in place.

>> When it comes to the ones that we can verify is Yukoners and BC.

We have huge connections for sharing of data.

We can verify information and we are continuing to work with those other jurisdictions to sort out the verifications.

Doctor Hanley and I have been talking about this.

The details can be worked out and we are in a position where we have the recommendation from the chief medical officer making sure there sat 14 days in between and we are working out the final details of those systems that we are so closely attached to but we've been saying for weeks now that we can verify these and we've also been saying if you don't want to share that information you are not compelled to do so and individuals can still come you just need to do the self-isolation and for those regions that we have a couple of nuances we will provide the information as soon as we possibly can.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question Luke?

>> Just the one.

>> Pat: We will move to Philippe from CBC Yukon.

>> Reporter: This question is for Doctor Hanley on the topic of Pfizer and Moderna.

You mention one can be subject to the for another.

We got a call for someone from Dawson city who was in BC and received Pfizer and now she's back in Dawson and wants to get her second shot and only has access to maternal.

Do you mind giving advice to her?

As a possible to get one and then the other?

>> Thanks for the question.

And relates to what I was talking about and I am not going to give a specific recommendation because we OEs do case management considerations but I think the key message is we have Pfizer only for a limited time and this is not Pfizer in territory and available for second dosage for people having previously received it.

The dose we recognize that fee recommendation from the National advisory committee on immunizations is preferentially where both vaccines are available.

Where clearly if you can continue with that same product and we are ample supplies of Moderna and we do know and it's okay to substitute one for the other that you can continue with a Pfizer and Moderna you can expect so really the message I'm trying to say is we do receive individual requests and we provide advice but the general message is to reassure people these vaccines are equivalent.

>> Pat: Do have a follow-up?

>> What are the conditions.

>> That's an important question.

It's one that we're deliberating on as we speak it will be a phasing out of mandatory mask use is.

I would say we have some phases to get through first.

We have a lot of changes happening as of this week as the premier mentioned -- we want to have this kind of cautious approach and we want to see the success and we want to be in a position to recommend next steps.

We do see there will be recommendations around mask use and future phases of reopening based on continued success with our current reopening and with stability I do think that masks are going to play an ongoing role more than they ever did pre-coded and it might be NOA we maybe finding ourselves catching up to one has been common practice is in Asia, to use masks more liberally in circumstances where they maybe circulating we have said before that physical distancing and mask use is will likely be some of those later removals in our phase the reopenings.

We want feeble to have those individual level protections as we go through these significant changes for the ability for people to gather and socialize.

>> Pat: We will now move to Tim from the Whitehorse star.

>> Reporter: Thanks and good morning.

Diverse question is for either review.

Is the system up and running properly for BC and Yukon residents to check their vaccine?

Is everything running properly?

>> As far as I know everything has been up and running and the verification team is working away on requests.

I have not heard from a contrary.

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

>> Reporter: Yes.

It just fled from my mind...

The Canadian ombudsman has released a news release about the vaccine passports.

>> We are definitely going down the road to make sure we are allowing for a loosening of guidelines and I want to get back to more sense of normal in the league's intrusive way possible and every step we do we have quite the process with recommendations from the medical community and going through a myriad of departments and we will continue to do that.

We are encouraged by our vaccine numbers.

I haven't seen the latest from the Canadian ombudsman but I will be looking at it.

>> Pat: We will now move to radio Canada?

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: Can you please repeat in French where we are at advanced points with the vaccination campaign and a few are looking about about some of the measurements we moved shortly.

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Do have another question?

>> Reporter: Yes.

[Speaking French]

>> Would choose say we have achieved herd immunity and what does it mean for the future in terms of reopening in the Yukon.

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Thank you it.

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: Is someone is coming to the Yukon from elsewhere, what are exactly the steps we are going to happen, do they need to self isolate and what is the next stab after that?

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Another question?

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: So to the new conditions that dew apply for people with two vaccines are only for those coming from British Columbia?

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Add light to thank everyone for their time.

The next update will take place on Wednesday June 2nd at 10:30 AM.