

COVID-19 Facebook live update: Thursday, February 24, 2022

>> 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 Tiessen for providing our ASL interpretation. And a note to reporters – unfortunately today we do not have any French translation. Following the remarks from our speakers, we will go to the media on the phone lines for a round of questions. I'll call you by name and you'll each have two questions. Before we begin with our speakers, I would like to verify that everyone can hear us. Any reporters are having any issues, please email ecoinfo@yukon.ca. I will now hand it over to Premier Silver.

>> Thank you, Renée. And good morning, everyone. And thanks for joining us today. We're here on the Traditional Territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. I'd like to thank – also thank – Dr. Elliott for – and her team – for coming together for another COVID-19 update. Before we start, I do want to speak to the deeply disturbing events that are happening in Ukraine. The Russian invasion of Ukraine is completely unjustified and it is a blatant violation of international law. We condemn Russian aggression in the strongest possible terms. And we stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine during these extremely difficult times. Our thoughts are with the Ukrainian people, including those who are here in Yukon.

Now here in the Yukon, I am pleased to let Yukoners know that we will be moving ahead with our government's plan to ease public health measures. Thank you – each and every one of you who've played your part. Limiting your contacts, following public health guidelines – all in the endeavour to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We can't thank you enough. It's because of you and the power of the safe and effective vaccines that we are able to forge ahead. Last week we – last week, changes were made to increased gathering sizes, larger capacity limits were introduced, and bars and restaurants were allowed to return to normal operating hours.

Today, I want to let Yukoners know, with guidance from Dr. Elliott and her fantastic team, we are now on track to lift nearly all of the remaining COVID-19 public health measures on March the 4th.

The public health measures that will stay in place will be the requirement to wear masks in indoor public spaces, including schools and outdoor spaces where physical distancing cannot be properly maintained. We will also be keeping the vaccine requirement for public servants, volunteers and contractors, and the requirement to show proof of vaccination to access designated sites. So on March 4th – what it means is – capacity limits for designated settings will be removed, size limits for all gatherings will be lifted. Additionally, bars and restaurants can return to normal service without needing to keep tables six feet apart. Dancing and mingling between tables will be allowed as of March the 4th.

Now, we would not be in this position without the efforts of Yukoners, especially those who protected themselves and their fellow Yukoners by getting vaccinated. Now, I know that this is welcome news for many, it does not necessarily mean that we can throw our hands up and pretend that COVID-19 is over. It is not. We must remain cautious and diligent in practising the Safe 6 plus one. No matter how mild your symptoms may be – if you're sick – it's absolutely crucial that you stay home and stay away from others.

We know all too well that a spike in a community, you know, could happen easily and transmission can get out of control very quickly. This is particularly important as we head into the weekend. It is the long weekend in February, which means it's Rendezvous, which is fantastic. I hope everyone who is planning this event – well I want to thank all the planners for one, but everybody who is planning to take part in the events, I want them to have a fantastic time. It's so wonderful to see festivals returning. And we can look forward to the spring, and the summer, and hopefully more to come. Check out the snow sculptures, the craft show the talented, talented Yukon performers,

and have fun. We all need this entertaining energy in our lives. And I wish all Yukoners a very happy Rendezvous. But I must urge you all, you know, please, keep on being responsible. You know, take precautions. If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, please, you know, stay at home. It's especially important not to travel between communities if you're not feeling well – as well. Please remember that vaccines are still available, including the booster shots. And again, I strongly encourage all Yukoners to get vaccinated. Getting a booster is especially important to keeping your immunity strong and preventing severe illness if you do contract COVID-19. You can find information about appointments online at Yukon.ca/thisisourshot.

There are also rapid tests available in all Yukon communities. You can – sorry – these can help you make informed choices as you think about gathering with people and attending events. Rendezvous does have virtual activities as well this year, so you can still take part in that way as well. And again, thank you to all Yukoners for helping your friends, and your families, and your neighbours through the all the trials of COVID-19 and the latest challenges that Omicron presented. We are getting through this. And we're getting through this thanks to our connections and our abilities to show kindness, whether that is in big ways or in small ways. And I'm so very, very proud of the territory.

And I take a look in context to the rest of Canada and the world – we absolutely live in the best place. So keep it up. It's the best place because of you and your sense of community. As always, we will continue to monitor the situation in the coming months and weeks together with Dr. Elliott and her team. And we will keep Yukoners updated on any changes as we move forward. So with that, I'll say thank you once again and pass it off to Dr. Elliott.

>> Thank you Premier Silver. Good morning, everyone. Dänch'ea [speaking language]. With the situation in the Ukraine, with the return of order and safety in Ottawa... it's a good time to remind ourselves that we all have a role to play by using our kindness and

our respect for each other – in our words and in our actions – to keep our communities peaceful and healthy.

I'm here to talk a little bit, today, about the COVID-19 situation update. The trends do continue to move in the right direction with our case counts continuing to fall and the end of all the long-term care outbreaks in the territory. I really want to take a moment to thank the staff in long-term care and Yukon Communicable Disease Control. And today, a special shout-out to our staff in the labs who don't often get that shout-out that's really warranted. In their work to contain the spread, to follow safety protocols and in long-term care to keep the residents safe – thank you for your outstanding care. And with the long weekend ahead of us, I want to remind everyone that there's still a considerable amount of COVID-19 transmission in the territory. And this is while we're asking that you do what you can and what you need to do now, and especially through this long weekend ahead.

As you celebrate Rendezvous and the joy of the days getting longer in the winter here in Yukon, please take a moment to assess your risk and consider what type of activity you will engage in. If you're sick, even a little bit sick, and even if your rapid antigen test is negative – please stay home and away from others. Follow the public health measures – the Safe 6, wear your mask, wash your hands. And if you're considering travelling to communities or between communities or cities, check with the First Nations government community websites to ensure that you're welcome where you're going.

Here's what's happening around the territory today. There are currently 47 active cases in the territory and the number of new cases is eight. The average daily case count is 10 for the past seven days, and the seven day running positivity is coming down and it's now 23 per cent. Our most recent reports show 123 hospitalizations that are due to COVID-19 and a total of 20 deaths since the beginning of this pandemic.

Over the course of the pandemic, there have been a total of 3,412 confirmed Yukon cases. And 3,351 case people have recovered from COVID-19. Going to turn briefly to testing. We have a strong testing system. And we implemented early and proactively the shift in our testing guidance. And this has meant that we've been able to offer testing to all people who require it throughout this Omicron wave.

Our testing demand has decreased and, therefore, beginning on February 28th, the hours of operation are changing. CTAC [COVID-19 Testing and Assessment Centre] will be open from Monday to Friday. CTAC is the testing centre in Whitehorse. It will be open Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 4 a.m. to 4 p.m., and they will close between 12 and 12:30 p.m. This testing centre in Whitehorse will be closed on the weekends. If you are eligible for a lab-based PCR, you can book a test online at Yukon.ca. We are also continuing to distribute rapid antigen tests and these are available to pick up in the usual locations. Check Yukon.ca for that information.

Assessing your risks. As we move into this time of more choice and more opportunity to take advantage of all the ways that we can stay healthy and well. It's important also to learn how to assess our risk. We've all done this, and I just want to talk a little bit more about this today. As people begin to gather in larger groups, some may still be unsure whether it's safe to do so. So before gathering, it's important to consider the current case activity in the territory and five key factors: Your own vaccination status and that of the people who are coming. The number of people. The type of space and the ventilation in that space you're going to be in. The time and the place.

You might ask yourself things like: are my vaccinations up to date? How many people will I be interacting with – especially people who I don't normally interact with. Will my interactions include close contact with these people? How long will I spend in close contact? And will it be inside or outside? Will there be a lot of space and air in the room or will it be in close quarters?

Please keep in mind that right now, personal gathering limits are 10 people inside and 25 people outside. And, as the Premier has mentioned, this is changing on March 4th. Organized gathering limits are 50 per cent of the venue capacity indoors – with masking – and limited to 50 people outside, with masking, when physical distancing can't be met.

It's also good to consider whether the people you're going with will be in higher risk groups. Who do you need to look out for while you're out and about? Is there somebody who's pregnant? Is there somebody who has underlying health conditions? Are there people who haven't yet had the chance or the choice to be vaccinated? How active are the cases in your community? Depending on these answers to these questions, you'll be able to gauge whether your risk is higher, or lower or medium and take the measures that you need to take. An example of a low-risk setting could be an indoor gathering with a small circle of friends or family, people who you are often in close contact with. Going for a walk outside with a friend. Again, something that is a lower risk scenario. A higher risk scenario is a group activity in an indoor closed space where you'll be there for a prolonged period. If you're shouting, or singing or exercising with lots of breathing – these also increase the risks.

Being able to distinguish between higher and lower COVID-19 risk situations will help you make good decisions. More information and a risk assessment tool can now be found [at] Yukon.ca/Assess-your-risk. Managing your symptoms. I want to talk a little bit now about how to manage your symptoms if you get COVID-19. Most people – many people when they get COVID-19 will take the opportunity to test themselves with a rapid test or if eligible get a PCR test. Many other people know that they've been in close contact or that they've been exposed somehow and they know they don't need a test, but they have those symptoms that indicate they have COVID-19. Most people can safely manage their symptoms at home by drinking plenty of fluids, whether that's teas, or water, or other fluids – getting some rest.

If you have a cough or sore throat, sometimes using humid air can help with that. You can also use medicines that are available at the pharmacy without a prescription, such as acetaminophen, otherwise known as Tylenol or ibuprofen, known as Advil or Motrin, to help with some of these symptoms. If your symptoms worsen or if you do not improve after the first five or six days or the week, it's worth calling 811, your family doctor or an urgent or primary care centre so they can determine if you need to be assessed again.

811 is a great free resource and it's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 811. And there are trained professionals available there who can help you assess your current level of risk. Now, of course, if you find it hard to breathe, if you have chest pain, you can't drink anything or you feel very sick or confused, you have a fever that goes on over a week, or a young child just seems – something seems not right with your child and you just have that feeling, then please do get assessed. If it's for these, some more severe symptoms, go to the emergency department or call 911. Somebody at the Community Health Centre or the Emergency Department will be able to assess you. These are important, because while COVID-19 is a mild illness for many people, for some, it can be very severe.

I want to take a moment, also, to talk about vaccines. We're now very pleased to offer vaccines for children. This safe and effective vaccine has been available for children over five here in Yukon since the beginning of December. And I also understand that some parents may feel hesitant about vaccinating their children. My own children have been vaccinated this week and I can tell you that they did have some mild reactions – a little bit of soreness in the arm, feeling a little bit tired. And a little bit of ibuprofen or Motrin can help these types of symptoms. I'm reassured to know that they are protected. And when we travel this summer or later this spring, or when they go to school and other activities – they're protected and less likely to get COVID-19. I also want to tell you about the Canadian Pediatric Society that recently issued an updated

position statement that confirms once again that these vaccines are safe and effective and recommended for all children ages five and up.

The vaccine is the very best way to develop immunity and provide better, longer lasting protection against current variants and future variants of the virus. It also helps prevent children from getting severely ill. Vaccinating a child can be important not just for the health of the child and the family but also the health of your friends and your neighbours, the communities around you, the others in school and activities. It also helps support their mental wellness by keeping them healthy enough to participate in school, and sports and other recreational activities. So they don't need to miss those precious things that keep them healthy and well – their education and their community.

Vaccine appointments are available and can be booked online at Yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot or by calling 1-877-374-0425. The clinic in Whitehorse is taking some walk in appointments, as well, and I found they're very convenient in terms of fitting around the other activities that families have in their lives. So, as I close today, I want to thank you, again, for your continued patience and your diligence, for toughing it out through this wave – which was a wave for us in Yukon on top of another wave and they came very close together, which resulted in a long period where we had to be cautious.

And as we continue into this next time, into Rendezvous weekend, remember that there's still a short period of caution as things continue to come down and we're looking forward to the lifting of measures – and very excited in about that. I hope you will get out and take in the snow carving, the fashion shows, the fiddling, of course, and the can-can dancing. And be safe and respect each other around different judgments. Everybody's going to make their own decisions about how they feel safe and the extra things they want to do along the way. So this is a time, also, to practise our respect and our kind words. If you're thinking about travelling within the territory this weekend, please check with the Council of Yukon First Nations website and see if there are any advisories in place.

We all have a role to play and thank you for playing it, and let's continue – as we reduce the spread of this disease and keep our communities healthy. You can help by continuing to follow the public health measures this weekend. Wash your hands frequently. Assess your risk and take steps that are lower risk where you can. Keep your distance. Wear your mask. And get vaccinated or your booster – if it's time. Shāw nithā. Māhsi' cho. Gunalchîsh. Merci. And thank you.

>> Thank you, Dr. Elliott, and thank you, Premier Silver. 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 now go to the lines and start with Luke at CKRW.

>> Hi. This is a question for Dr. Elliott. I know that there – I know earlier you said – earlier this week you said that there weren't any more active COVID-19 outbreaks going on, especially in – especially as the last long term care outbreak was lifted. I know there's been some activity in the Little Salmon Carmacks area, and I was just wondering if you maybe had an update on that. I know they canceled some of their events this week. And I'm wondering, kind of, what the severity of the situation is there with some of their cases?

>> Yeah. Thanks for the question, Luke. I think what we're seeing overall in the territory is – the cases – and this is not an uncommon pattern, actually, with other waves that we've had. And that's that we often will see a rise and a decreasing in cases in Whitehorse that is a little bit ahead of the same pattern in the communities. At this point, we are seeing the activity in the cases in the communities decreasing. And we are also respecting communities and decisions of local schools etcetera to take measures beyond what we would recommend. And so, you know, in various communities, there have been cases, and all those cases are available online. When we have a situation in a particular community, we do a deeper dive and look more closely as well as getting some information from the community on the ground to learn more about what is happening there. At this point, there are no outbreaks in communities

that have been called by our team, and we're continuing to monitor the situation.

Thanks.

>> Thank you. Do you have a second question, Luke?

>> I do. I'm just wondering now, obviously, with pretty much all of the public health measures being lifted except for masks and vaccine mandates in certain areas – and just wondering if maybe those are gonna be more of a long term – a long term measures that are in place, and maybe we're looking at later in the spring, when those might be lifted as opposed to a few weeks, the way these restrictions have sort of been lifted in phases.

>> Yeah. We, did have a quick COVID update before we came here with all of our, all of our teams, deputy ministers and ministers. And it was a Herculean effort to get us to where we are right now with the March 4th. And so we are turning our attention now to the final three that are left and discussions are happening there. And, you know, with our close proximity, as well, to British Columbia, watching that region is important. But more importantly, here is keeping people safe. So conversations of that are gonna be continuing on this week and into next week. But we don't have anything more to tell you right now about those three, other than I'm very excited that we get to a place where there's only three public health measures left. And we're in a place now where, you know, we've managed to weather a storm, and we've managed to reduce the harm to yukoners, and now we're in a place where folks are gonna be able to mingle and dance again – so that's great.

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

>> Good morning. My first question could go to, I think, either the Premier or Dr. Elliott. But I'm wondering about hospital and community health center resources. We saw, for example, the temporary reduction of services in Carcross and Teslin, for a bit there. And I'm just wondering what's going on staffing wise, when it comes to health care workers, particularly in the communities outside of Whitehorse.

>> Yeah, I could start – I'm not sure if Dr. Elliott has anything else to add to this. But, you know, we did definitely did see with increased rapid testing, and also increased infections of Omicron, a lot of strain on a lot of different systems right across the Yukon. You know, as we watch curves being planked, as far as epidemiology, we are also seeing a return to some semblance of normal, when it comes to our human resources as well. So these waves, they're not necessarily aligned directly on top of each other, but we are starting to see not only, you know, folks being tested, folks, you know, getting COVID and returning – if they're vaccinated – usually very quickly to the workforce. But we're also now seeing, you know, a lot of different businesses, including allied health professionals, and health care centers, you know, really [??], you know, being able to accommodate by having to go through so many different waves right now and being able to do more with less, and I'm humbled with the the ability of our healthcare professionals to work in such extreme situations. I think that we've kind of weathered the bigger part of that storm, as far as the effects of having to isolate or having to be tested on our health care professionals. So I hope Dr. Elliottt agrees with me on that, but time will tell as well.

>> Yeah, no, thanks for the question, Jackie. It's a really important point. I think, you know, if you look across the country and around the world, health care workers have been through a lot in the last two years. And when I say health care workers, I mean, the people we generally think of on the frontlines – the family doctors and the doctors and nurses in hospitals and acute care. I also mean, the nurses many people have talked to you on the phone from Yukon Communicable Disease Control and the nurses in our community health centers, community nursing. I – these these groups, YCDC has

been responding straight for two years. Weekends, is [Felice??], you know, there's a – there's full time people working weekends every weekend and has been for years – since the beginning of the pandemic. And I want to put a shout-out to that group as well. Their – the rollout of rapid testing was labor intensive and successful and we can thank our testing team for that, as well as the standing up of the drive-through in November when we needed to do that. And, you know, we've managed through all of that and also the the measures we've all followed. We've managed to protect our hospital staff who have been busy and they've adopted protocols and procedures. And they also have had a burden in terms of the visits to emerge and a few sick patients. I would be – behoove me to talk to – not to talk about the long-term care staff and the exemplary work in infection prevention and control in our long-term care facilities as well as responding and changing protocols constantly. So it's not surprising that the workforce is tired. And I think this is a time when we need to really take care of people and say our thanks in little and big ways – it goes a long way. And, you know, across the country, there are a lot of burnout amongst healthcare workers. And this is a time to protect, and thank, and be grateful for the health care workers we have here in Yukon. Thank you.

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

>> I do. I think this one's primarily for Dr. Elliott. But Dr. Elliott, you had mentioned hearing about some vaccine hesitancy amongst parents. I'm wondering kind of what sort of concerns you're hearing – how common these concerns are. And, just in terms of vaccinations/boosters, is it still kind of worth this push to try and change minds, like two years into the pandemic, when we've been inundated with suggestions to get vaccinated? And we're still seeing this hesitancy amongst some people.

>> Yeah. Thanks, Jackie. That's a really thoughtful question. You know, if we look at our pediatric – our child vaccine rates at 60%, first dose. It's actually – it's pretty good when

you look across the country, and it's not far off what we would have expected. I myself know how important vaccines are for children's health, to keep them in school so they're not taking a week off sick or isolating, etcetera. And also for the health of families, many families, in fact, I can't think of a family I know well that doesn't have some vulnerable people as part of that family. And so protecting the families. However, I also respect the decisions that parents are making. And I think – I think it's not a matter of pushing people, it's a matter of encouraging and offering information, meeting people where they're at, listening to concerns, and continuing to work together to offer these opportunities for those conversations, etcetera. I am a parent myself. I appreciate that decision making for a child is different than decision making for yourself. And that, you know, you have an obligation to protect that child. And so this is one way to protect children. And, I think it's, you know, I think any parent wants what's best for their child, and it behooves them really to get information from a variety of sources, to look at some trusted sources, to talk to their pharmacist, talk to their family doctors, and the people around them who can help them with these decisions. I – I'm very grateful that our vaccination rate is reasonable amongst children. I'm even more excited about our vaccination rate amongst youth and pleased to see many youth are now getting their boosters. This is very important as we move into the spring into times of mingling, such as grad, that youth are boosted. And, as we move into the fall, I think it'll be very important, again, for children and youth to have their boosters and their first and second dose because the fall does look like it will be a respiratory season of significance. And we want to keep people in school. You know, there's been two years now I've interrupted school, and I think looking to next year, we really do think it's important to maintain schools and also to keep our society as healthy and as normal – new normal as possible. Thanks.

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

>> Yes, good morning. My first question would be for either the Premier or the doctor. Just wondering what the rationale for keeping those final three health restrictions on while everything else has been dropped?

>> I can start, yeah.

>> Sure

>> Thanks for this question, Tim. Yeah, which you know, why keep certain health measures and not others? So let's look at the ones that we're going to be keeping after March 4th. So the first thing I want to remind everybody is that this announcement is now so people can prepare for March 4. But we're still in February and we need to remember that. The second is I'll talk a little bit about the measures. So masks. Masks are a very effective way of reducing transmission when people are out and about in mixing. Here in Yukon, we've had our – all of our essential services and most of our non-essential services open throughout all of the waves that we've experienced. And this is in part because people are spreading themselves out and wearing their masks. The masks trap those respiratory droplets and they can reduce transmission by – estimates are, you know, around 30% in a population. When you have a lot of cases that's significant because that 30% doubles every three to four days with Omicron. So that's a very significant number. However, we use the law, or mandates, when we need something to happen to break transmission. And we will – I will recommend to remove the mandate and move to recommendations as soon as possible. The other two measures have to do with vaccination and promoting vaccination. And as we know, vaccination is a safe and effective way to keep ourselves healthy and safe. Without vaccination, the delta wave would have been extremely severe here in Yukon, because of the severity of the Delta variant and the Omicron wave as well, because of the transmissibility, so the number of people who get infected. And this is borne out in the severe cases that we've seen, and the vaccination rates in those cases, who have been

hospitalized and who have passed away. It also is something that, you know, many vulnerable people when they go to get to – to participate in the activities of living, are very reassured to know that people around them are vaccinated. And so this is also a way to keep our communities health and safe – -healthy and safe for our vulnerable people, and that's a very important part of our response. So, these are the reasons that these these measures are in place. We are looking at them closely. We are evaluating continuously. And I will recommend to lift them as soon as is feasible. Again, many people will still choose to wear masks, and I think it behooves us all to respect those choices. And, similarly, many of us will be vaccinated, regardless of any rules or mandates. Thank you.

>> Just to add that, you know, it really is all about the numbers. You know, we mentioned last week, you know, Omicron really kind of hit the country from east to west... We had the the privilege, in a way, of being able to analyze other jurisdictions before things happened here. We've put measures up accordingly. And, you know, all across the nation, as we were, you know, bracing for Omicron, and hearing about it and other jurisdictions about how – how easy it is to transmit. You know, the comments that we were making here was, most people will get Omicron, like, most people will get COVID at some point. And, you know, expanding those cases, so that they don't all happen at once, was always the goal. I think we were very successful in that. You know, I still have friends as of today, calling me that – 'cause they have COVID. You know, there's there's still people getting COVID. We still need to analyze as we lift public health measures, which we have been doing every week, for the last three weeks. Then the data comes in to see if there's any spikes in cases or in testing – those types of things. We were very pleased with the tests, or sorry, with the statistical analysis, so far, because of the lifting of these measures. But these things take time. And if we do that all at once, there's still a risk. So I'm very pleased that we are where we are now, and that as of March 4th there's only three measures left when it comes to the pandemic. We've heard this week, you know, California lifting to an endemic status, you know, so we're starting to see right across North America, really positive results. So



it's about the public health stress, also analyzing the the measures being taken out. And we're in a good place right now. And I hope to see that trend continuing very quickly.

>> Thank you. Tim, do you have a second question?

>> I do. And sort of a continuation of the first one. With this being – or going to go down to only three health restrictions, what's the rationale for keeping the state of emergency on? After all, the federal government just released its Emergencies Act yesterday, and several of the other jurisdictions in Canada are doing things. So why do we still need the state of emergency?

>> So two of those three measures are based upon enforcement. That's the simple answer to that question. I think Canada's move for their Emergency Act was more about civil unrest as opposed to COVID and medical restrictions, so I don't think that those two things are necessarily related. But, you know, two of our measures right now for the enforcement piece are based upon the Civil Emergency Measure Act. Like I said earlier, though, Tim, we are, as a government, meeting and discussing next moves and next, you know, the spring and into the summer, and we should all be very encouraged by today's announcement of lifting of public health measures of March 4th as a very good indication that that Yukoners have come together as a community, they've gotten vaccinated, they've got boosted and we're in the place that we're in right now because of their actions. And we've been saying here since the get-go, we, you know, nobody wants to see the lifting of the provisions more than the Chief Medical Office and her team and myself as well. And we're going to continue to do it in a measured, calculated way to to ensure that we keep Yukoners as safe as possible.

>> Thank you. We'll now move to Lauren at Radio Canada. Hello, Lauren? I'll circle back at the end. We'll now move to Jim at Yukon News.

>> My questions been answered. Thanks.

>> Thank you. I'll try one more time – Lauren at Radio Canada

>> Uh, Lauren is – seems to be asking questions through the chat feature on Zoom. I don't know if you're able to see them there.

>> I am not, unfortunately, but I will look into those...one second. Thank you. The question from Lauren is: can Dr. Elliott please repeat in French why we are keeping the mask/vaccine mandate for public servants, proof of vaccination, longer than the other measures.

>> [speaking French]

>> Thank you. Lauren, if you have a second question, type it into the chat now. In the meantime, we'll circle back for one final question. Luke at CKRW.

>> Luke at CKRW – any final questions? All right, we'll go now to Jackie at CBC. Any final question, Jackie?

>> Yeah. I was actually hoping if the Premier had anything else to say to Ukrainian Yukoners right now.

>> Yeah. Thanks, Jackie, I appreciate that. As I said in my opening comments, you know, we absolutely condemn the Russian aggressions in the strongest ways possible. And we definitely stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. You know, the world is turning their attention to this area with more focus than we've seen since World War Two. You know, it's – we're living in extremely interesting times, that's for sure. As far as a territorial government, you know, we have been in contact with some families that live in Yukon, that run amazing businesses in Yukon, who have families – in back home in Ukraine. And so we've been working with some of those families. We have – earlier this month we temporarily waived measures to streamline the Yukon Nominee Program, for example. This would allow Yukon employers to quickly hire those that are outside the country, including Ukraine. And we know that there's some some families looking into that. We're also working very closely with MP Hanley, with the federal government when it comes to immigration. Continue to work – with our partners across the country, really, to support the people of Ukraine. Of course, these are early days from this aggression. We're hearing stories from the CBC, this morning, just about how shocked I think people were – as much as people were preparing to see this action happen so quickly and blatantly did take some people from by surprise. But, again, since some of the first amassing of troops on the borders, we've been working with some families here in Yukon.

>> Thank you, Tim at the Whitehorse Star, any final question? Tim, one more time? All right. Oh, sorry.

>> Oh, there we are. Just one more question. This could be either for the Premier or Dr. Elliott. Just wondering if you know, offhand, how much money has been spent on medivacing people out to be treated for COVID.

>> Yeah, that'd be a really difficult question to answer right now, Tim, just because the way that that's billed, we really are dependent upon those jurisdictions in which folks

are medicated out to, so current up to date numbers are hard to get. But what we could do is try to provide you that information with a callback.

>> Thank you. And as there are no final questions, I understand, from Lauren, and Jim at Yukon News had no questions – that now concludes our COVID-19 update for today. There will be another update next week. Thank you again to our speakers and to all of the media and everyone listening on Facebook. Stay safe, stay positive, and stay kind.