

COVID-19 Facebook live update: July 28, 2021

[Please Stand By]

>> Pat: Our sign language interpretation is provided by Mary Tiessen and our French language translation by Andre.

We will go to the phone line for questions after our speakers and will call you by name and you will each have two questions.

Premier Silver?

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

It's good to be here with Doctor Hanley and with Mary and the team.

Last week our minister announced a plan to lift restrictions that are in place as of August 4th based on new recommendations and today Doctor Hanley and I are here to explain the current situation in more detail.

I know the plan to lift restrictions has caused excitement and concern as well as confusion.

I want to thank you for tuning into here the most accurate and up to date information about the current situation.

We have been living and dealing with COVID-19 since March of 2020 and a lot has changed and you all know that.

Aside from the fact a highly contagious and dangerous virus was quickly spreading around the world not much was known.

Nearly 16 months ago to the day we declared a state of emergency in response to the global pandemic.

This was done so the government could deploy resources to protect Yukoners and limit the spread of COVID-19 in the territory.

It gave us tools to ensure we could respond quickly and effectively support Yukoners.

Our number 1 priority has always been to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

From the outset our response has been guided by the recommendation of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Doctor Hanley and his team have done the difficult and incredibly important work of researching the growth and growing body of information, of COVID-19 variants following the epidemiological data across the country and around the world and identifying the risk to Yukoners of this new virus.

The pandemic has been and continues to be a dynamic situation and the associated risks have changed over time.

Our government's response has adapted to address the risks and to protect the health and safety of the territory.

Early in the pandemic the greatest risk we faced as a territory was the importation of COVID-19.

To address this, we introduced border control measures to control the spread of COVID-19 in the Yukon.

Later the transmit stability of COVID-19 was better understood and we introduced measures to limit the spread of COVID-19 within the territory.

This included sizes of social and public gatherings as well as restrictions on capacity up bars and restaurants and the use of masks in indoor public spaces.

Fees were quite significant measures because they limited the ability of individuals to exercise their rights and freedoms that we enjoy as Canadians that are enshrined in the charter of rights and freedoms.

They were introduced based upon recommendations from Doctor Hanley and his team and were justified to protect the health and safety of Yukoners.

They have been enter goal in limiting the spread of COVID-19.

The past 16 months have been extraordinary times and they have called for extraordinary measures to protect the public.

We are bound by the charter and all of our actions and we also have the duty to protect the health and safety of Yukoners and we continue to take this duty extremely seriously.

We need to strike a balance between individual rights and public safety.

When the risk to public health increases and requires extraordinary measures as it has in this pandemic we have endeavoured to infringe on the rights, the individual rights in the least intrusive way.

We recognize these restrictions have negative impacts to mental health and to well-being.

By the end of 2020 as a result of unprecedented coordination and international efforts and resources we learned that vaccines for

COVID-19 had been developed in the news was a light on the horizon after months of darkness and anxiety and extremely challenging times.

It provided a new tool to fight COVID-19.

A much more powerful tool than we have.

We worked together with our partners across the country and across the territory but with our federal counterparts as well to ensure we had priority access to those vaccines and we negotiated very hard to make sure rural remote and indigenous communities had access to vaccines first.

In the first days of 2021 we launched an aggressive vaccine rollout beginning with the most vulnerable communities Watson Lake and Beaver Creek, others.

Big shout out to team Balto and team Togo, team Fox.

Along with all the public servants that joined in the vaccination rollout.

We undertook the greatest vaccine campaign in Yukon history and it was extremely successful because of Yukoners and what you've done.

As of Monday 80% of Yukoners, adults, are fully vaccinated.

We inferred with federal partners to get access for all youth 12 and up as soon as they were available.

Now more than 60% of Yukoners 12 to 17 are fully vaccinated which is phenomenal.

If there's one thing we've learned over the past 16 months fighting

this virus it's that getting vaccinated is absolutely the best way to protect yourself against COVID and it significantly reducing your chance of getting COVID-19 and suffering serious medical complications or even death.

And I want to thank the Yukoners that have recently shared their stories about the devastating health impacts of catching COVID-19 and how it has helped them to overcome their vaccine hesitancy and urge others to take the shot.

The vaccine provides much greater protection than border control and masks and physical distancing.

And the vaccine saves lives.

And it helps protect ourselves and the rest of the community.

The vaccine has completely change the landscape when it comes to COVID-19.

As Doctor Hanley will tell you the use of vaccines across the country and around the world has significantly change the risk associated with COVID-19.

As vaccine rates have increased throughout Canada, the case counts have gone down.

The border measures are no longer justified based on the current risk.

To put it another way that tool is no longer appropriate to the task we face in the current phase of this pandemic.

As of August fourth our government mould no longer be collecting declarations or forms from incoming travellers.

Travellers will no longer be required to stop at the border station in Watson Lake or at junction 37.

And those arriving at the Whitehorse airport will no longer be met with Cima enforcement officers.

The 24-hour limit for those transitioning through the territory will also come to an end.

I'd like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who has played a role in the border measures throughout the pandemic.

Most of the people at that border have other jobs.

We had to adapt many times throughout the pandemic and work very closely with our partners in other levels of government, to the people who have coordinated various border controls to the people on the ground at the border stations and at the airport providing information to travellers and receiving declaration forms, I thank you very much.

This monumental effort has been enter goal to our government's response to COVID-19 and to keeping Yukoners safe.

Those on the helpline as well, thank you.

Well over 30,000 people have transited through our territory without contributing to our case count.

It's a very important statistic.

The mandatory use of masks in indoor public spaces and the restrictions on bars and restaurants are tools that are no longer needed based upon the current situation.

Once we receive these new recommendations we took action right away.

As I've said, we've endeavoured to protect public health by impacting individual rights in the least intrusive way.

Last spring and summer as new case grew -- new case counts grew, there is no vaccines inside.

That meant introducing further restrictions.

And now with eight out of ten Yukoners fully vaccinated and case counts decreasing their restrictions as I've said before are no longer justified and we have a responsibility to lift them.

We're announcing the plan too weeks ahead of time from the date because we also know this is a big change and people need time to prepare and adapt.

Doctor Hanley will have more to say with what they mean for the bars and restaurants but I want to be clear that we are not hanging up our gloves and walking away as though a job is done, we are transitioning and we recognize that we are not out of this pandemic yet.

Far from it.

Even though we are getting closer and every dose of vaccine.

The spread is occurring there, Doctor Hanley has made it clear there are still risk associated with large God-fearing so we are keeping that tool in place to address that risk.

But win that goes away, we will be reconsidering the use of that tool and our priority romance protecting the health and safety of Yukoners and supporting them through their extremely challenging times.

We are adjusting our approach and using the approach, the appropriate tool to deal with the current level of risk that we face.

We have one of the highest vaccination rates in the world and that means we are entering a new stage in the pandemic.

And we are dealing with a new paradigm and we continue to follow the recommendations and act based on the best scientific information and evidence available and I understand there are certain concerns about this move but we are still actively managing the COVID-19 situation and have plenty of tools.

My colleagues and I have been having lots of conversations around the territory with leaders and first Nations chiefs and other community leaders and we are listening closely to the people of Kwanlin Dün -- -- sorry Mary, Ross River.

I hear your concerns.

Our government is here and we are committed to working collaboratively to keep you all safe and keep all Yukoners safe.

We share concerns about the impact of COVID-19 and we have support workers working seven days a week to support abominable individuals that need to self-isolate.

With social connections and referrals to other services and support with accessing personal items and getting help is needed.

People work directly with each individual that needs to self-isolate and ensure necessary support, for support workers and registered nurses and outreach licensed practical nurses and also physicians.

This includes accommodating those that are self-isolating and need withdrawal support.

It also includes providing nicotine and cannabis or alcohol as required in consultation with medical experts.

We continue to work with partners to adapt and ensure supports are available when and where they are needed.

These comprehensive supports are some of the tools that we continue to use.

We are also deploying rapid response teams to enhance testing to contain the spread of COVID-19.

This is a relatively recent tool we have deployed and it's very successful.

A team that's in Watson Lake and they have easy access to testing, if they test positive when I need to self isolate.

We have also expanded a vaccine rollout.

The new Minister of health informed me this week all Yukoners born in 2,009 even if they have not yet turned 12 are now eligible for the Pfizer vaccine.

Mobile teams are also returning to communities to run vaccine clinics for first and second doses for all eligible people born in 2,009 or earlier.

The clinic is in Haines Junction today and Watson Lake tomorrow, and Whitehorse the clinic is open to all ages from 9:00 AM talk to a 4:30 PM and on Wednesday from 12:00 PM taught us 7:00 PM providing access in the evenings.

At all of these clinics we encourage folks to book appointments so we can plan ahead and limit the potential for wasted vaccine.

But walk-ins are accepted in all clinics.

If you find information and book an appointment online you do so at YUKON.ca.

I am told the website is currently down but it should be running again very, very soon.

We have enough vaccines for everyone that wants one and we are fortunate to be in that situation.

We all need to keep that in mind.

The past 16 months have been challenging.

They been life-changing.

The vaccines, they are the way out of this pandemic.

That's basically the best tool we have.

The vaccines are here, please step up and take your shot.

Encourage your friends or family members to do the same.

Testing and rapid response teams, clinical support networks and social support workers, expanded vaccine access are some of the tools we are using as part of the new paradigm.

We also need to work together and support each other to feel safe and comfortable in this new paradigm.

Since we've announced our plan to lift some of the restriction several communities and organizations have announced they will continue to require the use of masks and other safety measures after August 4th as a precaution which is very good to hear.

It's very important to adjust to this new paradigm to take the steps necessary to ensure we all feel safe and healthy and protected.

Just because masks will no longer be required after August 4th it doesn't mean you were not allowed to wear them.

It only means we can't enforce the use of masks through tickets and fines anymore.

Nevertheless we strongly encourage you to respect businesses and organizations and communities that continue to request you to wear your mask.

We continue to ask those organize agents to remember the advice and recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and his team.

It's not unlike when Doctor Hanley no longer recommended avoiding nonnecessary travel to communities.

It's important to travel respectfully and follow the rules in place.

But it's also important we practice the safe six.

We each have a role to play in keeping the territory safe because our individual decisions impact the health of everyone.

That's always been the case even before the pandemic and it will remain the case once COVID-19 becomes as common as the flu.

We still need to look after each other and be kind and patient.

We are all in this together and we will get through this together.

This virus has pulled us together as a community.

Our vaccine rates are growing and our case counsellor decreasing and we are moving in the right direction and we need to keep going.

I know a lot of families are thinking about the next month.

Doctor Hanley and his team are working diligently with the Department of Education to plan for the upcoming school year with more information at next week's update.

Thank you very much.

We appreciate your time today.

>> Pat: Doctor Hanley?

>> Thank you premier silver and good morning everyone.

Last week was another eventful one in our long journey as the lifting of measures for self-isolation, the end to mandatory masking and changes to bar and restaurant rules were announced.

News quickly became talk of the town.

Reactions were mixed and I know that many particularly amongst first Nations and communities felt the rug was being pulled out from underneath the careful structure of safety we have built over the last 16 months.

So today Michael is to provide further clarification to these announcements and to present what our new package of protections will look like as we move past the emergency phase and into a new paradigm of long term living with COVID-19.

Now for our status of cases as of the end of yesterday there was 89 active cases in the territory.

426 people have recovered since this wave began.

Of course four Yukoners have died since the wave began and six overall since the onset of the pandemic.

As of yesterday 52 people have been hospitalized of whom 43 were unvaccinated or were partially vaccinated.

14 people have been meta- fact out of territory of whom 11 were unvaccinated.

Most of these patients are still presently in hospital care down south.

In our situation 399 of our cases as of yesterday are those who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

75 of the cases, 14%, fully vaccinated.

If we look at adults 19% or one fifth about all cases are fully vaccinated.

Most of these individuals have had mild's disease although some with more underlying disease have suffered more illness or have been sick with COVID as well as coexisting medical conditions.

We are seeing clusters in the Watson Lake area as well in these cases largely consist of three larger household clusters.

A number of contacts are in self isolation and we expect to see more cases here.

These clusters have pushed our case counts higher with 28 active cases in Watson Lake at last count.

As the premier mentioned in response to this situation we deployed a rapid response team made up of testers and supporting staff including cleaning and Edmonton and staff.

In order to keep those clusters under control as well as ongoing contact and case management the testing team will return to Watson Lake and details will be posted in the community and on YUKON.ca.

These cases are showing us how this virus is seeking out susceptible hosts.

Those who were unvaccinated.

Please be cautious and assess your risk if you cannot or choose not to be vaccinated.

You need to be cognizant of your risk and you need to act accordingly.

This means assessing daily for symptoms and assessing risk levels.

With certain activities that involve gatherings remixing a people.

Contracting COVID-19 while in high risk settings -- settings or households with infected individuals is a very real threat.

Before we move on I thought I would bring some slides and I hope this helps to provide insight into what the upcoming months may look like and I think it's a demonstration of the overall risk levels as we reduce measures such as self-isolation.

So what you are going to see is three graphs where it's showing the same thing in different ways and what we are seeing our estimates of risk of importation looking back as far as the end of last year and looking ahead towards the fall.

The first graph talks about the daily probability of an importation

of COVID based on incoming travellers.

And more recently that's largely been driven by Yukoners going out and coming back but increasingly that's also mixing with travellers who were coming from outside YUKON coming in.

You see when we look to last spring of 2021, March April and May we had the daily probability of at least one importation up as high as 30, 40, 50 percent and now we are dropping towards less than 10 percent.

We do anticipate summarize but a moderate rise and that greenline is projected rise through the fall.

Based also on the presence of Delta variant.

This is the probability that any given traveller is infected and so then we get into, is it 0.2 percent you see a peak in April, 0.6 percent NUC is quite close to zero at the present time.

You see how the actual risk is lower than it has been since the onset of the pandemic and this is because lowercase activity overall and even with an increase we do anticipate, ongoing low risk overall low activity in Canada and increasing vaccination status.

That increasing vaccination is competing with the rise we're seeing, or a possible onset of fourth wave.

But that dynamic overall is still showing that the given risk of an individual being infected is low.

These are models that we will be repeating based on traveller information and based on estimates of incoming travellers and prevalence of COVID activity in the provinces and in the United

States this is something we can read vamp regularly.

You see the little yellow triangles are known actual importations of COVID in to YUKON.

Again another way of doing it.

This is how many importations over a week were we likely to have seen are to have had, we probably only documents some of the use importations and you can see we would've had five importations a week, many of them unrecognized and as I have said, introductions where people do the right thing are not a concern to us, it's introductions that become associated with doing risky things like attending house parties or informal gatherings, that is what we get worried about.

You can see that the actual weekly importations are close to zero going forward week by week and it will take several weeks to get to have a single importation based on current activity.

So as I will explain later in my notes we have an opposite of risks to what we previously had where we really had a need to focus on risks based on COVID activity outside the borders and now we have more COVID activity within our borders.

If we were to have random attendance at gatherings based on our YUKON prevalence the probability that an affected adult would be attending a gathering based on the number of people attending, the more people attending a party based on say an informal gathering based on our current prevalence of COVID in YUKON, goes up linear.

100 adults attending a party right now, if we just took a bunch of random Yukoners from around the YUKON and put them into a

house party there is a 15% chance of someone being infected.

This is where we need to rethink our whole strategy and no longer looked outside the territory towards the border.

So more COVID transmission through unorganized gatherings then through travel is what we are currently seeing.

We are at risk for that for the time being.

And of course the likelihood of being exposed to COVID increases linearly or significantly with the size of the event.

That means that the -- our initial focus was on borders and quarantine requirements but holding on to gathering sizes as our prime risk area.

We have reached a pivotal point in our journey as we shift from a state of emergency to living with their risk of COVID-19 as an endemic disease.

Where we know COVID-19 is present but with appropriate mitigations COVID-19 does not need to dominate our daily lives and I think many of us are accepting there may not be a final inning to this pandemic.

No making out one moment to find that life is just as it was 17 months ago.

This virus is like flies and climate change part of our new reality.

To review the August 4th changes in the orders, self-isolation after domestic travel will no longer be required, bars and restaurants can return to full capacity and masking will not be enforced in indoor public spaces and I'd like to explain each of

these measures as well as explain what protections I'm recommending.

For what may not have been talked about enough is August 4th is not about letting go and it is not about leaving the pandemic behind, it's about becoming smarter and how we match measures to risk recognizing we're in a much different place than we were when vaccination was a distant dream.

Each of these adjustments and measures will be compensated for with augmentation of other measures so we can remain protected with their readjusted balance to live our lives more freely.

As the premier explained -- explained removing the quarantine requirement is in recognition that such a heavy and blunt instrument is no longer justifiable based on their risk we are trying to address or the intrusion on individual liberty that that now entails now that we have vaccination as our key protective measure.

Vaccination and not border control is our safety net.

The risk of acquiring COVID infection from someone travelling into the territory is lower than the risk of acquiring infection from a contact within the territory.

The first time we find ourselves in this position.

Though the measure of quarantine requirements have served us well, we have always acknowledged the toll this restriction has taken on workers and families and tourism and other industries depending on flow of people and goods back and forth across the border.

With a high vaccination rate we now have a measure like this can no longer be justified by the cost it incurs not just to financiers but to mental health and autonomy and economic vitality.

Is a principle not just of justice but a public health that we take the least intrusive means possible to achieve the public good that we are aiming for.

Likewise, removing mandatory masking is a recognition that with 80% of our adults vaccinated carrying on with the territory wide rule is too blunt and onerous.

Instead I hope that mask wearing will become an ensuring tool that with informed risk assessment we will learn to use in the right circumstances but at the same time be comfortable with not wearing one in low risk circumstances.

Guidance on how to estimate that risk will come.

I fully support events and establishments and municipality setting their own rules for mask use particularly during these times of high COVID activity.

Our office is happy to provide or lead to resources to decide when masking is recommended.

Meanwhile as the mask mandate expires next week if you are still asked to wear a mask before entering an establishment, please do so.

Now for bars and restaurants, another area of change, the change we recommended was to allow bars and restaurants to return to full capacity by allowing normal spacing.

And removed for spacing requirement at the counter which based on feedback we understand.

The changes we propose or not an invitation to visit between tables as always our recommendations are incremental and we will publish the revised guidance and we intend to meet once again with bar and restaurant operators to make sure the guidance is clear.

What we are not changing are the following.

Stay home when sick and follow recommendations to get tested, have hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol available upon entry and exit.

There is still no mingling between tables and there is no dancing any establishment.

And physical distancing is still required while waiting for a table paying for the builder moving around.

Quarantine and masks and bar and restaurant changes are the ones that are coming into effect as of August fourth.

, it remains an artist mostly around restricting gathering sizes.

In addition to continue to observe the safe six and two mask up.

And they are still in place and we do anticipate moving away from lease limits as well so we can replace orders under Cima with new guidance that is more focused and engaged to individual risk assessment.

Our aim as we move away is to live with this virus without the need for broad state intervention or restriction.

Rather I hope we can provide guidance that works as a point of reference on how to relive and adjust to living with COVID-19

without the need of enforcement except when required.

This will provide advice to ensure Yukoners feel comfortable accessing the risk of attending gatherings or events determining when a mask should be worn according to their risk and circumstances, advice for travelling or attending large gatherings.

Living through COVID-19 means continued vigilance.

And its public health surveillance, and management of cases and clusters and using powerful toolbox of continued vaccination programs testing social supports for vulnerable people, focus public health measures and surge capacity and we can do all these things without a -- upending most people's lives.

Part of living with COVID is going back to school, all grades face-to-face.

We are meeting with education officials to discuss what return to school will look like and what guidelines will be in place.

I know parents are looking at the calendar and next month's return to school.

We are planning to offer more details on what our guidelines will look like.

A few weeks ago the premier and I were discussing how we would sustain our lives beyond Cima while recognizing the ongoing threat COVID poses to our lives but also with recognition that the threat in a highly vaccinated population is much less than anything we would have faced a year ago.

What tools do we need?

That led to our development of the new paradigm that shifts our focus away from the borders and onto five pillars of action.

Thus our new toolbox involves a five pronged approach.

We are looking forward to bringing more detail as we work on the public document that will follow one from the path forward and look to the year ahead.

Those pillars, number 1 is vaccination with an ongoing strategy, an active vaccination strategy addressing ongoing hesitancy and seeks to reduce the pool of susceptible individuals with outreach innovation and collaborative work.

Our goal, at least 90 to 90%, at the moment down to age 12 including younger children if and when they become eligible.

This is our single most important ongoing endeavour.

Our targets must be ambitious and ideas bold.

Number 2, widespread availability of testing for rapid diagnosis surveilling and screening which means it will be developed in coming weeks but will involve water distribution for diagnosis of COVID-19.

Screening tests for sensitive work areas and exploring the use of new testing and technology with home-based self testing.

Number 3, social supports for vulnerable people.

There are many reasons people choose not to get vaccinated.

We have demonstrated how there is a strong connection between people that are unvaccinated and people living in vulnerable circumstances.

Ongoing investment and social supports, supports as prevention by resiliency by assisting with housing support and poverty reduction and access to addiction services which means more resiliency to infection and better uptake of vaccine.

When vulnerable people are infected, augmented supports are necessary and facilitate successful self-isolation and protect others from spread.

Number 4 surge capacity.

We have learnt out even with the high vaccination rates are public health system and acute care services can be overwhelms ensuring the health system is ready to meet rapidly increased demand will ensure not only high quality emergency care but will ensure Yukoners will continue to be served for all other routine acute chronic and preventative needs.

For this continuity and to preserve our public health and healthcare staff we must maintain surge capacity to dial-up public health and acute care.

Number 5, focused public health measures are needed equipping people with tools to make the right choices.

Examples, ongoing guidance for what to do when sick including avoiding work and gathering places.

Tools for assessing when wearing a mask is a wise choice and when physical distancing or reducing gathering sizes is advisable.

I've had many rich conversations with chiefs and leaders around the territory and we are in a difficult situation right now and many communities are still struggling to get through.

The unvaccinated are being hit hard and that will continue as we work our way through to control the wave.

COVID takes a heavy toll on vulnerable people threatening their lives when last may already be in turmoil and this wave is hitting first nations people hard and disproportionately at a time when we're looking back with grief and regret.

We have fared well but at a time when we thought this might be over we are facing some of our most challenging moments.

It has been strategic public health measures that have helped unload continue to achieve any other pillars I have discussed.

Before I sign off, if you choose to not get vaccinated pleas for whatever reason reconsider.

Don't get swayed by unreliable sources that town conspiracies and invite paranoia.

I ask you to listen to those who have experienced COVID-19 directly.

Listen to the stories and experiences of Darlene gym and Lisa Murray Anderson and others who have related their encounters with life-threatening illness.

This virus is no joke and it will come your way sooner are later if you don't get vaccinated.

Let's stop the next wave in its tracks.

That's it for today.

Be kind, stay strong and stay patient, stay together and stay well.

[Speaking Indigenous Language]

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Thank you Doctor Hanley.

We will now move to the phone lines and begin with Haley at Yukon news.

>> Reporter: Might first question, I know it was acknowledged in the press conference but after yesterday's -- last states update I did have a number 1st nations leaders say they felt lifting restrictions, it was not the right time.

Premier or Doctor Hanley do you think there were mistakes made and how that was communicated with first Nations communities?

>> I can go first and I'm sure Doctor Hanley has in conversation here as well.

There has been weekly conversations with mayors and chiefs and we've also known that the recommendations do to change based upon best advice at the time and as a jurisdiction we've never slows down recommendations.

I know there's lots of concerns.

I've spoken directly with several chiefs and community leaders as I have throughout the pandemic.

It's a new path forward Catholic conversations we have our these types of documentation.

And the government will always be there for the safety of Yukoners and as we turn the page the doctor was eloquent in outlining the future here, we need to make sure we are always in constant communication, I will say, a lot of times before other

amylase, because these are recommendations, they want them come out and we work on how to implement.

We have many tools available to support Yukoners and are getting on that path to recovery and are switching the approach from restrictions as Dr Says the heavy hand then, nationally and internationally.

And we will provide support when and where necessary and will continue to follow the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and I urge the chiefs, there is a lot of progressive work happening with governments across the Yukon as they do their recommendations to follow the doctor and his team because he has done an impeccable job.

We've been in the past where we've had changes and recommendation from the cancelling of the games early on all the way through to masks no longer being a requirement.

And I know these comments a lot of scrutiny, fair enough, and a lot of opinions but the true North and the pandemic in any jurisdiction is those jurisdictions that follow the best advice from the medical community.

I think that statistically relevant information and with eight out of ten Yukoners and case counts decreasing the restrictions, there are no longer justified in the most important thing is the communication will always be there and we will always have those conversations.

We are listening to the communities because we need that.

Who better to tell us what's happening than the leaders and mayors and councils, there is a lot of unelected leaders as well and

our ability to make sure we are in communications is truly important in the doctor is one of the most empathetic hole people I've ever met in my life when he makes recommendations, we talk about science but the mental wellness of the communities and wellness in general, not just to the science, I need to reiterate how important that is in understanding community well-being and those conversations, I would even hazard a gas the amount of conversations with Chief and Council and government and doctors, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and this jurisdiction does a good job of that in comparison to other jurisdictions.

We know things came quick and we did not have a regular meeting on Tuesday, it was on Wednesday and and I think every time new recommendations come in that are different than where we are accustomed to there's always concerns and the chiefs, I met with them, Doctor Hanley and I met directly with the chiefs yesterday at noon.

All of those weekly updates and conversations are extremely important because we understand not only the concerns about what we will do together.

Shout out to Chief chasse.

They are working on a campaign and the vaccination campaign.

I applaud the efforts.

The chief and councils and Mayor and Council, doing everything they can to make sure they are community a safe.

>> Reporter: My second question, it's kind of related.

I'm wondering, for businesses or First Nations.

In rural communities, they would like to request that people wear a mask.

If they cannot respond to conflicts does not fall to the RCMP create I'm wondering when it comes to conflicts.

Is that to business owners.

>> As we prepare for the new normal, people know what to do if there's a disturbance, you are right that once it comes to an end we no longer have that tool to enforce to final restrict.

>> Pat: will move to Luke from CK RW.

>> I'm wondering if there's advice going toward some businesses moving forward to keep certain measures in place such as plexiglass sneeze guards and directions and lines on floors to encourage spacing.

Is that advised for indoor spaces long after we get to the worst of this?

>> I do think these are, there should be no hurry to get rid of anything as of next week.

And again recognizing we are in a situation where we have lots of COVID circulating.

So it's also gives us that time, thanks are happening quickly and we don't know exactly what the fall is going to look like.

We have winter viruses poised to reenter the territory after an absence.

I think people have worked hard, it seems to work for business flow and I think there are other benefits of just keeping people

mindful of each other and protections from other respiratory viruses, I would not be in a hurry to take things down.

And I think in time we will learn what is really the right fit and what works well for the safety of customers and the thriving of the business.

>> Do you have a second question.

>> Another one for Doctor Hanley.

What are thoughts on vaccine booster shots?

I know there's been discussion in the United States and not so much in Canada but what are your thoughts on not moving forward?

>> It definitely is something under discussion at national tables and we do see international examples of this.

I can say at some point there will be a booster, there is lots to sift through with emerging evidence, one of the key concerns is how long duties vaccines actually last and how long can we rely on that protection.

And it also could easily be there are different recommendations for different age groups, for instance older people with less robust immune systems might need a booster earlier than young people and also of course not as high susceptibility to COVID.

There's also a question of how variants play into that and is it better to wait for a vaccine that is modified according to circulating variants rather than the present version?

Pfizer and Mentor are not are working on other versions that are variant adapted.

And there's new vaccine in the pipeline that may play different roles in terms of boosters and there's a question of the rest of the world that is waiting and I think that's a really important part of this.

How do we participate and that's not just Canada but Yukon as well.

How do we participate in that quest for equity for vaccine access because it's not only a humanitarian interest, it's in our interest to have the road covered with vaccine as fast and as much as possible.

>> Pat: We will now move to Tim from the Whitehorse star.

>> This is for the premier or the Dr., there seems to be a lot of confusion around case counting and general numbers particularly in Watson Lake.

How do you go about handling that confusion?

>> There is always going to be some mistakes made along the way in terms of numbers but we correct any errors we see as soon as possible.

I think the government has done a great job of getting that information out.

I do want to thank the staff who work diligently on serving Yukoners.

I'm told Yukon.ca is up and running again.

It's still team Yukon working to keep the territory healthy and safe and we will provide the most accurate information and we are

human, sometimes mistakes are made and quickly remedied.

>> Do have a second question?

>> Reporter: I'm curious, if the situation gets worse and we have another outbreak, at what point would you as a government backtrack on some of these measures?

>> I wouldn't classify it as backtracking.

The current situation is what determines current recommendations.

Avenue you've noticed over the last year and a half those situations change sometimes rapidly and we are all hoping the vaccine awareness is going to increase.

We are hearing stories of a new understanding of those people that are unvaccinated and hopefully there's a good portion we can work with to get the most updated information.

Our focus is to make sure everyone who can get vaccinated gets vaccinated and gushed through the noise of misinformation and identifies those people that can't but there's always going to be risk especially with COVID and I think just looking at the last year and a half we will take the most current situation and apply the most current science.

>> You know, we are facing a tough variant right now.

It's highly transmissible and it can affect fully vaccinated people as we see slightly more than wild type COVID can.

And it will lead and we have seen 100 percent of household contacts being affected.

This is -- we are already dealing with a tough variant and we had our second dose when we first detected this.

We were at about 72, 73%.

So now we are at 80% and we are moving forward.

That and counting of 12 and 17.

I would rather face deltoid with 90% eligible adults and 12 plus vaccinated then gamma was 73%.

Our protection against Delta and Lambda variant and SATA and Omega is going to be vaccination, vaccination, vaccination.

-- zeta.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move to Julian from CBC.

>> Reporter: I have a question for Doctor Hanley.

Loss of news out of the US lately, from the CDC they say they are read nagging on the masks and, you know, they say masking is required in certain indoor spaces.

Come next week we are dropping that mandatory mask wearing requirement and I'm wondering how you feel about them renegeing on that rule and whether making you reconsider possibly the dropping of the mask wearing requirement.

>> What the CDC says people should pay attention to and I would call it not so much renegeing but modifying fair advice and recommendation based on evidence as they see it.

And to be clear they are giving advice and recommendations but do not issue regulations.

What they are seeing is what we have been watching and anticipating for many weeks if not months which is the rise of Delta in the US and now in the provinces.

The US I think is problematic because it's going to be a much bigger case of what we have been seeing with many, many, many unvaccinated people in the US and in some states they have less than half their adults fully vaccinated and as we've described there is a high correlation between those who wrote Rubel -- are more vulnerable.

A lot of states are experiencing severe demand and it will get worse before it gets better.

That's also where you will see fully vaccinated people get infected and potentially lead to transmission.

It makes total sense when you have high COVID activity it's a good ADO to wear a mask in an indoor place and I still think it is.

I will still wear a mask in an indoor public place.

But that doesn't mean we need to mandated, we need to give us best advice as we can and work with our partners and organizations to get the right messages out.

It's mass recommendations for buses.

>> Pat: Julian to have a second question.

>> Reporter: Interesting you are working with the city to mask where.

And things are happening very quickly, talk 12 weeks ago there's a vaccination rate goal 495%, it's continuing to mask up and we're fast approaching August 4th.

It's raising the question so what kind of pressure have you been under and what was the advice you provided to cabinet in this accelerated timeframe we are in?

>> I would say we have our sights on summer and I think we've talked about that in media conferences looking towards and opening up and I think that Sobey's been on our radar.

We realize we pursue the modelling and it's the highest risk internal and not external and so probably the biggest switch was he recommended a change in the order of lifting from holding onto quarantine and loving gatherings increase to doing it the other way around.

Based on the modelling and epidemiology.

And our current situation.

So I did not feel any particular pressure except that, the pressure of working in a pandemic and making timely decisions.

There is no one leaning on me but of course everyone wants information and wants answers.

So it's a high pressure environment but there's no particular pressure to do anything in any one way.

We also side some general recommendations and it's info we say to the government.

The exact timelines are the governments decisions.

According to general advice.

>> Pat: Premier Silver?

>> I'd like to also add when you ask a question of what recommendations do you give to cabinet, it's the ones that you hear from him.

It's the ones we got.

We will have, Doctor Hanley and I have a one-on-one sometimes we involve Minister McPhee and also our Attorney General and we will talk about the logistics, a good example when schools go back in, we talk about how the folks are informed right away.

But the first people to hear about the recommendation are here for the most part.

They then start to work on information and guidelines and policies but there's no change in information from what the doctor recommends to myself than what you will hear.

Not an independent office but that office makes independent recommendation.

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: Doctor Hanley could you please repeat in French what makes you confident it is the good moment to remove some of those restrictions and most importantly, those surrounding masks given that and we are not going to require it anymore in the Yukon.

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: I won't ask you to repeated.

Do have another question?

[Speaking French]

>> Andre: As we turn the corner on some of the measures we have right now and you're recommending of easing on their restrictions,, they are trying to increase our put more pressure are you hoping to increase the uptake of vaccination by easing out on the recommendations or the restrictions right now.

>> So,.

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: We will now move to Camille from the Canadian press.

Looks like she has left us so I would like to thank everyone for their time today.

The next COVID-19 update will take place on Wednesday August 4th at 10:30 AM.