

COVID-19 Facebook live update: December 1, 2021

>> Good morning to you all, I'm Renée Francoeur with Cabinet Communications and the moderator for today's COVID-19 update.

We are joined today by Premier Sandy Silver, the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr Catherine Elliott, and Yukon pediatrician and President of the Canadian Medical Association, Dr Katharine Smart. Closed captioning is provided by National Closed Captioning. Thank you to Mary Tiessen for providing our ASL interpretation and to Andre Boissier for providing our French translation. Following the remarks from our speakers, we will go to the media present in the room and then on the phone lines for a round of questions. I will call you by name, and you will each have two questions. Before we begin with our speakers, I would like to verify that everyone can hear us? If any of the reporters are having problems, please e-mail ecoinfo@yukon.ca. I will now hand it over to Premier Sandy Silver.

>> Thanks very much, Renée.

And good morning from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Taa'an Kwächän Council. I want to thank everybody for joining us here today.

It's great to have Dr Elliott back. Thank you. And also very happy to welcome Dr Katharine Smart, the President of the Canadian Medical Association, and a much loved Whitehorse pediatrician. So, thank you to you both for being here today, appreciate your time. As we move into December, I know that there are questions and much anticipation about the days and the weeks ahead. Last month, our government declared a state of emergency in response to an alarming increase in COVID-19 cases and widespread community transmission in our territory. We introduced new public health measures based upon the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to make sure our healthcare system is not overwhelmed. We announced that those measures would be in place until at least

December the 3rd. We needed to take swift action to stop transmission and ensure that our healthcare system was not overwhelmed. Since that time, we have seen an encouraging decrease in active cases and daily case counts. Yukoners, you have been diligent. I'm very proud of how we all pulled together in the recent weeks. I know that there's been many sacrifices, as people have had to pivot and to adapt, and it's not something anybody wanted to have to do again. But once again, you stepped up. Thank you. Thank you to each and every one of you for helping us keep folks safe. It really matters, and we can see that it's making a difference. We have seen decreased spread, but there is also a new variant of concern that has been identified and reported in Canada. The Omicron variant. You've been hearing that word quite a bit lately, I think. Doctor Elliott will give an update on that current situation, on omnicron-- Omicron, in a few moments here. This week, we've received new recommendations as well from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, based upon our current situation. Starting this weekend, we will be in a position to loosen some of the current public health measures that are currently in effect. Proof of vaccination will continue to be required to access most designated sites. But as of December 4th, proof of vaccination will no longer be required for faith-based gatherings or to access personal services such as hair salons. Businesses and organizations can still choose to require the patrons to show that proof of vaccination, and we fully support those who want to take this extra step. I urge all Yukoners to continue to be kind and respectful to the businesses and the organizations that are taking precautions to protect the health and the safety of their staff, of volunteers, and also of their customers. Last week, we announced new supports available for businesses and organizations to help them to adjust to our new public health measures and verify vaccination status. I wanna thank Minister Pillai and his team at Economic Development, and also the Chamber of Commerce and businesses who have worked together on these new programs.

As of December 4th, proof of vaccination will also no longer be required for sport and recreation activities for those under the age of 18. As of December 4th, indoor organized gatherings will no longer be limited to 25 individuals, but will continue to be

limited to 50 percent of the venue's capacity, and masks-- mask use is still required.

Outdoor gatherings will also no longer be limited to 50 individuals as of December 4th.

Aside from this, the existing public health measures will remain in effect until we re-- until we receive new recommendations from Doctor Elliott and her team. I want to thank Yukoners, I want to thank you for your patience. For your understanding, and also your feedback as we continue to take action to protect the public, the public's health, and safety.

We continue to follow the recommendations from our public health officials to protect the health and safety of you all. And I know that it's been an important week for many Yukoners. As of midnight last night, new vaccination requirements for employers-- for employment came into force. All Yukon government staff are now required to have received their first shot of an approved COVID-19 vaccination. Including teachers, as well as those who work in hospitals, long term care homes, medical clinics, and allied health care settings, along with employees of non-government organizations funded by the Yukon government to provide services to vulnerable populations.

We need to do everything we can to stop COVID-19. As the territory's largest employer, the Government of Yukon has a duty to lead by example and to do our part to keep Yukoners safe. This vaccination requirement will allow us to ensure a safe working environment for our employees, including our healthcare workers, while protecting the health and safety of the members of public that we serve each and every day. Especially our most vulnerable populations.

We will have the latest numbers soon, but currently 94% of employees have attested to having received their first dose. The majority of those who have not yet attested are casual or on-call employees. Two percent of those who have not yet attested are full-time employees. I want to thank all these employees that have attested to their status and will continue to provide programs and services to Yukoners. Thank you.

Thank you very much for helping us to keep our workplaces safe, for employees, as well as for those who are accessing our programs and services, for example, home care

workers. I know that this will really bring a sense of relief to those who work in and receive home care, as just one of the examples.

We've seen other organizations in both public and in private sectors that have introduced vaccination requirements, including the Yukon University, and also the city of Whitehorse. These vaccination requirements are extremely important to protect individuals, but they're essential for the health and safety of all Yukoners. Vaccination remains the best protection from COVID-19.

More than 90% of Yukoners of 12 years of age and over have received their first dose, and over 85% have received two doses. I'll say that again, 90% of Yukoners of 12 years of age have received their doses. Vaccinations have also been approved for children that are age five to 11. Children's vaccines will be available starting December 6th at the convention centre in Whitehorse and all health centres in communities. You can find an appointment information at-- online, at [Yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot](https://www.yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot). You can also call the COVID info line for information on clinic dates and times, and that phone number is 1-877-374-0425. We have enough doses available for everyone who wants to receive a vaccine. This is an exciting step in our COVID-19 response, and we continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated. The vaccines are, again, our best protection against COVID-19, and again, they are safe and effective. So, I'm very grateful to have Dr Katharine Smart here, one of our resident pediatricians, to talk about safety and the efficacy of our vaccines, and the importance of getting children immunized against COVID-19. And I want to thank everyone who has helped curb the spread of COVID-19 over the past three weeks and the last 20-so months. Please continue to practice the safe six, be kind and respectful to your fellow Yukoners. We are all in this together, and together, we will get through this. Thank you very much.

>> Thank you Premier Silver, and good morning everyone, bonjour. I'll begin with a case count overview. There have been a total of 1,519 cases and 1,448 people recovered in Yukon since the beginning of the pandemic. As of this morning, we have 61 active cases in Yukon. Since November 24th, we have had two additional hospitalizations and

one medi-vac to southern hospitals. These numbers represent a continued stabilization in case counts. The decline from an active case counts well over 100, to the current number of 61, demonstrates the effectiveness of the circuit breaker measures which we have all undertaken. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of these measures in reducing severe COVID-19, and avoiding healthcare system overwhelm. Thank you all for stepping up and helping this happen. I am pleased today that we will be able to ease-- that the government will be able to ease some of these measures, and this, uh, is following our recommendations. I do also request that people continue to step up and follow those mandates and recommendations that are still in place. I'd like to now speak about Omicron.

As many of us are aware, Omicron was designated a variant of concern on the 26th of November by the World Health Organization. It shows a number of mutations that are concerning, and it is something we will continue to watch. Omicron is a variant of concern that has been found around the world, including Africa and Europe, and now Canada in several provinces. We do expect that at some point, we will see Omicron in Yukon. It is not here currently, and our aim now is to slow the time from now to when we see it here. We are in a good position in many ways. We have high and increasing vaccination rates. We have the pediatric vaccination program starting. We now have recognized this variant early, and we have time to prepare and to stall its inevitable introduction here. We also have some uncertainty at this time. We know about the molecular structure of this variant. However, we are not clear at this point how transmissible the variant is.

It does appear to be more transmissible than previous variants, we will watch how it competes with the Delta variant, and whether it becomes a dominant variant. We are also not clear at this time and how severe infection with Omicron will be. Again, this is something we will continue to watch and act appropriately. We have seen that the vaccine is safe and effective against all variants to date, and we will be watching this area as well. We also need to remember that we have been through this pandemic for almost two years now, and we know what to do. It is very important, more important



than ever, to get vaccinated. If you are not yet vaccinated, and to have your booster, if it's your turn for booster, if you are a child, to step up and get your pediatric vaccine. We know that wearing masks is an extremely important measure, and, um, that wearing it particularly in crowded indoor spaces, and at times when we can't be distanced, will continue to be important. We know that when people stay home when they're sick, even a little bit sick, they reduce the spread of COVID-19. And if they get tested and follow the measures, they reduce that spread even further. We are drafting and continue-- will continue to draft and recommend measures and advice as the situation changes and as appropriate. And we know that following this advice is effective, and we have seen this recently with the circuit breaker measures. I am very pleased to say that we've seen a solid increase in the vaccination-- in the number of people vaccinated leading up to yesterday's vaccine mandate deadline. Thank you very much to everyone who has stepped up to be vaccinated. The premier has talked about the vaccination rates, and I think overall it's important to-- to note that these numbers continue to trend upward, and the pattern is critical to controlling the spread of COVID-19, including Omicron variant, here in the Yukon. As you know, the government of Yukon is now offering the Pfizer Comirnaty pediatric COVID vaccine to all children aged five to 11. Many parents are enthusiastic about this, and we've already begun-- and have already begun to book vaccination appointments. The vaccine is administered as a two dose primary series that's recommended to be given eight weeks apart. Many parents, of course, are asking, "Is the Pfizer Comin--Comirnaty pediatric COVID-19 vaccine safe?" Yes. The vaccine is safe. In the clinical trials, children who received the vaccine had no serious side effects. Health Canada has completed its gold standard independent review, which is recognized around the world as a rigorous and thorough review. These decisions are based only on scientific and medical advice showing that the vaccines are safe and effective. Immunization will help prevent-- protect children from severe symptoms and sickness, as well as will help prevent them from getting COVID-19 and spreading it to others. We know that children have experienced collateral harms from the pandemic. Disruptions in schooling, social isolation, reduced access to academic and extracurricular resources, have had impacts on the mental and



physical wellbeing of children and their families. Vaccinating children ages five years and older can help keep them safely in school, and help them participate in sports, playdates, and other group activities. I urge you to talk to your kids about the vaccine, and if you have any questions, please reach out to your healthcare provider or call 811.

To help us understand the importance of the vaccine in Yukon children, we've asked Dr Katharine Smart to join us today. Dr Smart is a pediatrician here in Whitehorse, and she's the President of the Canadian Medical Association. Her work is centred on developing collaborative partnerships with community and government services to serve marginalized children using a model of social pediatrics. She's passionate about improving the services for marginalized children and has contributed to the lives and health of many Yukon children. I look forward to your questions, and thank you Dr Smart for joining us today as well.

[Speaking Indigenous Language]

Thank you, merci.

Dr Smart?

>> Thank you, Dr Elliott, and thank you Premier Silver for inviting me today. Um, I'm really grateful to have this opportunity to speak to Yukon parents about the pediatric vaccine and about COVID. As Dr Elliott said, I don't think there's any family in the territory who's not been impacted by COVID in some way, and that includes our children.

So what I'm hoping to do is tell you a little bit about what we know in terms of COVID's impact on children, and what we know about the vaccine, and why I believe choosing to have your child vaccinated is the right thing to do. So, fortunately we all know that COVID-19 has not caused as severe disease in children as what we've seen in adults. But there have been several Canadian children that have had severe COVID, so there are children who have been hospitalized. And important also, I think, to understand is that beyond the acute impacts of COVID in terms of hospitalization, there are other long

term impacts that we've seen. That includes long COVID, which is happening, we believe, in about three to five percent of pediatric cases, as well as a multisystem inflammatory condition called MIS-C, which is happening in about one in 3,500 infected children.

Still, these impacts are not insignificant when you look at a large denominator of children who are at risk of contracting the Delta variant, and now potentially the Omicron variant. The impacts of COVID, of course, in children have been far beyond just the immediate health impacts. As we've heard, we know there are significant social impacts of children, and the lockdowns and the quarantining, and those measures that have had to be put in place to keep our community safe. Lost time at school, lost times with family, and of course, just the anxiety children may have about the risk of them spreading COVID to their parents, grandparents, or other valued elders, family members, and loved ones. The pediatric vaccine offers us the opportunity to both protect children and their health directly in terms of preventing-- contracting COVID, and the health risks associated with that. But it also gives us the opportunity to create safety for children and allowing them to return to their lives. We know that children being in school, being able to do their activities and being able to be part of their extended communities is so important, and vaccination will make that easier as we move forward. So, as a parent, I think most often what people of course are wondering is what is the risk benefit of this health decision for my child? Most of us as parents are very familiar with childhood vaccines, and I think a lot of parents have wondered, you know, "Why should I immunize my child for COVID? And how does it compare to other vaccine-preventable illnesses?" I think some people have perhaps been distracted by the fact that death and severe illness in COVID is uncommon in children. The reality of pediatric disease is very few children die from any infectious disease, which is of course a very positive thing.

The impact of COVID in terms of how it infects children acutely with illness and more broadly is very similar to other diseases that we protect children against with vaccination. So, I think it very much falls in line with the principles we've used to

determine other immunization programs. As we heard, the COVID vaccine has been tested in children and it's received full approval by Health Canada. We've also seen the NACI guidelines come forth that have given us our recommendations around the dosing and the interval for the vaccine. The Pfizer trials in children included about 3,000 children, and there was no serious adverse effects in those trials. We've now seen the United States administer at least 3 million doses of vaccines in that age, which is a very important part of post-market surveillance and immunization. As we know, rare, serious adverse events may not be noted until large numbers of people are vaccinated. I'm happy to tell you there has not been any safety signals in this age group as we've been rolling out the vaccination in the US, and now started in other provinces in Canada. Which is, I think, very reassuring as we move forward.

I think it's also important to understand the NACI guidelines. So what we know is some of the differences between the pediatric vaccine and the adult vaccine, first is the dose. So, the dose is smaller than we're giving to adults, and what the trials showed us is that children have a very good immune response to the pediatric dose. Another question parents sometimes have around that is, "If my child is close to 12 years old, what should I do?" The guidelines are quite clear. Until your child turns 12, they should receive the pediatric dose of the vaccine. They then can receive the adult dose for their second dose. The recommended interval, as we heard from Dr Elliott, at this point in time is eight weeks between the doses.

So, you may wonder why that is. There's really two reasons. One is the evidence that's emerged in Canada by-- initially delaying the doses between vaccines in some of the provinces earlier in the pandemic, showed a longer lasting immune response when doses were spaced. So we're expecting that for children. The other reason is I think many parents have heard about the risk of myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart or the sack around the heart, as a side effect of the Pfizer vaccine in kids. There's some evidence that delaying the interval between the doses makes that less likely.

I'd like to speak a little bit about that side effect, is I think it's one of the main concerns

parents have had in terms of choosing vaccination for their children. We've seen myocarditis primarily in older adolescent boys and young adult men. It's uncommon, and it's generally mild and self-limited. If you speak to many people that work at children's hospitals in Canada, they will tell you they have really seen several hospitals not a single child actually admitted to the hospital with myocarditis, which tells us its something that's being able to be managed in the community, which tells us again, not seriously impacting children's health. We don't know for sure yet what the incidents of myocarditis might be in five to 11, but we anticipate it'll be even less than what we've seen in 12 to 17 year olds, which is already rare. The reason for that is, it's felt that likely the side effect has something to do with testosterone, and that's why we're seeing it more in pubertal boys and young adult men. So this is something that will be monitored as we move forward, but again at this point in time, we're not seeing that safety signal in this age group. I think it's also really important to understand that the risk of myocarditis is much more significant from COVID itself then it is from the vaccine.

So always when we're making these decisions, we're looking at that risk benefit analysis.

So, I think that's some of the scientific background. So I think there's many reasons to choose to have your child vaccinated for their own protection. And that, of course, is the most important aspect of that decision as a parent. There's of course the secondary gains of vaccination, which are for your family and community. Protecting people in the family, particularly people who may be immunocompromised, or more vulnerable due to their age. When children are vaccinated, they'll be able to be more safely in their families without putting those people at risk. And of course, there's a broad benefit to our community as well. I think it's very clear that Yukoners are community minded, and being able to be together and gather together is an important part of our culture. And having children immunized will allow that to come back quicker. So that's-- I'll stop there, and I'm certainly happy to take any questions.

>> Thank you. Thank you, Premier Silver, Dr Elliott, and Dr Smart. We will now move on to the question and answer session with media. A reminder to reporters, please identify which speaker you would like to answer your question before you start, and please also remember to mute and unmute yourselves. We will first go to the reporters in the room, and we'll start with Cece from CBC.

>> Reporter: Hi there. My first question is for Dr Smart. Regarding the vaccine clinics for children, how many appointments have there been for ages five to 11 to date? And what have you noticed about the interest in the numbers?

>> I will let Doctor Elliott answer the question about the number of appointments because I don't know the answer to that yet. I can certainly tell you that I think there's been a lot of enthusiasm amongst Yukon parents to get their children vaccinated. I know myself, I found out about it, logged on immediately to book my own child, who's 11, and already several of the days were full. So I found that, you know, I was sad I didn't get the first appointment, but encouraging, um, that so many people were already stepping up to have their children vaccinated. I've certainly heard from parents of my own patients, especially parents of children with complex medical conditions, just a real sense of relief of being able to bring this protection. So I hope that most Yukon parents, or eventually all, are feeling that enthusiasm. And I'll let maybe Dr Elliott speak to the capacity aspect.

>> Thank you for the question, thank you, Dr Smart.

I too have been heartened by the uptake in interest in the pediatric vaccine. The last I looked at the bookings, we were booked to-- to the 17th, it was full. Probably, if anyone logs on right now, they wouldn't be able to get an appointment even on dates after that because there is so much interest at this time. Our vaccine program is, at this point, um, helping people who are getting vaccinated for the first time, getting their second dose, those who are getting their boosters and now pediatrics, children who are able to get their doses. So it's a very busy and active program. Thank you.

>> Thank you. Cece, do you have another question?

>> Reporter: Ah yes, so this one's for Dr Elliott. In light of the Omicron variant spreading in Canada, when will those booster shots be available for people under 50? And are COVID screenings in the territory looking for this variant?

>> Thank you for the question. Omicron variant in Yukon is not here at this time. Having the Omicron here in Canada has made many people ask, do we need to have boosters for a broader number of people? And do we need to-- how quickly should we launch this type of program? The National-- NACI Committee on Immunization is working on these questions at this time, and we anticipate hearing from them shortly about the approach to boosters in the current-- with the current situation. We are offering boosters at this time to people who are 50 and older, and getting these boosters in arms puts us at or ahead of the-- many of the provinces and territories across Canada.

The second question was about the Omicron testing. So, we're fortunate to have partnerships with the BC Centre for Disease Control Public Health Laboratory, who does the complex testing as well as having our own testing here in territory for COVID-19. Screening and whole genome sequence for the Omicron variant is occurring through our partners with the BC Centre for Disease Control and the National Microbiology Laboratory, including Yukon specimens. And so, we are testing for this variant at this time. Thank you.

>> Thank you. We'll now move to Luke from CKRW.

>> Reporter: Thank you. My first question is for Premier Silver. I know earlier this week, there was a small window of access for approximately 100 doses of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine. I'm just wondering if all those were used and if the government's looking at acquiring more, just giving Yukoners more options for getting vaccinated.

>> [clears throat] Thanks for the question, Luke.

I don't know the final numbers of, uh, the 100 doses, whether or not they were used or not. When I spoke with Dr Corriveau, y'know, having any of these expire was really

weighing heavily on chief medical officers and so making sure they they're accessible was extremely important to them. I also-- talking with Doctor Corriveau, y'now, non-mRNA vaccinations and their availability is something that they've been, uh, dealing with and hop-- making available for those in extreme cases, but I would talk more-- I would let Doctor Elliott talk more about longer term, um, non-mRNA vaccinations. We've also said when it comes to the procurement of these vaccines right across Canada, we will absolutely take the vaccine that are passed through Health Canada, and we will accommodate based upon what, uh, products we get. We're extremely happy to have Moderna and, uh, to have the Pfizer as well. Y'know, as far as efficacy goes, these are the gold standards and so-- but again, the Chief Medical Officer of Health is always looking at all the variables when it comes to the supply chain management, the efficacy, the need for different vaccinations.

>> Reporter: I do have a question for Dr Smart. You mentioned long COVID.

I'm just wondering what signs parents should look for in children that have had COVID if they're experiencing the effects of that and if there's, uh, certain ways to treat it and maybe mitigate the long term effects of that?

>> Yeah, thank you for the question. Long COVID, I'd say, is something that we are really just starting to understand in children. It's partly why we're not sure the exact incidents as there's been different studies that have shown different numbers. Fortunately, there are some researchers now in Canada that are studying this in Canadian children which will be very helpful. The symptoms can really range from ongoing impacts of the virus itself that can look like chronic fatigue, chronic cough, and chronic neurological conditions, just feeling, like, brain fog and those types of things.

In some children, that means-- when we say chronic, we mean lasting up to 120 days after the illness so it's sort of like that acute feeling of being ill that just never really went away.

But there are other children that are having impacts past that, and those children are having a lot of the neurological conditions, that sort of brain fog and fatigue. And that's,

I think, the group we're of course most concerned about is, y'know, how do we get them back to baseline.

In terms of prevention, I think the biggest thing we can do prevention-wise is be vaccinated, continue to mask and follow the public health precautions because it's actually contracting COVID that's the risk. There's some emerging evidence that suggest if you're immunized and then contract COVID, which can happen, that the risk of long COVID is less, so I think that does provide that protection as well. There's no known medical intervention that prevents the risk of getting long COVID, so in terms of once you have it, you-- or have COVID itself, y'know, something you can do at that point to prevent long COVID, we haven't identified that. And certainly, the ongoing treatment of it is still something we're understanding. But it usually takes a team approach to support the child through those systems. So it's, um, I think again, an emerging area of knowledge.

>> Thank you. We'll now move to those joining us virtually and start with Hailey from Yukon News.

>> Reporter: Hello, can you hear me okay?

>> We can, thanks, Hailey.

>> Reporter: Great, okay. My first question will probably be for the premier. He said about-- there's about two percent of full time staff who didn't attest to their vaccinations. I'm wondering if you could give us an idea of how many people that represents in real numbers and whether there was specific departments that were more heavily hit.

>> Yeah, thanks for the question. I don't have the specific numbers breaking down per department. I do know-- I can give you a little more stats of what I do have right now, Hailey. Y'know, like I said, 94% of our employees have attested to vaccination status, two percent of those who have not yet attested are the full-time employees. We know that there's been 29 different individuals who have applied for religious exemptions

and 15 have applied for medical exemptions, and this is less than one percent of our workforce and as we've said, the majority of those who have not yet attested are auxiliary or on call. There's going to be more break down per department and the ministers will have that information will make it available per department.

>> Renee: Thank you. Hailey, do you have a second question?

>> I do, yeah, I was reading in the-- an article in the Globe and Mail this morning that described that of our recent cases in the Yukon, around 50% of people that were infected were fully vaccinated, and I'm wondering if Doctor Elliott could speak to that. Is that an unusually high number, or why might we be seeing that-- that 50% of the recent cases were people who were vaccinated?

>> Thank you for the question. The question was regarding the number of fully vaccinated people who have contracted COVID-19. In the Yukon, we're seeing about half of our cases, of people who have gotten infected with COVID-19 are full vaccinated. And among these cases we're seeing, as has been seen elsewhere in the world and in-- across Canada that the disease is mild, short-lived, and, um, severe outcomes are avoided. This is good news. If we look at our epicurve for the most recent outbreak, for example, the most recent wave that we've had, we see that although the case counts were quite high compared to previous curves, the hospitalization numbers are-- remained low, and that's what we expect to see in a vaccinated population.

The question was whether this is high. I think we all had hoped at the beginning that we would have what's called a sterilizing vaccine that would prevent any infection from COVID-19, that's a very rare type of vaccine. At the same time, I think we were also extremely satisfied with the prevention this vaccine has for not only infection, but particularly for severe disease and for death. And this highly effective, highly safe vaccine is a, uh, one of the reasons-- one of the great protective factors we have at this time and one of the reasons we can move forward and, um, watch Omicron and slow its, um, its movement here. But at the same time, we know what to do in terms of getting vaccinated to, uh, to protect ourselves. Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you. We'll now move to Tim at the Whitehorse Star.

>> Reporter: Yes, good morning, can you hear me?

>> Renee: We can, thanks, Tim.

>> Reporter: Hi, all right, thank you. I guess my question's probably more for the premier than for Dr Elliott. Just wondering even with the loosening of some of the restrictions, you didn't mention when the state of emergency might end. Are you hoping to have it end by, say, Christmas or New Year's, or are we in for a longer haul?

>> Thanks for the question, Tim. Again, you know me, I'm not gonna speculate on this. I think Doctor Corriveau was, uh, great last week explaining as well, y'know. And I think to the forging forward documents and, y'know, all the way along the way, we've kind of shown you our modus operandi about how things move forward, so we're announcing now what we can for the fifth and we will see what happens, y'know. Even those announcements of then changing some of the requirements or the restrictions, they may or may not have an effect on epidemiology. So it's so hard to predict. But you can imagine as well when you see, y'know, what we saw in the States with American Thanksgiving or if you saw here with Halloween, whenever there's an opportunity for folks to gather, that really does, uh, cause concern to the good doctor and her team. So, again, cautiously optimistic. We know Yukoners have done extremely well by, y'know, knowing what the-- recommendations are, following those, and if we continue on that path, then I think we have good things ahead of us as far as the civil emergency measures, but again, I won't speculate.

>> Renee: Thank you.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

>> Renee, Tim, do have a second question?

>> Reporter: I do, and this is probably more for Dr Elliott. I've seen a number of articles recently including on CTV about the effectiveness of, uh, your typical cloth mask and

current science is indicating it basically isn't very effective. Is that something you're looking at and thinking of recommendations for here?

>> Thank you for the question. The questions regarding the effectiveness of mask use, and there's different ways to look at this. So we look at the effectiveness in an individual and we look at the effectiveness across populations. We know that the wearing of masks, including cloth masks, in population levels is highly effective way to prevent and reduce the spread of COVID-19. The person wearing a mask, any respiratory droplets are inhibited by that mask, a-- the large portion of those droplets are inhibited. And the most common way that the vacc-- that the COVID-19 vari-- virus spreads is when a person is coughing, and so most of that cough would be caught in a mask. Nonetheless, masks are not 100% effective and-- and also, different masks are appropriate in different settings. So, any of us whave been in healthcare or hospitals, a dentist, or many other places have seen the medical masks used in those settings and when we have procedures that produce a lot of droplets, um, then a 95 mask is used.

so, all these factors including the risk that someone is infected, the level of the mask, the crowdedness and the amount of respiratory droplets that are produced and also could stay in the air, all contribute to the, uh, effectiveness of the intervention of wearing a mask. We-- at a population level wearing a three le-- three layer cloth mask is highly effective way to prevent spread of COVID-19, thanks.

>> Renee: Thank you, we'll now move to Vincent at Radio Canada.

>> Reporter: [Speaking French]

>> So Doctor Elliott, could you please repeat in French when the booster shot will be available for people that are less than 50 years old?

>> [Speaking French]

>> Renee: [Speaking French]

>> Reporter: [Speaking French]

>> So Doctor Elliott, can you please say in French what is your worry about the Omicron variant coming and what measures we should maintain to make sure that Yukoners are not too affected by this new variant?

>> [Speaking French]

>> Renee: Thank you. Do we have any other reporters on the line I might've missed? All right, thank you. That now concludes our COVID-19 update. Stay tuned for another update week. Thank you again to all of our speakers and thank you to all the media and everyone who tuned in to watch live over Facebook. Have a wonderful day, everyone.