

## COVID-19 Facebook live update: August 5, 2020

>> Pat: I'm Pat Living with the department of health and social services unmoderated for the COVID-19 update for Wednesday, August 5th.

Joined today by Yukon Premier Sandy Silver and Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of health Dr Brendan Hanley.

Our sign language interpretation is being provided by Mary Tiessen and our French language translation by Andre Bourcier from French language services directorate.

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

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

Premier Silver?

>> Thank you, very much.

Hello and thanks for tuning in.

It is good to be here on the traditional territory of the Taa'an Kwächän First Nation and the Kwanlin Dün Council.

We are now as you all know into phase three of a path forward plan.

It has been a few days, only a few days but we remain in a good position in the territory.

I know that there have been concerns following last week's announcement that two travellers tested positive for COVID-19 after returning home from a trip to our territory.

I know there has been a lot of questions.

I have certainly heard a lot from my constituents in Dawson city who wanted to know more.

Once we were notified of the situation, Dr Hanley and his team worked very quickly to complete a risk assessment and to undertake contact tracing.

The risk was determined to be low, and we notified the public as soon as possible and asked those who were potentially exposed to self monitor as a precaution.

Dr Hanley will have more to say about this, about the nature of the announcement and the current protocols for contact tracing and public notification in these kinds of cases.

I know that contact tracing is a key issue that is being discussed nationally, and conversations with my fellow premiers and the Prime Minister we have spoken about the importance have contact tracing.

It is in the news now that you can download the new contact tracing app available for download, not in all regions right now so we know it is not perfect right now but it will be helpful in containing the spread of the disease and we need all the tools we can get to help us keep a coordinated effort response to the pandemic nationally and also here in the territory.

Good news on the horizon as far as the app and contact tracing.

I want to thank everyone who learned about the potential risk of exposure and followed the recommendations to self monitor or symptoms.

Extremely important.

This is exactly how we need to prepare to respond as we settle into phase three.

Staying informed about the current situation by tuning into these updates and checking into Yukon.ca and following the recommendations issued by the Chief Medical Officer of health, including following the Safe Six in staying safe.

It has now been more than 14 days since those travellers were in our territory and we have reported no additional cases in the territory.

This is good news and it means our system is working, and Yukoners are continuing to do their parts to keep the whole territory safe.

I can't thank Yukoners enough for maintaining the Safe Six.

It is really important that we continue to do our part, and I know that it isn't easy.

This pandemic as presented challenges to each and every one of us for sure.

The resilience of Yukoners and Yukon communities is remarkable, absolutely remarkable.

At the same time, we know that the response to the pandemic has taken a toll on our well-being.

And I'm very pleased to announce that this week, our government is launching 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 in a way that goes beyond the usual economic indicators.

In particular, it will help us identify some of the unintended consequences of the pandemic and the overall health response so far.

We want to hear directly from Yukoners about how these things -- how things are going during these challenging times.

And we want as a government to be able to improve the well-being right across the territory.

Survey is available online at [Yukon.ca](https://www.yukon.ca), and I encourage Yukoners to take the time to complete it.

We need to hear from you.

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

We are very pleased that we have entered phase three so that we can continue to gradually ease the restrictions.

As Dr Hanley announced last week, live music is once again allowed in bars and restaurants.

New guidelines for bars were released this week, as we continue to move through phase three we will continue to monitor the situation, along with Dr Hanley's team.

When we look around at other parts of the country and the world, we can see that this virus remains a very real threat.

We must all remain vigilant and continue to practice the Safe Six, even as we return to social and group activities.

We also need to continue to be respectful of each other and to those who come into our territory as well.

Please remember if you have any concerns about gatherings or people being where they may be are not supposed to be, please call the enforcement line.

1-877-374-0425.

We have a team in place to investigate complaints about folks that are not following the rules.

We have investigated over 500 complaints so far, most of which have to do with concerns about failure to self isolate.

We take these concerns extremely seriously, and we have issued another two charges this week under the civil emergency measures act for failure to self isolate.

Self isolation as required is one of the Safe Six but it is not a recommendation, it is an order when you're required to do it.

We will continue to enforce self isolation going forward because it is incredibly important to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Aside from social isolation concerns, most complaints that we have received are about transitioning through the territory.

As I mentioned last week, stopping at the highway information stations is mandatory for all transiting travellers.

If they failed to stop at the information stations or if they are found off the designated routes, enforcement officers will be able to issue fines.

For those without of territory plates who are allowed to be in the territory, we have the visitors decals available and today, we have issued 123 of those decals.

The Canadian border service agency also announced tighter rules for Americans entering the country to transit to Alaska.

They are providing tags to hang in their rearview mirrors of vehicles to help with identification.

These rules complement our rules about how to travel through the territory respectfully, which include sticking to the designated travel road, not making unnecessary stops, and transiting through the Yukon within 24 hours.

I want to thank community services Minister John Streicker for working very closely with Public Safety Minister Bill Blair and his team to ensure that the concerns of Yukoners are being addressed.

Yukon is also planning to tighten the rules for those looking to enter into their state.

Starting next week, nonresidents travelling by air or by land to Alaska will be required to provide a negative COVID test performed within 72 hours before arrival.

We have also confirmed with our Alaskan counterparts individuals will not be turned back into Canada at the Alaska border if they do not have a negative test.

If they do not have a valid test results from within the last 72 hours, they must pay \$250 fine, I guess, to have one performed at arrival.

They must then quarantine until the results come back negative.

The intent of the new rule is to encourage people to get tested in advance of travelling to the state.

We are happy to see our fellow governments taking actions to help protect the health and safety of northern residents.

We will continue to work with all levels of government to ensure that we are responding to the ongoing situation in a coordinated way that protects the health and safety of northern residents.

We will continue to enforce measures.

In place in the Yukon to support our government's COVID-19 response.

The visitor information centres in Beaver Creek, Watson Lake, as well as the interpretive centre will be closing on August 6th.

Staff from those three facilities will be reassigned to work out of information stations at Yukon's land and air borders where they will provide visitors with COVID-19 resources and information about how and where to travel safely, respectfully, and responsibly when in through the Yukon.

Information stations are located at the CMA border stations outside of Watson Lake, the Canadian border services agency stationed in Beaver Creek, top of the Robert service way, top of the -- top of the world highway and the airport in Whitehorse.

Sorry, the top of the Robert service way and the airport in Whitehorse.

My apologies.

Before closing, I want to commend Queer Yukon

For their thoughtful ways that they have organized this year's pride festival -- pride festival.

It was delayed from June as a result of COVID-19 and this year's the aim is remote connections.

It all kicked off last week when we raised the progressive pride flag in front of the Yukon legislative assembly for the first time ever.

This is an inspiring event to take place, and I want to thank Minister Dendys as well for helping me with that.

I want to thank all of the other elected officials that were in attendance.

We had Minister Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister Pauline Frost, Minister -- Minister Mostyn, leader of the third-party, and his worship Mayor Dan Curtis as well.

There is so much great work going on in the territory to advance equality and to ensure that our territory is inclusive to all Yukoners.

So I want to thank Joe and the team at Queer Yukon as well.

The idea of remote connections is especially important right now as we continue to adjust to life with COVID-19.

Pride festival events continue throughout this weekend I encourage you all to check them out and join in and celebrate.

As you celebrate, of course I remind you to practice the Safe Six.

This remains the best way that we can all contribute to the collective efforts to keep our territory healthy and safe, maintaining physical distancing washing your hands very frequently, staying home if you're sick, limiting the number of people in your gatherings, travelling respectfully within our territory, and also self isolating as required.

Remember, the excellent to one another.

Thank you everybody.

>> Thank you, premier.

Good afternoon.

Yes, I would also like to support with the premier said at the beginning about the Yukon community index of well-being, the survey that officially I believe opens today.

The more people who can complete that survey, the better the results and the more useful that survey will be to turn around into recognition and improvements in our pandemic response especially in addressing the unintended consequences and health effects.

The two individuals diagnosed with COVID who had visited Yukon and returned home kicked our contact tracing process into high gear at the end of last week.

The event also seemed to be something of a wake-up call for Yukoners, as most of the people who had come forward for testing since Friday have been people experiencing various symptoms often for several days, rather than being specific contacts related to the exposures that were posted on Friday afternoon.

I know we ran into some hitches in getting people to the right place to get tested.

For the people in Whitehorse.

And we are working on processes to improve this.

But overall, we have tested a lot more people in the last few days than we have over the last few weeks.

The work that was undertaken by Yukon communicable disease control in advance of this public notification was detailed and completed in such a way that we can say with confidence but the risk of Yukoners having been infected by either of these two individuals during their visit here was very low.

So far, all of the tests to date carried out in either Dawson or Whitehorse have come back negative.

There have been many questions related to how we issued this particular information about sites and I wanted to give a little bit more detail on contact tracing.



When we receive notification of a positive case, we will speak in-depth with the individual or individuals to find out where they have been in who they have been in contact with.

And if we have that information, we will then contact those who are identified directly.

So, we will call people and advise them if -- what to do if they are named as contacts.

When locations that have been visited are identified such as hotels, restaurants, or retail stores, these are noted in case of other cases being identified that may also have been in these places.

And we may also call these locations to verify if there is a potential for public mixing at these venues.

A lot of phone time takes place as our nurses at why CBC and community nursing work the lines.

They are like detectives, ferreting out information about possible contacts.

When we can define who is exposed, then we will contact people directly, and this is the preferred approach as we get the best information and protect everyone's confidentiality.

When we have reliable information that spacing and sanitation protocols are being followed at hotels or restaurants or campgrounds so there is no opportunity for public exposure, we do not identify these places as contact locations.

When we have clear detail on locations and time but not exact information on who may have been present and whether there may have been public mixing, we do a public notification.

Examples of these were the two businesses identified in the Whitehorse notification on Friday.

We're very careful about naming particular businesses, and do this after having conversations with these premises to let them know our plan.

Posting a notification is not a reflection on the business at all.

In fact, I know they have worked hard to put in workplace protocols and enhanced sanitation measures, as has Walmart.

It is just that there was some potential for public contact at each of those locations.

When we have little detail on when and where someone was, but we have a general location, then it is a larger notification and this was the case with Dawson with the information we had of multiple tourist locations over multiple days.

This is not our preferred option and is done when we feel there is some risk to the public.

Note that in the recent case, again, we were relying on information that we received from another jurisdiction.

I know that many people have asked where of these people were, names, and times.

But we don't have that information to give and if we had it, we would not be sharing it unless it was necessary for identification of a risk.

We have also had questions about what other communities these individuals may have visited, and similarly, based on the information we had there were no other exposures of significant risk to the public.

If there is a risk, we have committed to advising communities and the public and while we have identified one community and two businesses, the risk is lower for everyone else.

Public notifications are done like this when there is a potential exposure and when we don't have enough information to directly contact people.

We also need to get the information out as early as possible so that people have the information early enough to act even if the information is not as complete as we would like.

From time to time, we expect to have to post similar notifications.

This is part of learning to live with COVID, and part of the potential that we are going to see where there is a risk for cases appearing.

In my mind, there are a few early learnings from this event.

The notification served as a reminder that when people are experiencing symptoms, they should call or do the self-assessment and arrange for testing if they screen in.

It is also that we need to live as if COVID cases are already among us.

I know I have said this many times, and I will need to keep saying this.

And I know that I need reminders myself, to remember safe spacing.

It is something that is unnatural for me as I like to be close to others.

I like to mingle.

And even while I was visiting Dawson over the weekend, I know there was the occasional lapse on my part and I appreciate the reminders.

If we all do physical distancing most of the time, this will help to keep us out of trouble.

As well our other practices of staying away from others while sick, and handwashing and getting tested when advised to.

As well as the other parts of the Safe Six.

This is still new to all of us, and we are all having to adjust.

Learning to live with COVID will take time, but I have said before if we can follow the Safe Six and maintain our capacity to trace and test, then our lives can return to a livable state of normalcy.

That is all for my part today.

Thank you.

>> Pat: Thank Premier Silver.

Thank you, Dr Hanley.

Now to the phone lines and we will begin with Doug from Shone FM.

>> Reporter: No questions, thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Philip, CBC North?

>> Reporter: Dr Hanley, you mentioned some lessons had been learned from this incident.

What if anything will be improved upon next time there is contact tracing and a public notice like this?

>> Thanks, Philip.

I think one of the things is probably looking for ways to maybe reiterate in the public messaging about when-- if you need to get tested, or if you don't.

Perhaps more clear direction.

An example might be, there were many people calling that did not have symptoms and we were not asking people without symptoms to get tested.

So it may have helped to clear up some information there.

We were simply asking people to self monitor.

We also did not anticipate the surge in demand for testing that actually did not have to do with the contact or these specific exposures.

But as I said at the beginning of my notes, I think it kind of stimulated a realization in people who had been having some symptoms for some days that they probably should get tested.

And this was the majority of people who have come forward for testing since Friday.

So I think it led to some delays in getting testing for some of those people.

We tested a lot of people, both Friday evening and through the weekend and then Monday and Tuesday at the rack and we are looking at ways to make sure that the testing site and Whitehorse still has the capacity, if this level of testing demand remains.

So I think those are some of the areas, and sort of anticipating a public response.

There are always unanticipated events, but I think may be adapting the communications and making them more clear might have been helpful for the public.

>> Pat: Follow-up?

>> Reporter: Yes.

I wonder if you could guide us through what would happen if a case was reported in a school -- I wonder if?

>> Yeah.

We will have written processes and also be rehearsing with the schools exactly what the procedure is.

So really, when a cases identify-- the first thing is, if there is a child in school that is sick, that child will be kept in a place of isolation within the school until the child can go home.

And be in self isolation until assessment and testing can be arranged.

Maybe that is the first thing.

It would similarly apply to staff, to withdraw, be in self-isolation and arrange for testing-- assessment and testing a where possible.

So really, the first thing is to lessen the threat of contact if that should come to be positive.

Then if that case turns out to be a positive, the whole contact tracing process gets into gear in terms of identifying any close

contacts, contacting those people, notification to the school itself, so that people are allowed to monitor.

Really, the rest depends so much on is it one case, are there other cases, are other people experiencing symptoms?

In terms of what protocols might be applied either to that classroom, or to the school as a whole.

A lot of that will depend on the extent, but certainly I think we are trying to build in processes where, as we do every year for respiratory disease and influenza, we actually do have agreements and processes in place with the schools so that they can identify early any changes in activity, any higher rates of absenteeism than normal for example.

So we have these early warning systems, and we will again be practising and rehearsing those.

Obviously the earlier that we know of a case or potential case, the sooner we can put an appropriate isolation and that will limit the impact and let the school continue to function as best as possible.

Hopefully that gives you some overall idea.

Many of the details will depend on not only the location and the school, but the details of the case.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move to John, CKRW.

>> Reporter: I was wondering-- around the country, there have been COVID-19 contact tracing apps.

[ Audio Difficulties ]

>> Reporter: Consider implementing some sort of contact tracing app in the future?

>> Thanks for the question.

There are some apps being developed, and of course there is the COVID Alert App which is being developed as a Google, apple collaboration and is being supported and promoted and funded by the federal government.

So the first phase of this is piloted in Ontario at the moment.

This app actually is available for download, by the activation currently is within Ontario and it is really to learn more about how applicable the app -- it can be and how useful it will be in addition to standard contact tracing.

So I guess the key question is, will it help separate the signal from the noise and this particular app relies on Bluetooth, Bluetooth notifications.

Basically cell phones talking to each other, gathering information that in case of a positive person being identified, can then serve as a notification to people who may have been in contact or will have been in close contact with that individual.

So it is an additional aid to identifying contacts.

Perhaps the biggest value might be in that kind of memory jog, for people.

And there are other variations being developed so we are certainly looking with interest to see not only did -- the development of these apps but how do they actually work in real life and how do they add value to traditional contact tracing.

I think, particularly in a small jurisdiction where we have a lot of advantages than contact tracing compared to a large jurisdiction because we have well-known networks, it is easier to contact people, easier to find people.

We tend to have very complete and very thorough contact tracing so it remains a question of, how much added value and app would bring us but we are certainly looking with keen interest at how these are being rolled out.

>> Can I just add to that, the pilot project that is happening in

Ontario, this has been a national conversation for many months now.

I want to commend Alberta.

Alberta came out early on in preliminary conversations with tech companies exactly for this reason, to have a tracing at.

So the national program is being piloted in Ontario.

That particular app, it is available for download but is not being used outside of Ontario.

Its design is for the nation, not just Ontario.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up?

>> Reporter: Yeah.

I was wondering if...

I guess, how is the territory feeling about the recent spike of cases and jurisdictions nearby, mainly basically I have been noticing more masks in and around Whitehorse when travelling through stores and I'm wondering if there is possibly more concerned from a government perspective because it seems the public might be a little more uneasy.

>> I mean, we are always concerned when epidemiology trends are upward as opposed to down nor it and we are closely monitoring this.

Really concerned with what is happening in the states.



We see certain countries with certain spikes as well.

Whether the conversation is, is this a second waiver of the extension of a first wave, all of these things are very concerning in our responses, as we look at the epidemiology in other jurisdictions, is cautious, with optimism.

We are into our third phase and as you know, this is the last phase before a vaccine.

So it definitely is affecting the speed with which we are releasing new initiatives or relaxing restrictions.

And we will continue to monitor those situations but again, you know, we do live in a great spot.

We have a small population, we are remote and we have a population that is doing its best to try to make sure they keep vulnerable people safe.

I think that is what you're seeing with the masks.

People are following the science, following -- you know, if they are in areas where they can't maintain the social distancing, having a mask available.

That is a sign of comprehensive Yukoners.

Following the signs and doing their part to make sure we keep each other safe.

But we are concerned with any spike in any cases, but we are monitoring the situation and it directly affects the timelines of initiatives in phase three.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Hailey, Yukon News?

>> Reporter: Yeah, I have a question for the premier about the federal government's new COVID-19 infrastructure program.

I was wondering if the territory is planning to take advantage of that program?

If so, are there specific projects being considered right now?

>> This is the announcement that came out today, I'm assuming?

>> Reporter: Yes, that's correct.

>> You know, we are extremely pleased with that announcement.

A lot of this is the funding that we have been rolling out into communities over the last few months and into the last couple of years.

And what we have seen from the federal government is that they have listen to the unique circumstances of the North.

You will see that the Arctic energy fund as now available for Whitehorse.

That is a flexibility we have asked for and received.

A conversation of whether or not Whitehorse is an isolated grid or not, and we did manage to convince the federal government that if their true goal is to reduce carbon emissions, then please work with the communities, identify that the northern communities are different and remote and unique, but also who better lead know what programs and what areas to focus in on to reduce those emissions better than the territorial government, First Nations government and municipal governments in these regions.

We are very happy to see that the flexibility we have been looking for is available.

We will continue to be using these infrastructure dollars and continuing to work with the federal government on flexibilities as need be.

There is still lots of construction happening in Yukon.

We are very happy to see that, happy to see people working.

It is an extremely important part of mental health, people being out there and working in the communities.

And very happy with the announcement today because again, we received the flexibility we have been looking for.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up?

>> Yes, thank you.

You mentioned mental health the bear, potentially related.

When it comes to that survey that's going to be on Yukon.ca, what kind of factors beyond economic growth, what kind of factors are you looking at capturing and that survey?

>> Great question, I appreciate it.

In past years, decades, the territory kind of relied on GDP as an index of how we are doing relative to other jurisdictions.

To us, the Canadian index of well-being partnering with them and the universities which they come from, you know, we now have an ability to take a look at the things that make a community while.

Not only the economic measures, but also social measures.

As you go onto that survey, I will say it is long.

It takes about 30 minutes to complete so I appreciate folks getting out there and signing into it.

But it basically goes through the gamut of how individuals are feeling, related to COVID but also just related to living in the north, living in Yukon.

The index came out originally at the beginning of the year, but with COVID coming in we got about 300, 330 responses to that original survey of the index before pausing it.

Now, as we relaunch it, it will be very similar to those questions that Yukoners have seen in that first survey but now there's

going to be a version of the survey that features a brand-new first section which is on a pandemic response that focuses on the unintended consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the overall health response.

So working with Doctor Hanley and his team at the medical office, you know, working hand in hand and partnering on this natural progression through.

The key differences the survey is open to Yukoners over the age of 18.

The first survey was restricted to a randomly drawn sample of 1,000 people, but now the survey is open to all Yukoners who wish to participate in that.

That will collect the data on this survey, and we will have a report later on in the fall.

And Yukoners will report on features, just an analysis of the well-being indicators that is very important as we turn into that next phase.

Being in this new normal, how we are going to program and target our programs for health and social services, it will be an extremely important part of that transition to our new health plan as we move forward.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move now to Gabrielle, Whitehorse Star?

>> Reporter: I have a question regarding the new rules requiring a negative COVID test to go to Alaska.

First, I'm hoping premier you can clarify, you said Yukoners -- Yukon is also planning to tighten the rules for people entering the state.

Do you mean Alaska is planning to tighten the rules or Yukon is as well?

>> Canada.

As Alaska is moving forward as well, we have had Minister Bill Blair talk about the nation's restrictions.

So what I mentioned was how Minister Streicker and his team here in community services fed in Yukon's concerns and considerations to the national plan when it comes to our borders.

So with Alaska specifically, there are new requirements we mention for nonresident travelling by land or air into Alaska to provide that negative COVID test.

And also what happens if they show up at that border without that test, the \$250 they have to pay to get a test at the border.

I am definitely applauding the efforts of Alaskans, the Alaskan government to make sure that all the communities in the North are safe and that they are doing their utmost to make sure that those entering not only their state but also British Columbia and Yukon along the way are doing so in a time sensitive manner and in the safest way possible.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up?

>> Reporter: In relation to that, I am wondering if testing criteria for COVID-19 is going to be expanded as things open up?

For instance, allowing people to get tested before they travel, whether to Alaska or somewhere else?

To include teachers who might not have all of the symptoms generally required, et cetera?

>> That's more a question for Dr Hanley.

We will follow the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of health when it comes to what type of provisions we will use as we lift restrictions.

>> Yeah, I think I would add that you will see the criteria for testing are actually very broad now.

But they still do depend on symptoms.

For public health testing, we have recently expanded the criteria and posted those.

So they can be symptoms-- there is a large variety of symptoms.

Anything from loss of smell or taste to a sore throat to a headache.

And then in context.

Is this something that is new or unfamiliar?

So very broad criteria.

The other category though, are an increasing number of requests for tests that are based more on third-party requests.

Cell verification of test negative status even in people without symptoms.

These are not normally covered under public health testing, but we are looking at ways that such requests can be accommodated.

Usually this is a separate stream, these are not people where we are actively looking for COVID-19.

But may require it either or travel, sometimes for health care, and other jurisdictions, A negative test.

So we are still looking at mechanisms to accommodate these requests that would not be an imposition on the public health system.

>> And just, as a nation and also as a jurisdiction, neither Canada nor Yukon requires the testing take place to allow entry.

Neither the borders will require temperature checks.

It is hard to see that changing at this point, but that is kind of the direction the nation is taking right now.

>> Pat: Thank you.



I would like to thank everyone today for their time.

The next COVID-19 update is scheduled for Wednesday, August the 12<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 PM.

