

COVID-19 Facebook live update: September 2, 2020

>> Pat: Good afternoon.

I'm Pat Living with the Department of Health and social services and moderator for the COVID-19 update for Wednesday, September 2nd, with you gone Yukon premier the honourable Sandy Silver.

Today our silent interpretation is being provided by a zoom from Winnipeg by Kevin Klein.

Andre Bourcier from French language services directed will translate questions from French-speaking reporters.

Following the statement we will go to the phone lines for questions from reporters.

We will call you by name in you will each have one question plus one follow-up.

Premier Silver?

>> Thank you, very much, Pat.

Thank you everybody for joining us today on the traditional territories of the Taa'an Kwächän Council and the Kwanlin Dün for station.

It has been over a month since we entered into these three, our longest phase.

Changes in this phase will continue to be gradual and adaptive as we resume more day-to-day activities and a safe way.



We have all been very impressed with the efforts from local businesses to adapt and change to COVID-19 realities, even with some of the very creative adaptations we know many businesses are still feeling the strain when it comes-- felt through these safety precautions.

Very early on in this pandemic, our government recognized a need to support businesses.

We introduced several programs including Yukon business relief program to support Yukon businesses who are the heart of our economy.

Today I am happy to share that this program will continue to provide support to Yukon businesses.

To date, our government has committed more than \$40 million to support Yukoners during the spend a mix.

The Yukon business relief program is one of these particular pieces of support.

The Minister will have more data is about this program extension very, very soon.

As we navigate the repercussions of COVID-19, we know the businesses continue to need help.

The preservation of our local economy remains at the forefront of our minds as we continue to take the necessary steps to ensure public health and safety.



The Yukon business relief program is offered in partnership with Canada's northern business relief fund and businesses can apply for support for both or either of these programs through the Yukon government.

We also continue to offer supports for essential workers through the Yukon essential workers income support program.

This program offers employers a subsidy to increase wages for essential workers and is available until early November.

We will continue to listen to local businesses and work with them to keep our economy going.

As of this week, all Yukon schools are open to in classroom instruction.

Yukon children have returned to school, and while there have been challenges, I am pleased to see the result of months of hard work from the school communities to ensure a safe return.

For many Yukon families, the start of the school year brought with it more hurdles as seasonally expected colds require more children and parents to stay at home.

This causes a ripple effect, as parents and caregivers also stay home to care for children.

This can be a challenge and it is being experienced right across the nation.

I would like to thank Yukon parents, caregivers, and teachers for their patience as we navigate new and stricter health policies in schools.

I would also like to thank employers who have accommodated employees with more time off.

Thank you very much for your patience, your understanding, and contributions to the safety of our society.

Supports continue to be available for employers and self-employed Yukoners through the paid sick leave rebate.

This program helps reimburse pay for time taken for sick days in response to the pandemic.

Yukon employers can access this program through until March 2021.

Staying home in response to COVID-19 symptoms will remain a necessary and ongoing challenge for all of us, but it is an essential step to curbing the spread of the virus.

Please remember, we are all in this together and our government will remain responsive to the needs of Yukoners.

We want to hear from all Yukoners, in one way to share how the pandemic has affected you and your family is by participating in the Canadian index of well-being wellness survey.

The survey was sent to Yukoners in early August and it closes September 6th.

The purpose of this survey is to understand Yukoners' perceptions up well-being in also the impact of COVID-19, the public health response, to help the quality of life of Yukoners.

Questions will focus on things like physical and mental health, safety in your communities and workplace, paying your bills, access to education.

While Yukon communities are incredibly resilient, we know that responding to COVID-19 has taken a toll on our overall well-being.

This survey will help to identify some of the unintended consequences of the pandemic and also the overall health response so far.

This is a chance to hear directly from Yukoners about how things are going during these challenging times and what we as a government can do to improve the well-being right across the territory.

I encourage all Yukoners to please take the time to complete this important survey which ends in a couple of days as it will inform us as we continue to manage through the pandemic.

It helps us understand the impacts on individuals and communities and it is very valuable information.

Survey is ending on September 6th, so please visit Yukon.ca for more information.

With no active cases of COVID-19 and no known community transmission, Yukon remains very well positioned.

Last week, 109 Yukoners were tested at the respiratory assessment centre, otherwise known as the rac.

The team tested everyone who presented as symptoms.

As always, thank you for your hard work and dedication following the Safe Six and doing your part to keep all of us safe.

Each and every one of us has made changes and adjustments and sacrifices every day to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in we

thank you very much for your continuing diligence.

Let's keep on doing this good work, keep up the physical distancing, staying two metres apart from each other-- anyone outside of your bubble, stay home if you're feeling sick, follow the new social and organized gathering guidelines with respect and limitations on group sizes, limit your travel to rural communities and be respectful when you do go, self isolate when you're returning from travel to anywhere outside of British Columbia, Northwest Territories or Nunavut, or if you had contact with anybody who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Most of all, wash your hands and wash them frequently.

I will say once again, thank you very much, thank you for following the guidelines and keeping yourselves and your loved ones and your communities safe.

Have a safe and healthy rest of the week, and I will open up to questions.

>> Pat: We will begin with Chris from CBC.

>> Reporter: Well, I hate to-- well, we did not hear any of what the premier just said because the audio was not transmitting to the phone line.

I mean, we have not seen a news release so I don't know what has been announced today.

None of us do.

>> Pat: Were we aware of that?

[Inaudible]

>> Pat: Okay, can you hear me now Chris?

>> Reporter: Yes.

>> Pat: Okay.

It looks like we have actually just fixed it.

>> We can go through the whole thing again.

>> Pat: We will go through it again.

Can everyone else hear us.

Yes.

>> Yes.

>> Pat: Gabrielle?

>> Reporter: Yes, thank you.

>> Pat: Premier Silver, I'm sorry.

I want to subject do all to my intro.

[Laughter]

>> No, problem.

Thanks for letting us know, Chris.

If those on the Livelink already heard this, I apologize for being repetitive but it is important that the media knows the update.

So I will start again.

And again, coming to you from the traditional

territories of the Taa'an Kwächän Council and the Kwanlin Dün for station.changes in this phase will continue to be adaptive and gradual as we resume more day-to-day activities and a safe way.

We have all been very impressed with efforts from local businesses to adapt to changes based upon new COVID-19 realities.

Even with some very creative adaptations, we know many businesses are still feeling the strain when it comes to safety precautions.

Very early on in this pandemic, our government recognized a need to support businesses.

We introduced several programs including Yukon business relief program to support Yukon businesses who are the heart of our economy.

Today I am happy to share that this program will continue to provide support to Yukon businesses.

To date, our government has committed more than \$40 million to support Yukoners during the This pandemic.

The Yukon business relief program is one of these particular pieces of support.Minister Pillai who is out on a community tour will have more details about this program extension very soon.

And I want to thank him in his department for all of their hard work on this particular file.

As we navigate the repercussions of COVID-19, we know the businesses continue to need help.

The preservation of our local economy remains at the forefront of our minds as we continue to take the necessary steps to ensure public health and safety.

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This is a chance to hear directly from Yukoners about how things are going during these challenging times and what we as a government can do to improve the well-being right across the territory.

I encourage all Yukoners to please take the time to complete This important survey as it will inform how we continue to manage the pandemic in a way that minimizes the impact on individuals and communities.

The survey ends September 6th.

You can visit Yukon.ca for more information.

Thank you for -- if you have already taken this survey and if you intend on taking it thank you very much.

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As always, thank you for your hard work and dedication following the Safe Six and doing your part to keep all of us safe.

Each and every one of us has made changes and adjustments and sacrifices every day to help Reduce the spread of COVID-19 and immensely.

Let's continue to do that would work -- good work and remember to keep physical distancing,

distancing, staying two metres apart from each other-- anyone outside of your bubble, stay home if you're feeling sick, follow the new social and organized gathering guidelines with respect and limitations on group sizes, limit your travel to rural communities and be respectful when you do go, self isolate when you're returning from travel to anywhere outside of British Columbia, Northwest Territories or Nunavut, or if you had contact with anybody who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Most of all, wash your hands and wash them frequently.

I will say once again, thank you very much, thank you for following the guidelines and keeping yourselves and your loved ones and your communities safe.thank you very much, Yukoners.

Have a safe and healthy rest of the week, and I will open up to questions.

>> Pat: Now we will go to the phone lines.

Chris, CBC.

>> Reporter: Thanks, premier.

I appreciate the do over.

I am interested to ask what your opinion is of the Yukon party's proposal today to amend the civil emergency measures act to require the legislative assembly to debate certain emergency man -- measures and certain extensions of states of emergency, and also to review orders of Council and ministerial orders.

What do you think?

>> First I heard of it today.

Sorry, we have been busy dealing with the pandemic.

They legislative assembly is opening up in October.

Very excited to get back into the legislative assembly.

Very interested in what the opposition has to say, suggestions, critiques, the whole 9 yards.

We are looking forward to that opportunity.

Private members day is on Wednesday.

A great opportunity for the opposition to have their day to put forth motions in other things.

Nothing is stopping them right now from sending in e-mails or letters as well, but definitely, really looking forward to the opening of the legislative assembly.

>> Pat: Follow-up?

>> Reporter: Yes.

We have talked about this before, but is it your assertion then that the government is simply too busy to have any kind of on the record, legislative review of your government's actions during the pandemic over the last several months?

>> No.

Not at all.

There is no other way to answer that question, other than no.

The legislative assembly was closed down when the official opposition requested that we shut down the assembly.

We have not heard much from them since, despite numerous offerings for briefings, discussions on ministerial orders, response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our government has been working tirelessly all summer.

In fact, we have been in here day in and day out since March, and that is exactly what Yukoners expect from their elected officials.

We shut down the legislative assembly.

All parties committed to that, on the request of the official opposition.

We will open it up again in the fall, in less than a month or a month now, and really relish the opportunity to have thought debate and show Yukoners what we have done to not only reduce the curb but plank the curve of cases here in Yukon.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Gabrielle, Whitehorse Star?

Gabrielle?

>> Reporter: Can you hear me now?

>> Pat: Yes, we can.

Go ahead.

>> Reporter: I'm wondering if there is any update to how the \$4 million from the federal government will be spent.

>> We don't have an official update right now.

Although during the course of the pandemic, we have definitely reassigned funding focused in on key priorities.

In our public school system to ensure the students are safe, the families are safe, with staff and the general community are safe.

With this extra support from the government of Canada that we are think to have, we will be able to offset those costs and, you know, there is also a flexibility in identifying new and emerging needs to our school communities as they come in.

I can say that talking with the Department of Education, they are prioritizing spending on health and safety of the students and staff in the school communities, ensuring the continuation of learning for all students, with as many students in class as safely possible, support for students with diverse learning needs and for students that have additional or different support needs.

Also supports for children of critical or essential service workers, and supporting students, teachers, and support staff for flexibility in learning including access to technologies and tools in training.

>> Pat: Second question, Gabrielle?

>> Reporter: Yeah...

Now that we are kind of in this next round of relief programming being extended, I am wondering if there are any COVID-19 relief programs that won't be extended?

>> We're going to continue to work with all of our stakeholders in Yukoners in making sure we identifying needs, and making sure that the supports are available.

Again, I hate to dwell on the well-being Index survey but an extremely important part of us knowing that our programs and services are targeting and focusing in on the individual communities and sectors of our beautiful territory correctly is by getting that input from Yukoners as well.

Whether it is from the very good work that was done with the business advisory committee that Minister Pillai and Minister Dendys worked with coming to economic supports, or working with our partners in public health, it is really important that we have that input from the communities.

We are on weekly conversations, myself as Minister of finance, with finance ministers across Canada and also the first ministers calls, the Council of the Federation calls, and there's a lot of balls in the air as far as federal funding coming in.

It was a long time negotiating the restart money that is now flowing into Yukon and other jurisdictions, and being aware of how do we most benefit from federal funding by continuing to ask for flexibility for the unique needs of the North in we have been doing a good job of getting back.

Then having the departments reports back in on where we need to still provide local, territorial government support where may be some of this federal funding balls short.

I will say as well, the federal government has been very attuned to the programming that is happening here locally.

Our sickleave rebate is the basis of a national model that the federal government is taking and adopting.

So not only are we paying attention to their flexibilities but it is good to see that smaller jurisdictions like the Yukon have a large voice when it comes to initiatives and best practices being implemented right across this nation.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Claudiane, Radio-Canada?

>> Reporter: Yes, so yesterday, Yukon university was closed down after a risk of COVID.

Is this to say that will be the new norm, that when there is risk in a school or COVID case in the school that school will be closed down?

>> I think what you see here is the due diligence of the University and making sure the students are safe.

Average cases going to be different.

Either a scare, an issue or an actual COVID-19 case has to be taken as an independent effort.

But again, the actions of the University and the staff there is making sure that we are airing on the side of caution so that everybody involved is as safe as possible.

It is hard to answer that question as far as, will this be some kind of precedent-setting.

I think it is just a matter of following the guidelines and making sure we have the ability to trace individuals.

I am amazed at public health's ability to do that tracing very quickly

But I don't know if this is going to be precedent-setting.

-- but I don't know if this is precedent-setting.

>> Pat: Follow-up?

>> Reporter: It appears the number of sick days taken dropped in April, since the beginning of the pandemic.

This data comes through a -- an information request.

Do you have any idea why that is?

The number of sick days are the lowest since 2017.

>> I mean, I have not seen that specifically myself, but I know that right away when we were dealing with things like cancellation of the Arctic winter games back in March, my goodness, it feels like any on ago when it was just March, we were definitely again airing on the side of caution.

Workers to be safe did go home until practices were in place.

I was amazed how quickly the government responded to the technologies needed to have public servants working from home.

I really hope after a review of pandemic procedures that we better ourselves as far as our ability to adapt to the workplace operational

behaviours, but I would imagine too with April, what is out anyway just anecdotally with the folks I deal with at the main administrative building, a desire to come back, check in, and to be present at work for some of the things that are harder to do from home.

But just speculating right now.

I could see if we get an analysis from Yukon statistics as to why they believe there is a decrease in April, but it seems to be related to the timelines as far as the knowns and unknowns about this pandemic.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Now to Haley, Yukon news.

>> Reporter: Great, thanks.

I had another question about the Yukon university precautions taken.

Do you know if the two students who failed to self isolate will be facing charges from the emergency act?

>> I know that they enforcement team is investigating the incident right now, and we take this very seriously.

So nothing to report yet as far as whether or not they are receiving fines but we are absolutely looking into the situation.

>> Reporter: Okay.

My second question was another one about that 4 million, which you referred to there.

Does that mean that we can rule out a return for senior students and high schools to full-time classes?

>> It is not going to rule out very many things.

Again, we were happy to get flexibility on this money.

There are unique circumstances to the North versus other areas.

We are the only-- not the only, but we are a jurisdiction which does not have community spread right now, so we were the first community to go back into school.

That is unique to other jurisdictions like, let's say Québec or interior, that are dealing with their own issues.

That flexibility allows us to take a look at may be, there are other costs that are at -- other jurisdictions have to have, therefore we will apply that to other considerations.

But again, it is two different buckets I guess.

One pretty immediately and the other later on at the end of the calendar year.

I did talk with the Minister of education on this and the preparations that we put into place already for the physical distancing and all those different things, making sure that we have that continued learning in class and as much face-to-face education as possible while still adhering to the guidelines comes with a huge cost, and as I said, we will spend this.

We will definitely be able to spend this, and it does then give the department -- more flexibility within their own budgeting.

A couple of weeks ago, we would've thought as a territorial government were responsible for paying this and budgeted accordingly, so it is great to have the extra money so the department can look at all the things we need to do to maximize the amount of face-to-face time for our students.

In sorry for you having to listen to the speech twice.

>> Reporter: That's okay.

>> Pat: Thank you, Premier Silver.

I would like to thank everyone for their time today.

Our next COVID-19 update is scheduled for Wednesday, September 9th, at 2:00 PM.