

COVID-19 Facebook live update: August 12, 2020

Testing testing testing.

Two, good.

Four.

Testing testing testing.

testing.

>> Pat: Good afternoon.

I am Pat Living with the Department of Health and social services and moderator for the COVID-19 update for Wednesday, August wealth.

We are joined by Yukon's Minister of education, the honourable Tracy-Anne McPhee and Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of health Dr Brendan Hanley.

Our sign language interpretation is provided by Mary Tiessen and Andre Bourcier from the French language services directorate will translate any questions from French-speaking journalists.

Following our speakers we will go to the -- phone lines for questions from reporters.

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

Minister McPhee?

>> Thank you.

Thanks, Pat.

Thank you, everyone for joining us today on the traditional territory of the Taa'an Kwächän Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

I am pleased to be here today with Dr Hanley.

We will be sharing more information about the operational plans for public schools and about school busing for the 2020-2021 school year.

Before I get to the details about school, I would like to provide a quick update on our government's response to COVID-19.

Last week, we launched the community well-being survey in partnership with Dr Hanley and the Canadian index of well-being.

This survey will measure well-being in the territory and help us better understand the local impacts of COVID-19.

The survey has received more than 2300 responses so far.

Thank you to those who have completed the survey.

It is still alive, and you can find it online at Yukon.ca and it will remain open into September.

I encourage all Yukoners to take the survey.

The results will inform how we continue to manage the pandemic in a way that minimizes the impact on individuals and communities.

We continue to encourage everyone to do their part in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Residents and visitors to Yukon who are required to self isolate may receive a check in call during the 14 day self isolation period to provide information and help ensure compliance.

Individuals in transit through the Yukon may also be contacted with a reminder to remain on the designated transit route and to leave the territory within 24 hours.

I would like to remind all Yukoners and visitors to our territory to be kind and respectful to one another.

A few have concerns, please contact our enforcement team at covid19enforcement@gov.yk.ca.

Or call, 1-877-374-0425.

Planning for the 2020-2021 school year has been underway since school ended in June.

Just a few months ago, we had to make the difficult decision to suspend face-to-face classes which was challenging for students and families across the territory.

Yukon has benefited from the hard work of everyone working together to keep us safe.

We have had a low case count and have adapted to the new realities that are necessary to keep our communities safe and healthy.

Yukoners have been doing their part to keep each other safe by practising the Safe Six and we need to keep this up.

Thanks to your hard work and dedication to staying safe, we are in a good position here in the territory as we head into the new school year.

We are very pleased that students can go back to school this month.

We know how important it is for our students to get back to the classroom, learning face-to-face with their teachers and alongside their friends.

As we return to face-to-face learning, we are putting the health and safety of students and staff, and our communities first.

These are unprecedented times, and we know that school this year will be different.

All schools are following the health and safety guidelines set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of health.

This includes common practices across all schools, like physical distancing in classrooms and common areas where possible, limiting the mixing of groups of students and staff, washing and standardizing hands regularly during the school day, regular cleaning and disinfecting of each school, and keeping students and staff at home if they have symptoms or are sick.

We will continue to follow the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of health as we move through the school year.

I understand that Dr Hanley will share new recommendations about the use of masks on buses and in schools today, and I will let him speak to that in the moment.

Following the health and safety guidelines, the majority of students will be able to return to full-time face-to-face classes and received in person supports from their teachers.

This includes all rural students in kindergarten to grade 12 and all the Whitehorse students in kindergarten to grade nine.

As with many jurisdictions across the country, some programming has to be adapted in order to meet the health and safety guidelines.

In order to meet the guidelines, the three larger Whitehorse high schools will provide grade ten to 12 students with a mixture of face-to-face in class instruction and teacher support and learning away from class each day during the school week.

I want to reassure parents that this does not mean that these students will only be learning half of the time, and it does not mean that students will be left alone online when they are not in class.

Grades ten to 12 students in Whitehorse will continue to take four courses person master and supports will be available while they are not in class, including teacher supervised study halls, both in person and virtually.

Resources will also be available for students who need additional support.

'S arrangement for grades ten to 12 in Whitehorse will be carefully monitored and assessed over the coming weeks and months, and we will adapt as necessary to ensure that all students are supported in their learning.

While all schools will follow common health and safety practices, each school is also unique in its size and layout and student population.

As a result, each school requires its own operational plan that fits the unique needs and contacts of that school community and outlines the specific health and safety routines for their school.

My heartfelt thanks to school principals who have been working hard to support -- with the support of the central administration staff and public health officials to finalize these operational plans.

They have reached out to their school Council and the local First Nation for feedback to address community concerns.

Thanks to everyone for their tremendous efforts to work together to develop these plans and safely bring students and staff back into schools.

Our thanks goes to the Yukon first Nations, two school councils and associations, to the Yukon teachers Association, and the Chief Medical Officer of health and his public health team.

You have all provided helpful support, information, and feedback in planning for the 2020-2021 school year.

Each school's operational plan is being shared with their school communities and posted on their school website.

Almost all schools have finalized their operational plans and these will be available today.

School operations will be monitored and adjusted on an ongoing basis this year.

As schools learn more about how routines are working for their students and their staff, this will be ongoing monitoring and adjusting.

We will be adaptive and responsive to student learning needs and public health advice over the course of the pandemic.

We are committed to providing our students with everything they need to be safe and to succeed in learning this year.

We are completely invested in this school year being successful for students.

As part of our planning for the 2020-2021 school year, school bus services are also being adapted to meet health and safety guidelines.

Riding the school bus will also be a bit different this school year.

We are taking steps to ensure the health and safety of students on the school bus, as well as school bus drivers.

To meet the health and safety guidelines, students and families can expect some changes.

Students will be assigned to the same seat on the bus for their rides to and from school.

Students will be provided with and need to carry a school bus pass with their school bus number on it.

Students will be loaded back to front and unloaded from front to back.

There will only be two students per seat, unless they are family members or part of a household bubble with another student who also rides that bus.

There will be fewer students on each school bus than a typical school year.

And school bus routes for elementary students are now available on Yukon.ca back and school bus routes for high school students are currently being finalized and will be posted this week.

While there maybe fewer students on each bus this year, we are making every effort to accommodate as many students as safely possible.

We are working with our school bus contractor to provide additional school buses this year.

I am pleased to share that we are able to accommodate all eligible students on school buses this year.

We will also be able to accommodate some students beyond the eligibility requirements who have registered for school bus transportation.

We are prioritizing younger students who may have a more difficult time getting to school on their own.

As the school year starts, we will actively monitor bus services and adjust to ensure we continue to accommodate as many students as possible.

To allow for room on buses for students without other means of transport, we continue to encourage students and families who can walk, cycle, drive, or carpool to transport students to and from school if possible.

This will allow for room on the buses for students that don't have other ways of getting to school.

We also encourage high school students to register for the city of Whitehorse's transit pass with their school or with the busing office and to ride city transit instead of a school bus, again if possible.

We will continue to provide city bus passes to all students who request them.

If students and families have registered for the school bus but are now able to support due -- to support their own transportation to school or use city transit, we asked them to please contact the student transportation officer at student dot transportation @of dot, you know,.ca.

So that we can have accurate registration numbers for school bus use.

This will help us to accommodate as many students as possible on a school bus.

Planning for this school year has been challenging and different than other years.

It has taken a tremendous amount of effort from individuals across the territory.

We should all be so encouraged by the efforts of staff as well as partners in education who have done great work together to get us back to school.

I want to thank everyone for their hard work.

It takes patience, kindness, and mutual support to come together as a community and overcome the challenges that COVID-19 brings.

We have here the opportunity to be brave, and flexible, and compassionate to support the children and our communities who need us more than ever to be a positive example, to show our resilience and our care for one another.

Thank you.

>> Pat: Dr Hanley?

>> Thank you.

Merci, Minister McPhee, and good afternoon.

I want to thank the Minister for referring to the community well-being survey, and like her, I do encourage you to fill out the survey.

Again, the more people that fill out the survey, if we can have a few thousand more, the more representation we have of Yukon's needs and experience during the pandemic times.

The reopening of schools -- Yukon schools next week marks another momentous step forward in phase three of Yukon's path forward plan.

Like the Minister refers to, the number of people and hours -- I cannot tell you the number of hours that have gone into making this happen, from individuals in the planning unit of the health emergency operations centre, many within the Department of Education, the principles, school councils, but it will be in the thousands of hours.

Between principles and the Department of Education and our team, and many others.

We have discussed and researched and debated everything from whether children should be able to play with blocks, to whether windows and classrooms should be open, from use of gymnasiums and libraries to how far away from each other students should be while waiting for the bus.

And we have watched each other jurisdiction drug -- struggle with their own return to school and taking their learnings and expertise into our consideration.

This of course has been a tremendous amount of work but will I believe help us achieve our goal, and that is to get kids back into schools.

I think that is what we all want, and we can all agree that the safest place for children to be is back in schools.

To further ensure that those in the school environment are as safe as possible, I am now recommending to the Department of Education that children aged ten and older wear nonmedical masks in those situations where physical distancing cannot be maintained including on school buses.

Children under ten can also use masks in these settings, but without a specific recommendation.

I have been meeting with the deputy Minister of education over the past few days and I make this recommendation based on emerging evidence that older children may be just as likely to transmit COVID-19 as adults.

I hope this additional step will provide further assurances to parents and staff that we are all doing our utmost to keep students and school staff safe from COVID-19.

The Department of Education has indicated it will be providing masks to all students and schools will be deciding in their operational plans where masks will be required.

The general approach though will be towards usage in the corridors and and movement between rooms, but not in classrooms where students will already be well spaced.

I think that all of us, including our children, need to become more familiar with and comfortable with mask usage in appropriate settings.

This recommendation does not change anything else about my current recommendations for a mask use in the community.

I am still not in favour of making masks mandatory for all citizens, but I do advise their use in locations and situations where people cannot stay well enough apart from others who are not in their household bubble arrangements.

I also think usage within a school environments will help us all to recognize the additional role that masks can play in COVID-19 prevention and allow us to circulate and interact with more confidence.

However,, we should remind ourselves that mask usage is an additional tool and should never replace the need for safe spacing in either outdoor or indoor environments.

As always, we need to be flexible enough to change our advice as we learn more about the disease called COVID-19.

Expect more changes to advice in weeks and months ahead as we make further progress in tackling the pandemic.

In our everyday lives, we always take on a certain amount of risk.

Crossing the street is a well considered risk.

So is getting into a car, or sending your kids on the bus.

Whenever we go for a hike, a bike ride, or a swim, we are incurring the risk of something unexpected happening.

A fall, getting lost, a bear encounter, having a drink, smoking pot or taking drugs each carry risks.

Now, we have COVID in our world and we need to carefully find the right balance between the risks of shutting this out entirely or recognizing the limits of such a restricted approach,

finding a middleweight where we can tolerate a limited amount of COVID risk along with the chance to breathe.

This is our new normal, living with some risk.

But we also have a huge chance to modify that risk by observing these sensible and well-established practices that we call the Safe Six.

We can continue to live our lives close to the normal that we once knew, as long as we do a few things.

Washing our hands, staying 6 feet away from people who are not in our bubbler social circle, and staying home when the sick, among the other steps.

I want to quote the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada who, and her August 9th briefing, said the following.

"in Canada, we have controlled of the epidemic with a hammer, and now it is time for the dance to keep the infection rate down until a safe and effective vaccine or treatment is available to bring COVID-19 under widespread and lasting control.."

As I have said before -- this is still in the quote "the virus does not care about our past efforts.

It is what we do now that matters.

We have come too far, lost too much and have so much to protect.

Our biggest struggle is to persevere with our collective effort to maintain the careful balance of keeping the infection rate low, the dance, protecting the most vulnerable, while minimizing the unintended health and social consequences of restrictive public health measures, the hammer."

That is the end of the quote.

Before I go into more details on contact tracing, I want to speak briefly about testing.

For those of you who are following the daily counts, you will note there are pending numbers -- the pending numbers are recently risen significantly

There were several reasons for this.

The first and most important is simply that more tests are being done as we reach out to individuals through contact tracing and asked people respond to the public notifications from last week.

And other reason is a combination of circumstances, simply that the BC August holiday was last Monday and the lab likely had a smaller crew working.

We are of course sending out record high numbers of tests.

As an example, since our public notification on July 31st, staff have collected 425 samples.

In the past seven days alone, we have collected 295 samples and received 264 results.

I have said before that I am very pleased with the service we are receiving from the BC CDC lab and that has not changed.

From time to time we will run into situations where there is a bit of a lag.

We are continuing to follow turnaround times and are confident that for the vast majority of cases, our turnaround time of the three to five days from a swab collection to result notification is maintained.

In many cases, the turnaround time is still within 48 hours.

I know everyone is waiting on further results from our recent case and contact tracing.

And I want to thank all of the people who have come forward for testing because of symptoms, whether they were people from Dawson who had travelled to Dawson city, visited the places we named as exposure sites, or simply had symptoms.

This is what we want to see.

We have had a real surge in testing, and have managed to handle a large number of tests mostly still within the expected turnaround time.

We have had some issues with one batch of swabs getting transported out of so our contact investigation is still ongoing.

We still need to see a few contact test results before I can give you more specific information on the current investigation.

As we are interviewing people though, there is one theme I would like to strongly reiterate.

And that is, if you're sick, stay home.

Employers, if your workers show up sick, please send them home.

Parents, if your children are sick, even if they have a cold, please keep them home.

I realize there is much angst, and I have seen many e-mails particularly with school beginning that all kinds of kids will be missing school and parents perhaps missing work.

As a result, because of one kid with a sniffle.

That is one of the realities we are going to have to face for this year.

This will not be a normal school year, and there will need to be a threshold lower than before for keeping kids at home.

I wish we could tell a simple cold from a case of COVID but at this point, we cannot.

Not without testing.

And to limit circulation of even the common cold amongst a classroom of kids, we need to do our best to keep kids from passing all of these viruses around.

We are fortunate that with all of Yukon's 15 cases so far of COVID-19, people have been pretty cautious.

They have stayed home and self isolated, and this has helped us stay on top of COVID and prevent community spread.

By staying home, sick people have limited where they have been and who they have interacted with.

It has also made contact tracing so much easier for the nurses at Yukon communicable disease control or community nursing who do the actual tracing.

I do want to further touch on contact tracing and how it works.

I know I spoke to it again last week and briefly on Friday when we last announced a new case.

I think it is worth reviewing."

When a person tests positive for COVID-19, they become a case and will be interviewed by a nurse from YCDC or from community nursing to identify people they have spent time with and where they might have been.

YCDC will then contact the people they have been in touch with and ask them about symptoms, and many other things.

Not every contact needs to be identified, only those who have been exposed to the case's respiratory droplets.

People are asking why only select places were identified as potential places of exposure, and I'm hearing some ongoing concern that locations in Dawson city were not identified as possible places of exposure.

There are a few reasons for this.

Just to go over the different categories, first, if from interviews with the case we get very specific information and we can identify and contact all of the contacts in that location, then there is no potential for exposure to the public in that location and therefore no reason to post a location.

The last public notifications we do, the better.

That allows us to concentrate on the individuals at risk, contact them directly, give them the advice they need and test them if necessary.

In other words, if we are confident that we have been able to effectively find the people who may have been at risk, we will not issue a notice of exposure.

However, if, as with the locations in Whitehorse that we identified, we know a case was there but we cannot know all the contacts -- who all the contacts were, we will issue a public notice about the location and the time period that people may have been at that location when the case was there.

This does not mean that exposure did occur, rather that it could have occurred.

We are being cautious, and this is no reflection on the business at all.

Businesses have been extremely responsive in meeting all of the guidelines.

It just means someone who was positive happened to be in that location where there may have been exposure to members of the public.

That is also why we focus and stress the Safe Six so much.

If you're practising the Safe Six when you're out and about, then there is a lower chance that you will have been exposed.

In some cases, it is not possible for us to determine exactly where these individuals spent time.

If, is -- as in the case of the tourist who tested positive upon their return home, the interview is carried out in another jurisdiction, it is possible that neither the tourists nor the interviewers are necessarily familiar with the community they visited.

They do not remember the restaurant they were in or the tourist attractions they visited.

If we don't have the information, we cannot trace and we cannot share.

Time is also of the essence.

In order to give citizens the information about potential exposure as quickly as possible, we have to act with limited information.

In this case, we had to give notice to Dawson as a whole because all the information we had was that multiple tourist sites were visited.

The key point though is that regardless of residents in or exposure to Dawson city, people who have symptoms should self isolate and come forward for testing.

Now, as we are continuing with our investigations, I want to be very clear about something else.

I have also heard concerns that if a person with COVID was in Dawson, that there is an increased risk to other people who have been to Dawson.

While contact tracing continues, we are talking about a very small number of individuals who had COVID infection while in Dawson city.

We are not seeing community spread.

We have no firm evidence at this point that the recent case was even exposed in Dawson.

It is a working hypothesis, about we have no proof.

There is no reason to target Dawson city as a place of risk or to restrict travel to and from Dawson, or to bar people who have travelled to Dawson from entry into retail outlets.

We put out the alert to make sure people were aware and had the chance to get tested for symptoms.

We have done hundreds of tests in recent days in locations throughout Yukon, including testing many, many people who have recently been in Dawson and they are all negative.

We are still working hard to nail down contacts in that community.

COVID is a new disease.

It is natural to be concerned about it and this concern should be channeled toward the best ways we keep each other safe.

We need to do our best to avoid singling out an individual or a community based on our own assessment of risk, rather than what public health professionals have identified.

We must be kind to each other and for the time being especially, to our brothers and sisters in Dawson city.

Dawson residents should not be ostracized because one or a few individuals were sick while in the community.

I want to reassure the residents up Dawson city and any other community residents who may have been there at the same time as our last case, if we know the information and if we need to assure public notification, we will do so.

We will do so in any community where it is necessary.

It is in everyone's best interest to know the information, to watch for symptoms, and to get tested.

Meanwhile, I can only repeat what I have said many times before.

We all need to act as if COVID is present in our community and follow the public health measures, the Safe Six, accordingly.

That's all for my update.

Thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you, Minister McPhee.

Thank you, turn on.

We will begin with Doug from shown a fan.

>> Reporter: No questions, thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Philippe, CBC North.

>> Reporter: Using the word recommendation here, but is it a condition for being on the bus?

And to what level would this be enforced for students, can they board a bus without a mask if they are not wearing it?

>> Yeah, I will take that one, Minister McPhee.

Thanks, Philippe.

This is a recommendation and this is not mandatory.

This is again what I see as an increase in a socialization as we learn more about the potential for COVID-19 transmission.

So I think it is all something that again, we need to learn how to use and to get used to.

Again, the main principle especially for the buses is going to be the way that people lineup, the orderly entry and exit, and the safe spacing while on board.

The masks are an additional measure.

I think most people will be happy to comply, and to use the masks when recommended, and I think that that, for now, is an appropriate level of recommendation.

But note, it is not going to be enforced -- but no.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

And a follow-up perhaps for the Minister, have we decided yet on the type of mask that would be distributed?

Are we talking disposable or reusable?

>> Thanks for the question, Philippe.

We currently have nonsurgical masks that will be available for the start of the school year and we are in the process of ordering reusable masks for every student and teacher in the education system.

They can be used throughout the school year.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Hailey, Yukon News?

>> Reporter:

>> Pat: Hailey, are you with us?

>> Reporter: Can you hear me now?

>> Pat: Gas weekend, go ahead.

>> Reporter: Okay, thank you.

Sorry, I'm having some technical issues.

I just wanted to clarify what happened if a child comes to school with a sniffle.

Does that mean the entire class of students immediately quarantined until the test results come back positive or negative?

>> Thanks, that is an important question.

No, it does not mean that.

Again, it is really that the child will be asked -- will be isolated from the class and then sent home.

Then, you know, the rest, if criteria for testing are meant with in general it will be because having a cold for gold like symptoms is one of those criteria, then the rest really depends on making sure that the child stays self isolated until the test result is back.

Practically speaking, the vast majority of those tests are going to be negative.

The follow-up will be relatively straightforward.

The child will be able to return to school when free of symptoms, but if that test happens to come back positive then of course, everything kicks in in terms of contact tracing and measures which could potentially involve members of the classroom.

So all of that will play out under direction from communicable disease control.

And again, this is something that we will be practising and rehearsing, and refining as we go on.

>> Pat: Follow-up question?

Are you still there?

>> Reporter: I am here now, the feed kind of cut out at the end.

>> Pat: Sorry.

Go-ahead, please.

>> Reporter: I guess my follow-up to that is just in that situation while we are waiting on a turnaround for tests, if it was a positive COVID-19 test that would be quite a large area for contact tracing.

Is there a contingency plan if there is an outbreak in a school?

How would that be handled?

>> Yeah, there certainly are.

Actually as part of our public health contact tracing in public health guidelines, we have a section specifically for school.

We also have a surveillance plan specifically for schools.

We will you know if there are signals that this is something more-- for example, something more than a common goal,

there are some patterns that seem unusual even while we are waiting for a test, we might take different measures.

And of course, if it happened for instance that the child was already a contact and happened to be in the school system for some reason, then that would obviously be a different case also.

So, I mean, we have to be prepared as in the case that there maybe an unexpected positive with no exposure.

Really again, that is why we do a lot of testing at the moment.

So we do have to be prepared for that contingency of an unexpected case and that would involve contact tracing.

But this is what we know how to do.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move to L'Aurore boréale?

>> Reporter:

[Speaking French]

>> Interpreter: So the question is for Dr Hanley.

You said that most of the schools will be using masks.

We already see masks everywhere in the garbage.

Have you looked into the possibility of having reusable masks?

[Speaking French]

>> The question again because back to disposable versus reusable masks.

We have seen lots of instances of single-use and the potential for waste.

We are hoping that wherever disposable masks are used, that waste considerations are taken care of and that people do their best to prevent environmental damage and waste.

The ultimate goal, as the minister said, is to have reusable masks as part of -- that each student and staff will be equipped with reusable masks.

[Speaking French]

>> Reporter:

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: We will move to Gabrielle, Whitehorse Star.

>> Reporter: I have a question about privacy and information sharing.

If a culvert case is found in schools, will parents of that school be made aware of that or how will that information be shared to protect the privacy of the family.

>> Thank you.

Like any investigation, and in fact it goes to the heart of why we do what we do even with exposure notifications and the whole process of contact tracing, it is to protect individuals' identity and balance that protection against public protection where needed.

Again we do have measures for notification where appropriate and keep the circle as small as possible.

So if we can cover with normal contact tracing -- normal contact tracing processes, in terms of notification, then we keep the notification as limited as possible depending on the risk.

Very often, the risk-- and again, it is all going to depend on the case, the investigation of a case, and what the risk is posed to either the circle or the classroom or even the school at-large.

It really becomes a risk assessment that then informs the notification process.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up question?

Gabrielle?

>> Reporter: Can you hear me now?

>> Pat: yes, we can.

Please go ahead.

>> Reporter: This is a question for Minister McPhee.

I am wondering if you have any idea approximately how many students will not be returning to school this year?

I have been hearing quite a few parents who plan on homeschooling.

>> Thanks for the question.

I don't have that number now.

I think it is important to remember that during the first few weeks of school, and often into the middle or end of September, even in a regular school year the students attending classes are always adjusting.

Sometimes plans change.

Students go to a school different than the one they initially registered for, or families have moved over the summer.

There are many different reasons that might occur.

Of course, during COVID-19, a world pandemic, we might have even more reasons for why those numbers might adjust.

So I don't have those numbers at the moment, but as school administrators and teachers and the Department central administration folks are used to this adjustment period at the beginning of the school year, we will be ready and willing to work with those numbers and as the students adjust and work with every family that makes a request or decides they are not going to a particular school or to public school this year for whatever their reasons might be, we will work with each and every family.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move to Dave, CBC.

>> Reporter: Hi.

I missed a lot of has been said because of some technical problems with the volume, but Minister McPhee, there has been a lot of concern raised by parents about what they might see as potential issues this year coming up and there have been various situations but what is your general response to parents who are concerned about how things are going to go this year?

I know they said departments have been responding to specific ages but generally, what is the response for people who have misgivings about the upcoming school year?

>> Thank you, for the question.

I think in it's entirety, it is what Dr Hanley and I have been saying here today and that we have been saying to all of our education partners over the last few months as we have been working diligently on a school reopening plan.

I would say it is in line with all of the letters that have been sent to me and every which one that we have responded to, and the reassurance that we can give.

We are making every decision in relation to schools with the best available information on the day that we have it and moving forward one step at a time.

We have worked very closely with our educational partners in the process of being prepared for school.

We know there is a variety of opinions or concerns out there, all of which are valid on the basis of this is something we have never dealt with before.

I don't think anyone has used the word unprecedented so many times then in the last five to six months but it is incredibly unusual.

Something we have never had to deal with before and by that I don't mean just schools and educators and administrators who are trying to do things to make sure that our kids can be back in school in a very safe way.

But for everyone in their individual lives, in their work situations and family situations is struggling with what does this mean for me and how do I go forward.

We have complete confidence based on the science and the medical advice and the Chief Medical Officer of health, and those across the country that we have been working with as well as of the other departments of education across the country that students can safely return to school.

We have built in flexibility with the ability for us to adjust if necessary, and make sure that we are constantly monitoring the situation to determine, is this best decision for today and is this the best decision for tomorrow?

And as we have information come forward to adjust to those concerns.

So if I could speak to parents, as you have said, there is a variety of concerns, I would want to say that I think students need us to be resilient.

They need us to have enthusiasm and positive attitudes.

I think they need us to believe in one another and work together to make a safe return to school possible for them because we know it is incredibly important for them to be in a school setting, to be near their friends, to be near their teachers and to have those learning opportunities.

And as we proceed carefully, cautiously, I think there is also an opportunity for us to learn and do things together in a different way.

It won't be the same as usual, but I hope that we will be surprised not only by the resilience of our students but by the innovation and the ways in which we will adapt to being together in a new way.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up question?

>> Reporter: ...to do with the busing.

I understand the buses will not be carrying a normal load, there will be more room so is there going to be enough room on the buses for everybody?

Will there be midday buses to get the high school kids coming and going?

And also, did you consult with the city

I see parents are being encouraged for older kids to take the city bus when possible which I know happens anyway, but did you consult with the city about that?

Because there has been an issue with people being left on the streets because there buses were full.

>> Those are great questions about busing.

This is the first iteration of the busing plan, of course.

We're focused on providing services to all eligible students and we believe that we can do that.

We have worked with our busing service provider to get a few more buses that will help us adjust and provide that service for students as they need to attend school.

We have worked with the city.

We expect that while -- those numbers, as I said with the glasses, they are all settling in.

We have a number of students who have registered for the bus and we are working with those numbers but we are also expecting that to adjust.

There will be some students who might be registered for the bus and high school but will determine they want to take a city

bus for they have other modes of transportation to get to school, so we expect those numbers will continue.

The busing routes have been put up on Yukon.ca for the elementary schools today, and the high school ones are being worked on and will be available as soon as possible in the next few days.

I can say that in the plan currently being worked on, there is midday School bus service so that grades ten to 12 who will be moving around during midday or possibly to either go home or take the city bus for use throughout the city, that is continuing to be worked on but it is a key component of the final decisions to be made.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move to John from CKRW.

>> Reporter: No question, thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you.

I would like to thank everyone for your time today.

Our next COVID-19 update is Wednesday, August 19th, at 2:00 PM.

>> Thank you.