



COVID-19 livestream: Thursday, February 17, 2022

>> Renée: Good morning. I'm Renée Francoeur with cabinet communications and the moderator for today's COVID-19 update.

We are joined today by Premier Sandy Silver, and Dr. Catherine Elliott, the acting chief medical officer of health. Thank you to Mary Thiessen for providing our ASL interpretation and to Andre Bossier for providing our French translation. Following the remarks from our speakers, we will go to the media present in the room, and then phone lines for a round of questions. I will call you by name and you'll each have two questions.

Before we begin with our speakers, I'd like to verify that everyone can hear us. If any of the reporters are having problems, please email ecoinfo@yukon.ca

I'll now hand it over to Premier Silver.

>> Premier Silver: Thank you very much, Renée, and good morning to everybody and thank you for joining us today. We're here on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

And it's great to be here with Dr. Elliott and also Mary and Andre and the whole team. Thank you everybody. I just want to start by taking a moment to acknowledge what a busy and transformative week this has been in the territory. Hundreds of people participated in phase one of the mental wellness summit to address the substance use health emergency in Yukon. It was a very moving and important event.

I learned so much by listening to the speakers.

We discussed how we can work together to strengthen our communities and build up the support networks. Still processing a lot of the information that was shared and I plan to go back and watch some of the presentations that I may have missed, they were kind of happening at the same time. I hope all Yukoners take an opportunity to check out the videos and the presentations.

And you can find the links online at yukon.ca. They're very powerful and representative of local stories and know-how and knowledge and international and national best practices.

Additionally, on Monday, the Education Minister Jeanie McLean, and Yukon First Nations chiefs, they gathered to honour the 49th anniversary of Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow by formally establishing a Yukon First Nations school board. What an incredible moment for our territory and historic milestone on our journey to advance reconciliation.

I want to congratulate everybody that has contributed over the years to getting us here, it has been a huge effort.

So, thank you.

I'm very happy to report that things are looking good on the COVID-19 front as well. This week we announced that we are expanding access to at-home rapid testing, starting February 21, folks will be able to pick up rapid testing kits from two different locations. Downtown at the visitor



information centre parking lot, the VIC, and on the Alaska Highway at Centennial Motors drive thru.

Now, you can pick up rapid home tests for a friend or a neighbour if they are unable to travel to get one themselves.

At home rapid tests, rapid test kits, they're also available in all rural communities, and lab-based PCR testing is available through the health care providers, or community health centres as well. You can find all this information, and additional information of course, online at yukon.ca.

Today, I am excited, as well, to share some more information about our government's plans to continue easing the public health measures. We've been closely monitoring the situation, along with Dr. Elliott and her fabulous team, and also health indicators as well, and we see these are trending in the right way. We appear to be moving past the peak of the Omicron wave in the territory and we are trending towards safer waters.

As of tomorrow, February 18, we will be making the following changes to public health measures in the territory. Indoor organized gatherings will continue to be limited to 50% of the venue capacity but will no longer be limited to 25 individuals. Indoor sports events, team sports, group fitness, group recreation and group leisure activities will continue to be limited to 50% of venue capacity but will no longer be limited to 25 people.

Additionally, proof of vaccination will be required for those 19 years of age and up. Movie theatres, museums and art galleries will no longer be limited to 50% venue capacity.

Capacity limits will be removed for personal services such as hair and salons. Steam rooms, public saunas and hot springs may reopen up to 50% capacity with proof of vaccination requirements for those 19 years and older.

Indoor faith-based gatherings and cultural events will be limited to 50% the venue capacity, with no requirement for proof of vaccination. Bars and restaurants will no longer be required to end in-person services at 10 pm and may return to their normal operating hours. Casinos and nightclubs can also reopen with proof of vaccination required.

I want to thank, again, all Yukoners' businesses, organizations, for following public health measures and helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. I also want to thank you all for your patience, your understanding, and your feedback, as we continue to take actions to protect public health and safety. We are getting to a better place.

And we're getting there thanks to your diligence. We will continue to monitor the situation over the coming weeks, together with Dr. Elliott and her team, and we will continue to move in the right direction. And hopefully we'll be able to be in a position to continue to loosen public health measures if we stay on this track.

Our hope is that by early March, the only public health measures that we will need to continue will be the requirement to wear masks indoors, the vaccine requirement for public servants, volunteers and contractors and the requirement to show proof of vaccination to access designated sites. We know that we can get there if we continue to do our part. Get vaccinated if you haven't already, including your booster shot, practice the safe six, mask up and continue to take precautions and follow public health measures.



Thank you very much for listening. Thank you again for your diligence, and with that I will hand it off to Dr. Elliott.

[speaking Indigenous language]

>> Dr. Elliott: Thank you Premier Silver. Good morning everyone.

[speaking Indigenous language]

>> Dr. Elliott: The easing of more public health measures, gives a sense of what we've accomplished in this wave. More and more people have received their booster shots, thank you. We've rolled out pediatric and adolescent vaccines, thanks to those children and youth who have stepped up.

And we've been able to increase access to rapid testing, in response to requests to do so. In fact, just this week we've expanded the distribution centres, and soon we'll have additional opportunities for Yukoners to receive these at-home rapid test kits. I'm pleased to be able to declare the outbreak at Whistle Bend Place over, thank you to the staff, the patients, families and visitors, the volunteers, for all the work that this took to keep these residents safe.

While we still have some precautions in place at the Thompson Centre, I'm also proud of the work of the residents and staff there to contain transmission. Here's what's happening around the territory today.

There are currently 61 active cases in the territory, and the new case number is 12. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have had 126 hospitalizations due to COVID-19, and a total of 20 deaths. The average new daily case count is now 12, for the past seven days, and nine over the past three days. The seven day running percent positivity is 26%. These are all good indicators. Over the course of the pandemic, there have been a total of 3,361 confirmed Yukon cases, and 3,288 cases have recovered. At this time, people always ask me, where are we? Where are we in the curve and what can we expect ahead? Well, you hear the good indicators that I said today, and you also hear that we still have an outbreak at Thompson Centre, that we still have new cases every day and we still have a 26% percent positivity, which indicate that we are on the downslope and we are still in the storm. If you think about the weather outside in Whitehorse today, if you're in Whitehorse, it felt yesterday like spring was coming, maybe spring was here. But today, there's snow falling from the sky. It's a bit like that. What happens next will depend still on what we do, and how we make the wise choices. I'm really excited today to introduce to you the new COVID-19 dashboard that will be available tomorrow on yukon.ca.

This is an exciting move and will help all of us know what the data is in near real time and have an easy-to-read format with interactive graphs and maps and summaries of the data over the course of the pandemic. All of this will help us visualize where we've come and where we have yet to go. As the Yukon, and Canada, move beyond this wave of the Omicron variant, epidemiologic indicators will guide public health measures as COVID-19 persists. Public health and individual risk assessment and protections will help Yukoners be ready for the future of COVID-19. And this dashboard will be updated on a regular schedule, with most metrics updated daily Monday through Friday. We will continue to work on this new tool to keep indicators relevant and useful. So, let me take a few minutes to give you a quick overview of what the dashboard looks like and some of the data it will show. The data that I'm showing today is accurate as of 7 am yesterday,



Wednesday, February 16, 2022. This first slide shows what you can expect when you go to the dashboard. If you look under the top, the title "COVID-19 data dashboard," there are five tabs. Cases, vaccinations, testing, hospitalizations, and definitions. The definitions tab is important, because it will help you interpret what the data means, what the numbers mean, how are these numbers calculated, and that's very important when interpreting the information.

I'll show you another page now. This is a graph of the case counts over time. So, first of all, without looking at the colours, you can see that we have case counts close to 500 cases. And we have also, the colours represent the vaccination status of our cases.

If you select the tabs at the bottom, you can choose whether you want to see the information for the entire period, by month or by vaccine status. You'll note a scroll bar across the top lets you narrow the timeline. You can make it shorter or longer and look more closely at specific times. You'll see that, in this graph, by looking at the colours, that most of the people who are infected now with COVID-19 have had two doses of vaccine. This is because most of the population now has received two doses of vaccine. So, this is the largest group of the population, and we would expect that this group will be infected. It's also important to note that if you had two doses, and it's more than six months ago, that you have waning immunity and so your protection against infection is less, as is your protection against severe illness. It's very encouraging, and it always has been, that Yukoners have received the primary series of two doses.

And also, we can see that there's a large number of new cases each day, and that we're still in a community spread situation. We'll now go to slide three. This shows you a little bit more about the percentage of the population who's vaccinated by age group. You can see that the groups of three bars represent the age group, and the coloured bars represent the percent of the population who've had one dose, two dose, or three doses. What you can see here, is that as you go up in age, the percent of people who have been boosted is higher. And, in our working age adults, we'd like to see increases from the low of... Well, the 18-29-year olds are below well below 40%. We'd like to see all of that increase in order to prevent transmission. It's reassuring, as well, that people who are older, which is one of the main risk factors for severe illness, it's reassuring that people who are older have received their booster to a much greater proportion, and I encourage those people over 50 to continue getting boosted in order to prevent severe illness.

Next slide.

This shows you a little bit about the testing. The bars here indicate how many tests have occurred each day. And the percent positivity is there as well. Recall, that this is the percent positivity as of Wednesday. When we chose to test everyone, who was suspected of having COVID-19, when we were dealing with Delta and Alpha and Gamma, and other variants, the case counts really were a better indicator of how many cases we had in the territory. Now, they are still an indicator of cases, however, they're an indicator of cases amongst those most at risk of severe illness, and those most at risk of spreading to people who have severe illness, such as healthcare workers, etc. And this is why we use those special precautions in healthcare settings, in order to prevent such spread. Now that the testing has shifted, we still also look at the percent positivity. This has been a risk indicator we've been following for quite a long time. We would like to see it below 5%, and it's now at 27%. And so, it gives us a sense of the number of cases who are not getting tested. And it



indicates that our case counts are still significant, and we have spread in community when it's this high.

Next slide. So, on this last slide, we see the hospitalizations. You can see that, over the course of the pandemic, 126 people were admitted to hospital. We also see that this is an indicator that we're working on still, and as we work on it, you might see some fluctuation in these numbers as we get the quality of this data improving. We do clinical investigations, we look at why people are admitted to hospital, whether it's due to COVID or whether it's hospitalization with somebody who has, for another reason, but who also has COVID, these are some of the things that we want to include to improve this indicator. This includes a number from all Yukon hospitals, including Dawson City, Whitehorse, and Watson Lake hospitals.

And you also can see that there's a total number of medivacs, 20 medivacs have occurred for people with COVID since the start of the pandemic.

There's a table below, so people who are really curious and want to know the exact numbers on different days, they can follow this table to see where we're at with hospitalizations.

I do want to comment that we are very pleased that hospitalizations have been low during this wave of the pandemic. And this is a great achievement, and it's been achieved by rapidly responding to Omicron, offering boosters, people really following those public health measures, protecting those people who are vulnerable, and all of these things have contributed to keeping our hospitals functioning.

So now we'll move away from the slides. And I'd like to talk a little bit about easing of public health measures. I want to acknowledge where we have been and the strength it's taken for all of us to get to where we are today. While we're not completely out of the storm yet, it's important to reflect the steps we've taken along the way, and to thank you all for the sacrifices that you have made. Without your diligence, without such a vaccinated population, without people adhering to the public health measures and recommendations, things could have looked very differently.

We could still be in a spot of increasing cases and could still see more hospitalizations and even more deaths. And as we start to come down the curve of the Omicron wave, we need to keep what we have been doing, and keep our work in mind. As the Premier mentioned, we're continuing to ease public health measures, so people can have choices and make choices about reasonable actions at this time.

I know while this is welcome news for many, there are some people who will find this time-- become more anxious and be more fearful.

We need to respect people's choices in these times. Please, all Yukoners continue to take the necessary measures in order to stay safe, and to protect those who are vulnerable, including being respectful if people make different choices than the public health measures suggest.

In closing, we are now moving slowly past the peak of the Omicron wave and coming down the other side. We know it's not over; we know what we do now will affect whether we stabilize, we continue to come down or whether we go up again. In order for us to return to a sense of normalcy, it remains as important as ever to follow this public health advice. We are gradually, sensibly, reducing those risks to balance the needs of people to stay healthy, and well and function in a normal society with the risk of transmission.



This means, please, if you have not done already, get your booster, make sure you are fully vaccinated, practise the safe six and mask up, wear your mask. As these days get longer and warmer and sunnier, we can spend more time outside, where there's greater ventilation and it's safer and prevents transmission. And we can enjoy the fruits of this hard work that we've been through.

I want to again thank all the workers who have contributed to this, including communications and our healthcare workers, YCDC, all of the people behind the scenes, in policy and legislation and all the people who are working on the frontlines. Thank you so much, [speaking Indigenous language], merci.

>> Renée: Thank you, Dr. Elliott, thank you Premier Silver. We will now move on to the media question and answer session.

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'll first go to the reporter in the room, and we'll start with Haley at "Yukon News."

>> Reporter: Thank you. My first question would be for the premier. Obviously, across the country this past week, past two weeks, we've seen a lot of conversations about the freedom convoy going on in Ottawa and all those protests taking place, I wonder if you have any messages for folks in Whitehorse who have been out protesting mandates and COVID-19 restrictions in our own city?

>> Premier Silver: Yeah. I think we can start by just saying that I don't know of anybody who's not frustrated with COVID, two years in, right? You know, a lot of people have had to postpone very significant events in their lives. We've lost loved ones and haven't been able to grieve properly at funerals. You know, we haven't been able to visit loved ones over the last two years. You know, there's people who, whose loved ones are sick and need urgent medical care. You know, it's frustrating. It's completely frustrating and I get it. And, you know, we've said here a few different times too, there's really no playbook when it comes to pandemics. Science is our best guide but, you know, working closely with public health and to ensure the best possible outcomes is the goal, you know, and that's always been our goal as well.

When it comes to freedom convoys, those types of things, I completely understand, and I support people's right to demonstrate. That's extremely important living in a democracy, expressing views, that's key to our democratic process, absolutely. But what I can't condone would be any of the disruptive or disrespectful behaviour that we're seeing. So, taking people's anger and frustration out on frontline care workers, we've seen that happen. People that are providing the vaccines, that's completely unacceptable. We've seen business operators threatened for supporting public health measures. That's unacceptable, there's no room for that. And, you know, I think we're all in this situation where we all know the pandemic's not over, COVID-19 remains a huge threat still, and we're asking people to act in appropriate ways. I would caution as well, you know, we're all frustrated. I say, probably the most frustrated and most downtrodden are our frontline workers, right? The folks that show up every day, I look around this room, the folks that show up every day during the pandemic. You know, everybody's frustrated.

I just want to make sure that folks are safe when people are protesting, and I think that that's key. I imagine, you know, the question of the federal measures comes in, and we've talked about that a



bit as well, in the past, more tools in the toolbox for our RCMP. I think it's important, not only for the threats that we've seen so far, but also, infrastructure and border protection moving forward as well. It's good to have that extra layer of protection for the RCMP. The Prime Minister has been adamant that this does not mean military, all the premiers completely agree with that. But we are living in interesting times. I agree with Dr. Elliott, every day moving forward is a new day. We're getting more sunshine every day and with announcements like this, of easing restrictions, that gives more people, more pause to have more things to celebrate. I look past, over the last two years of the pandemic, comparatively to other jurisdictions about shutdowns of businesses, shutdowns of schools, shutdowns of services -- we've fared very well, because of our approach. And so, we'll maintain our approach and we'll get there. And I see greater times ahead. Because most of our, most of our citizens have done what we've asked, and we're very grateful.

>> Renée: Thank you. You have a second question, Haley?

>> Reporter: I do, yeah. Second question for Dr. Elliott, you just shared a slideshow there with a lot of different data points. I was wondering about case positivity, that's obviously something a lot of people are looking at to try and get an idea of where we are. Do we expect case positivity with Omicron to go back down to 5%? Or will that remain higher with this new variant?

>> Dr. Elliott: Thanks for the question. So, I think what's really important when we look at case activity, is to look at the number of cases and the percent positivity together. So, if one is stable and the other changes, you will have a sense of whether the case activity is increasing or decreasing. For example, if case positivity is stable, and cases are declining, we can confidently say cases are declining. When they move together in the same direction, we can also be quite confident in saying what's happening with case activity. Both decline, case activity is declining. When they are moving separately, it's much trickier. It's not linear, it's not direct, and there are many factors that affect, for example, case positivity. For example, if people are testing only the people, let me give you an example. If a household has one case in that household, and they test the remainder of people using rapid antigen, they won't be seen in our counts, and our case positivity will be affected by that one person. If that entire household, and lots of other households in that circumstance get tested, our case positivity is going to be high, because it's reflecting a sampling of the population with a high percent positivity. Within households, it's very hard to not transmit Omicron, and so there is a high case positivity, if we're testing households of people who have Omicron.

So, you can see how different factors affect that case positivity. What I've been very pleased with - from the change in the testing strategy. And then, as we get used to this different strategy, and people are getting more and more used to rapid antigen testing, is that we've been seeing that more and more people are following the recommendations and the required, people who require testing are getting testing, and those who do not, are not seeking PCR testing. This helps us because it means that it's much more easy to interpret the data. So, you can see that case activity is a factor of case counts, and of percent positivity.

When there's uncertainty, we also look, in fact all the time, we also look at the number of outbreaks, the spread across the geography, the number, and then we look at severity, hospitalizations and deaths. Because remember, the ultimate goal of our pandemic response is to



prevent severe outcomes, such as hospitalizations and deaths, and to limit the societal disruption caused by measures. And this is the balancing act that we work on every single day. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to the phone lines, and we'll start with Luke at CKRW.

>> Luke: Hi, this first question will be for Dr. Elliott. I know the Premier mentioned that soon, as long as things go well, the only public health measures that might still be in place would be masking and vaccination requirements for certain spaces. I'm wondering what the public health indicators need to look like for you to consider recommending that masks are no longer required, and that vaccine mandates are no longer required in places like restaurants and bars.

>> Dr. Elliott: Thanks for the question, Luke. The question is about when we can go the next step, when can we go the next step in reducing public health measures? I talked a little bit just now about the indicators that I use when I'm looking at making recommendations to government. And I want to talk a little bit about the role of masks. Masks are a very valuable tool, and they're effective when there's community transmission. And this is because we're trying to vary, we need to take a lot of measures to reduce transmission in our community in order to reduce the number of vulnerable people who become infected. The more people get boosted, the more people are vaccinated, the less likely we are to transmit and then the more likely we are to remove our masks. We also are looking, of course, at places that are ahead of us in this Omicron wave. We've seen what has happened in Denmark, where they've removed public health measures, and are really struggling to get those case counts down. We're watching what's happening across Canada, where as the case counts come down, they're still seeing high hospitalizations, and a number of people -- a considerable number of people are still passing away from COVID-19. All of these things are things we're watching. It's really important now that people use their COVID sense. And those who are vulnerable, take the extra measures, above and beyond public health measures, where they feel it's necessary, and also seek testing and help when they need it. All of these things come into consideration, and it's no one indicator or one benchmark. It's all of them together that are important as we look to the next phase. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. Luke, do you have a second question?

>> Reporter: I do, and this is just a clarification, for Premier Silver, I'm just curious -- is the two-household limit still in place for bars and restaurants? I know the six person at a table is still in effect, but I'm wondering if two households is still in effect?

>> Premier Silver: Yeah, no, that was last week that we announced that that's no longer in effect.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Brianna at Canadian Press.

>> Reporter: Great, thanks so much. With the lifting of these new restrictions, I'm wondering, I guess either of you can answer this probably. But, with the state of emergency, what are the plans for that? And when do you think that'll probably be lifted?

I think that's a very similar question to the previous question to Dr. Elliott, because two out of those three measures are attached to the civil emergency measures. So, you know, we did expand that deadline, it's in 90-day chunks. So, we did extend the Civil Emergency Measure Act. But again, it's more of what Dr. Elliott said, we're looking locally for the stats and also internationally and nationally, to take a look at what other jurisdictions are going through. We are lucky in Canada versus other jurisdictions because Omicron really did hit east to west and, you know, looking at BC



as well, and where they are, these are all extremely important to indicate how we're going to move forward into the next round. And if we have three measures left, two of which are attached to the Civil Emergency Measures Act, when those two are being recommended to be gone, then you'd see the act, packaging itself up, the measures of that act, packaging themselves up in due time.

>> Renée: Thank you. Brianna, do you have a second question?

>> Reporter: Sure. Thank you so much. I'm just wondering if you could plainly say, you know, what measures are left to be lifted? And you said, hopefully by early March. I know in previous press conferences, you've also sort of, laid out a plan to lift them incrementally, is that still sort of the case? And if so, what do you foresee is the plan?

It's mostly in gathering sizes. You know, as we announced today, we're lifting the 25 people maximum, so now we're at 50% capacity for a lot of these gatherings, indoors and outdoors. So that is the main piece that's left. There are a couple of other considerations as well. But again, we're not gonna do so much speculating today, we are very impressed with where we are, thanks to Yukoners' diligence to get boosted, those numbers as well have increased quite a bit, which is really great to see. We were a little bit worried over December looking at numbers, but we've seen those numbers increase, which is great. It speaks to the diligence of Yukoners and the importance of community to most Yukoners, which is great. So, looking at those parameters, it's extremely important. And if we continue at this trend, then we will be in a situation in early March where we'll have three public health measures left to consider, which again, is boding very well for us, comparatively to the rest of Canada, I think.

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

>> Reporter: Yes, good morning. First question is for the Premier. You mentioned that one of the remaining things that will be lifted, and there'll be some time is the vaccine mandate. Just curious, is that going to be lifted at some point? Or is that a permanent measure? We've said from the beginning, Tim, that that's a temporary measure. You know, again, this is all based upon us living in a pandemic. Yeah.

>> Renée: Thank you. Do you have a second question, Tim?

>> Reporter: Yes, in that case, do you have any idea, or perhaps Dr. Elliott does, as to when that could be lifted? What requirements there would be?

>> Premier Silver: I think that would be pretty big news, if we had that we wouldn't be holding it from you, at this point. Yeah it's, it's really important that we, as a government employing, you know, close to 6,000 Yukoners, do our part to make sure that the public health of Yukoners is paramount in our decisions. And we will follow the recommendations and keep closely this conversation, it's something we talk about quite a bit. And, you know, both of us up here are extremely happy about where we are today, with the lifting of some public health measures. We both look forward to a time where we won't have to be updating on this every week, and that would include the ending of the Civil Emergency Measures Act, ending of all of the public health requirements, because that would mean that we're no longer in a pandemic, we're moving into an endemic. We've spoken about this quite a bit in our Forging Ahead document penned by both of us in August, which feels like a long time ago. But again, you know, how we then transition ourselves from policy writ large, to a situation where public health officers are very helpful in



making sure that individuals and businesses and communities are healthy. That's our end goal, and to get there as quickly as possible. It's tough, a lot of political pressure, for sure, but we'll maintain keeping a direction based on science. And I know we get criticized by saying that it's some kind of a cop out-- it's not. It's the best approach forward, we'll create the policies for sure, but our best friend and best advice over the last two years, not just in Yukon, but across this world, is science.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Jackie at CBC.

>> Reporter: Good morning. My first question is for Dr. Elliott, you had mentioned in your remarks that some people may feel anxiety about restrictions easing, and we still have a fairly high-test positivity rate, I was wondering if you could talk a little more about that balance, just in terms of the public trust and faith aspect of it, where there are always some people who are for or against easing restrictions?

>> Dr. Elliot: Thanks for this question, Jackie. I think this is actually a very important point, when we have restrictions that are in the law and enforceable, that is what I would consider the minimum that people can do. So similarly, if you think about driving, we have restrictions about certain ways that we drive, and there is more that people do that is not within the law, and this is similar to protecting ourselves and communities against COVID. If we think of some of the things that people do, I know people, for example, who have chosen to not mix as much as others, or socialize as much as others, even as restrictions get lifted. For some people, that's their own personal choice. For others, it's about their vulnerabilities. For some people, it's about being safe because they're going to visit or spend time with people who are vulnerable, maybe it's grandmas and grandpas or older relatives, or friends with chronic disease. These are all, you know, really using that COVID sense and being sensible. Each wave we go through, people learn how to do that a little better. The rapid tests, for example, are a good tool for people to learn about that. And really, ultimately, we need to get to a place where we don't need restrictions, but people know how to be and act. If the case counts are going up, they recognize it's not a time for a lot of mixing. If the case counts are coming down, that's a better time to start opening those doors and having those encounters. And at no time is it really reasonable to, for example, be sharing a water bottle or something like that. Because you're spreading -- the possibility for spreading disease is high in those circumstances. So, this is all about using COVID sense, and accepting that there are a range of people's comfort levels and a range of risks amongst our society, and that's the wonderful thing about living in a free society, is that we can make these choices. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. Jackie, do you have a second question?

>> Reporter: I do, I think this one's for the Premier, and it's actually about the Forging Ahead document. So, the document lists goals, pillars, and actions, but some are a little vague, for example, "continuing to monitor development on vaccines." I'm wondering, at any point, is there going to be an update on what actions or goals we have achieved, if some of these goals even have an end date? Or will this document be updated? As you mentioned, it was released last August.

>> Premier Silver: That's a really good question, you know, because again, what we knew in August compared to what we know here. So, it's a really good question. I think your specific example will continue as well, as variants continue. We know that there's not necessarily an



Omicron-specific booster right now, but there's one that works better than just the two shots right now. There's other medical technologies that are coming forward so, of course, Dr. Elliott is going to, with her team, be continuing to analyze and monitor those particular endeavors. That's as far as I talk about the science part of the medical side of this.

But yeah, it's our second guiding document, and if you go back to our first guiding document and you think about what we knew about Omic-- sorry, about COVID at that time, internationally, you know, right around the world. And then fast forward to August, we knew so much more, and now with Omicron of course, that's a whole other animal. So yeah. Our hope is that we get to a place very quickly where we're not going to have to have guiding documents because we're back to a new sense of normal. And I think that the Forging Ahead document really did speak well about setting, at least, the foundations of that, and now it's about conversations about well, what is the new normal? And, you know, I would add that the mental health summit that we just had, and opioid conversations, you know, all of these other conversations that we're having, the documentation and the activities that we're going to, and the policies that we create, from identifying need and identifying current issues. That's going to probably be more prevalent than us creating another guiding document necessarily for COVID, specifically. I, again, that's me speculating a bit. But, you know, there's lots of information to write down, whether or not it makes the pages of a new book that guides us through an endemic, we're not there yet.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Vincent at Radio-Canada.

[speaking French]

>> Andre: So, Dr. Elliott, could you please summarize in French why we are in a good place right now, and why you feel confident on easing the restrictions?

>> Doctor Elliot: Merci. Maintenant...

[continuing in French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Renée: Thank you. Une autre question, Vincent?

>> Reporter: Non c'est tout, merci.

>> Renée: Thank you. Have I missed any reporters on the line? Thank you. Given the time, that now concludes our COVID-19 update for today, there will be another update next week. Thank you again to our speakers, to the media in the room and on the phone lines, and everyone who tuned in to watch live over Facebook. Stay safe and stay kind.