

## COVID-19 Facebook live update: May 12, 2021

>> Pat: I'm Pat Living with the Department of Health and social services and your moderator for the COVID-19 updated.

We have the Minister of health and social services the honourable Tracy energy Medical Officer of Health Doctor Brendan Hanley.

Our sign language interpretation is provided by Mary Tiessen and our French language interpretation is provided by Andre Bourcier.

We will go to the phone lines afterwards and take questions.

You will have have two questions.

Before we began if any reporters are having difficulty hearing please e-mail [ecoinfo@gov.yk.ca](mailto:ecoinfo@gov.yk.ca).

Ministry McPhee?

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

I am pleased to be here as the new Minister of health and social services with Doctor Hanley.

I also want to acknowledge this is national nursing week and send sincere things and appreciation to all those who have chosen the nursing profession and to care for us all each and every day.

Yesterday we announced two new cases of COVID-19.

One is here in the territory and one is outside the territory.

That person will remain outside the territory until they have recovered.

We have only one active case.

This is a reminder we are vulnerable to COVID-19 in the Yukon.

What we are seeing in our sister territories is a reminder of how vulnerable our northern communities are and how quickly things can change.

We need to take precautions by following safe six plus one.

Maybe it's plus two with vaccines now.

Following this and masking up is the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 but getting vaccinated will help us all and will allow us to move beyond pandemic.

Yukoners have done a fantastic job of taking their shot.

Nearly 75% of eligible Yukoners have received their first shot and 66 percent have received their second.

This is phenomenal news.

I want to send a big thank you to the dedicated staff working on the vaccine rollout as well as our community partners who have helped us rollout the vaccine so successfully.

Since our announcement with Doctor Hanley and the Premier we have seen nearly 500 more individuals get their first shot.

Let's keep going.

We are truly leading the country when it comes to vaccinations.

Our fellow Canadians are watching as we forge a path towards recovery.

The pandemic has been a challenging journey and we have

seen -- we have been on for what seems like forever.

When vaccines were approved we all celebrated.

The only drawback has been the vaccines were only approved for adults until now.

That changed on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May when Health Canada approved the Pfizer vaccine for use in individuals 12 and up.

We know Yukon parents are eager to get their children vaccinated as soon as possible and we've been working on how to include youth in our vaccine plans.

I am so pleased to announce we have made arrangements with the federal government to obtain enough Pfizer doses to get all Yukon youth aged 12 to 17 vaccinated.

There are 2,641 Yukoners in this age group and almost 2,100 of them are located in or around Whitehorse.

We are developing a robust plan to deliver the vaccine to the territory youth.

Our goal is to provide safe efficient and low barrier access to the vaccine whilst being mindful of the staffing and logistical challenges.

In the coming weeks our dedicated health professionals will be visiting nearly every Yukon community to host a youth vaccine clinic.

Our plan will ensure all youth ages 12 and up will receive their first shot before the end of the school year and will youth are still in their communities.

The plan will see you fully vaccinated by mid-July.

We know offering only one opportunity will not work for everyone.

Medical travel will be supported for travel to Whitehorse or outside Your Community for youth who are unable to attend the vaccine clinic.

Our youth have made incredible contributions to keep the community safe over the course of this pandemic.

Our community is not fully protected until our children and youth are.

Vaccinating youth will protect them and prevent them from spreading COVID-19 in our communities.

We know from events in other parts of the country that variants are hitting younger and healthier people.

Even a mild case of COVID-19 can have long-term effects.

The Northwest Territories began vaccinating 12 to 17 -year-olds last week and other places are beginning to vaccinate youth.

Here in the Yukon we are fortunate to secure enough vaccine doses to immunize our youth.

I'm encouraging all youth and pared to take advantage of this opportunity and make the choice to vaccinate now.

Taking your shot will protect you and your family Your Community and your future.

We've had amazing success in vaccinating adults across the territory.

We are releasing the vaccination numbers by community.

We recognize there are some with lower vaccination rates.

Every community and age group has different dynamics and will have a different impact.

We are continuing to work with our partners and first nations on how to best address vaccine hesitancy on a community by community basis and will engage with healthcare providers community leaders and youth to find out how to best address their concerns and continue our vaccination efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

I will now turn to our Chief Medical Officer of Health Doctor Hanley.

>> Thanks ministry McPhee.

Good morning, Bonjour.

In Yukon as Minister McPhee announced we have confirmed a new case linked to two out of territory travel and that individual is isolating, and doing well.

We are not concerned about a possibility a public exposure.

As you heard the second case is a Yukoner who contracted COVID outside of the Yukon and will remain out of territory until freedom of infection.

The individual accounts and numbers but is not considered an active case in the Yukon.

Within weeks we will begin immunizing 12 to 17 -year-olds with Pfizer.

That question, when, has been the most common question I have had over the last couple of weeks so I know that parents and young people alike will join me in celebrating this good news.

Our immunization planning team has come through with making access for 12 to 17-year-old a reality.

Our team of immunize servers and supporting staff will be stepping forward to move through communities vaccinating young people.

For those who may not wish to or be able to get children vaccinated at this time we do expect MADD will be approved for the same age group later on the summer.

-- Moderna.

We encourage all youth to take advantage of this opportunity to protect more Yukon citizens.

Every vaccine has another layer of protection.

The vaccine team is currently finalizing the plan and we should be able to expect to share that information shortly.

Pfizer and Moderna are very similar mRNA vaccines.

Although in the Yukon we are pleased to accept Moderna as a better fit for the challenges of moving around the territory, Pfizer has become easier to handle with subsequent regulatory applications.

It still requires long-term storage at ultracold temperatures but this vaccine can be released from that Minus 70 to normal freezer temperatures long enough to move around a matter of days.

It's become more similar to Moderna.

Some extra training will be required for Pfizer for our immunize others and we will work with a one month's dosage between the first and second doses so we expect as Minister McPhee said this cohort will have received both doses by the middle of July.

Getting vaccinated is one of the best ways we can protect ourselves, our loved ones and our community and I'm thrilled adolescence and youth will have this extra layer of protection.

The vaccine numbers are hovering tantalizingly close to 75 percent of the eligible adult population.

66% of their second dose and I want to join Minister McPhee in thanking every Yukoner who has taken time out of their day to get immunized.

We should be proud of our collective effort to be near this milestone in just over four months.

In older age groups we have gone much further.

I am glad to see the recent news of reduced self-isolation for those who was fully vaccinated has brought some excitement back and even more pleased to see that spike in uptake for immunize station.

If we keep this up we will continue to have much more to look forward to in the coming weeks.

If you been watching our numbers closely you will note the numbers by percent have not increased.

This is because we have a new denominator using data from December 2020 instead of last year recognizing Yukon and it's

growing population and adding a few hundred people to the number.

With the ongoing daily numbers of people coming for first doses we will get past 75 percent soon and each age group continues to climb.

I also need to give my heartfelt thanks to our team of immunize errors, community nursing staff and everyone who has been involved behind the scenes in making this work.

People have been tireless in their efforts to get as many doses as possible.

Thank you to all of you who were selflessly investing so much of your time and energy to ensure this is a smooth vaccination campaign.

As this is national nursing week, I want to add my congratulations to all nurses in Yukon.

The theme this year in Canada is we answer the call and surely there's been no year to compare to this one where nurses have truly answered the call to serve.

Yukon nurses have demonstrated strength perseverance kindness innovation and compassion as they have weathered the challenges of this pandemic.

Whether in frontline hospital care or community clinics or the testing, whether the frontline a public health or the convention Centre are the mobile team are the Royal Health centre, immunizing people not just with COVID vaccines but with all the vaccines to keep us and our children protected weather



community nursing, providing care in the health centres, by their serving and long term care facilities are helping in home care, in managing clinical teams or preventative care and administration, there is no health in Yukon without nurses.

Without the dedication of our nurses we would not be where we are right now.

As we approach 75 percent first dose uptake numbers I want to discuss our goals.

75% is fantastic and we still have more to go.

Our younger adults are coming forward and higher numbers and I hope we continue so we see all age groups achieve 75 percent or more.

Second doses are still in progress but I would like uptake to closely match first.

One dose is not enough to reliably protect anyone individual.

We have differences by region and community and we need as high and even end uptake as possible.

That is better for all of us.

We have children to vaccinate, our youth 12 and up and then younger children.

It's important to note there is no one target number we reach and stop.

I want to make sure everyone who lives or stays or works in the Yukon has a chance to access vaccine and ideally our numbers will climb.

In return we will be able to talk about further relaxations of restrictions soon.

Canada as you heard Prime Minister Justin Trudeau talk about is getting ready for first dose summer.

In that the Yukon we will be able to enjoy a second dose summer if people continue to come forward for vaccines that haven't already.

We need to keep public health measures in place, physical distancing and save six and masks.

As numbers rise and evidence build and Canada approaches stable activity and higher uptake life will get better.

When Canada gets to seconds dose fall I hope you can join with all Canadians and looking forward to further lifting the remaining public health measures.

Let us continue to proceed with care as we lift restrictions and look forward to more freedom.

The public health measures that have kept us safe while were made.

In light of our announcement last week I want to clarify some questions around self-isolation.

First, the easing of restrictions to self-isolation.

As the premier and I announced any Canadian resident to was fully vaccinated will be exempt from self-isolation if they arrived or returned from domestic travel into Yukon.

From domestic travel in Canada.

Fully vaccinated means with a Health Canada approved vaccine fall 12 weeks after the second dose.

While I know many of us are itching to go see our friends or go fishing or get to our boats and hangs and Skagway this does not apply to international travel.

The international border with the US remains close of the exception of those passing through or four essential travel.

Canada still has a federal quarantine measure meaning if you were in the midst of planning a road trip you will still be required to self isolate for 14 days and provide COVID-19 tests during your isolation period.

Territorial versus federal guidance is different.

Yukoners can travel domestically without self-isolation in those circumstances.

They must abide buy federal quarantine guidance.

Secondly I want to address public health measures as a hole and why we need to follow them.

I know some people are asking why they should maintain distance or wear a mask and I do understand people think they are vaccinated that should be enough particularly after a year of doing this.

I need to say not yet.

To do so too early is still risky and can result in outbreaks or susceptible people getting ill.

Both our territorial neighbours are demonstrating outbreaks and spread of COVID are still a possibility with ongoing case importation if we don't continue preventative measures.

We are close but not so close that vaccination alone is enough to protect us.

We need to apply a public health measures, the save six plus one until we have high and uniform vaccine uptake, until we have successfully phased in reopening measures gradually and until Canada reaches low levels of COVID activity anti- vaccine uptake.

Covid's always there and ready to hit susceptible pockets especially when we least expect it.

For now please continue to wear a mask in those spaces where it's prescribed.

You need to continue to physically distance from those outside your bubble, you need to keep your bubble small and stay home and get tested when sick.

Public health measures to be part of our lives for the next few weeks, perhaps months and we are taking significant steps forward but at the same time, we may face resurgence and need to reimpose restrictions.

This virus has reshaped the way we interact.

The way we work and travel, but not forever but we are getting close to phasing back to normal.

With testing and contact tracing we have done well and we have been able to contain any active cases.

Our success depends on Yukoners getting tested.

If Yukoners our stake and choose to not get tested our stable condition could be compromised.

I know seeking testing can be inconvenient and our teams are working towards improving the testing process with online booking systems and extended hours it's a priority that people in Whitehorse can access tests.

Testing is also available throughout the rural Yukon.

To further streamline our efforts we recently introduced an online tool that allows you to receive a negative COVID-19 test result online.

Individuals can access their online results by Yukon.ca by entering the health card number and birth date.

Individuals can access their negative test result or receive confirmation of results.

If you test positive you will be contacted directly.

Your online result will red is not ready and you will be followed up with personally.

This will ensure you are promptly informed and instructed on next steps.

To access the tool you can go to Yukon.ca and click on get the test results.

I hope this will make the process a little bit more seamless and easier for Yukoners.

That is it for today.

We've had positive news and more positive news to come.

Please take care of each other.

Stay well.

Thank you.

Screen wanted thank you both.

We will move to reporters and start with Jackie from CBC.

>> Reporter: Hello there.

My first question I think would for Minister McPhee by Doctor Hanley can jump in.

Why is the community vaccination rates?

There was some concern this might pick communities against each other.

You mentioned reaching out to communities on a community by community basis.

How will that work?

>> I'm happy to start with some of the pieces of that question but I'm sure Doctor Hanley has more information.

Being new to the role I can't tell you some of the answers because I don't have that info but what I'm happy to say is during the entire course of the pandemic which as we've said seems like forever we have been regularly in touch with first Nations chief and Council as well as municipalities and their councils and mayors on a sometimes more than a weekly basis but certainly a weekly basis

and we speak to them about the announcements and rollout, vaccinations as well as the impact the pandemic has had.

We seek their input on how to manage.

They are best informed as to how we should interact with them and how we can work with them going forward to make sure when decisions are being made say take into account what the local situation is and what their wishes and desires are.

That's been happening at least on a weekly basis depending on what phase and stage we are in and that will continue.

I have no doubt whatsoever.

They are very engaged with us and our goal is to make sure we are doing things in step with what is best for each of those communities.

We will continue to do that.

Maybe Doctor Hanley can add more detail about the actual numbers.

I know there was some opportunity to determine those numbers but I think there was a recent media statement that we have refused to release those numbers, I don't think that was the case.

We wanted the numbers to be accurate and up to date and made sure communities were aware it was to be done.

>> Thank you minister.

I want to add just a couple things, and I think it's important for one thing to recognize what we call vaccine hesitancy is normal and is predictable.

I mentioned this before but with any vaccine campaign you will always get a rapidly increasing slope especially in an emergency response and then you get a flattening of that curve as the uptake amongst those people who are holding back dictates that kind of slower curve.

You have that rush of enthusiasm we all love but we know that the ones who are waiting for more time and more information or for other questions, we know there are ones that will never come forth and is working with the ones who are in what you might call the movable middle or grey area, those who need more time or have more specific questions to work with them to move them into the camp of receiving and comfortably receiving vaccines.

It's not about blame or not being successful, it's about identifying it as something that must be addressed and I think it's also not I guess just a question of bringing people in to the can, I think this speaks to a community effort and community building effort and the efforts within rural communities and municipalities have been amazing and how they have gone about on whether it's picking people out or addressing individual questions or leaders, all of those things have been so important.

Or simply assisting with the mobile teams.

We have people dedicated in our team who are having virtually daily conversations and are identifying the areas we need to address and it might be around there.

We need to make sure those conversations are ongoing and continue to engage with leadership.

In short hesitancy takes the less people you have remaining the more time it takes.



But we are working together to make progress and it is making a difference.

>> To have another question Jackie's.

>> I want to correct the minister, the premier did say pitting one community against another will have everyone speculating.

I don't think that will help the safety of Yukoners so I don't believe it was ever about preparation of numbers.

But my second question is related to Pfizer.

You have said the Yukon is considering all options but logistically it would make more sense to stay the course.

What changed in that week?

How long have discussions been underway and some of the logistics of getting these vaccinations?

Will people be able to walk in as adults have?

>> You are right Jackie, what I did say is in an ideal world we would get Moderna and see that being approved and go with that.

But we were looking at the other options and from the beginning of knowing Pfizer was going to be ahead and getting approval for 12 to 17 we have been looking at that possibility and conferring with our colleagues and then just looking at can we do this, what needs to be deferred, what needs to be delayed and how would we get the supplies.

Just so we knew what our options were and it became clear there was strong public interest as well as aligning with our

self-isolation adjustments for fully vaccinated which increased the case for going as early as we could and I think it's just responding to what's possible and what we knew the interest and the demand was from our public.

I do think, Moderna won't be that far behind.

We will be watching with interest for the applications and approvals based on their trials.

I think that will become an option.

But this is the early bird option.

I don't have a lot of deeds hills operationally.

We do immunize adolescence for lots of other things.

And it's based on a consent Rule, what we call mature minor consent.

At a certain age and adolescent can consent themselves and they would be able to walk in and receive thought independently.

But there will be a consent process.

I hesitate to speak too far ahead of the people doing the immunizing and operations.

>> Pat: We will now move to Luke.

>> Reporter: I'm wondering about the logistics of the Pfizer vaccine.

It is expected all of the doses that will be reserved will all in one shipment and if so when will that shipment arrived.

>> These discussions are from day to day requests, from our department and the Deputy Minister went to the National operations Centre and was recognized.

And it was aligned with weekly shipments and distributed throughout Canada.

What we are asking is a relatively small number of doses to be enough for our 2600 young people which is a relatively small amount compared to the numbers of doses that are in the millions.

It's just ensuring we reserve our supply but the actual -- I don't have that information on the arrival date.

The planning will incorporate that assurance of when the supply will be in territory and turned around fast enough.

To be able to mobilize the vaccine.

And it's making sure all of those details are in place before we announce the actual dates.

>> Pat: To have another question?

>> Reporter: No.

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

>> This might fall in a similar vein.

Is there a time lawn on Wednesday kids can expect to receive that first dose.

The health Minister said by the end of the school year but is there any firmer date?

>> I can tell you our school year ends here in the territory around the middle of June so within the next -- this is now the 12<sup>th</sup> of May so within the next four weeks for sure, we anticipate lining up the logistics and having having individuals liver those vaccines across the territory in the next four weeks, it will be based on when the shipment arrives and how tight those timelines can be because the initial planning is that there will be staffing but as Doctor Hanley has said we are pleased to have secured the Pfizer vaccines so youth can begin being vaccinated as soon as possible.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question?

>> Bounce out good.

>> Pat: Tim from the Whitehorse star.

>> Reporter: My first question could be for either one of them.

In terms of Pfizer, do we have the super cold refrigerators here?

Or is at no longer needed?

>> Yes, we do have the freezer capacity and of course that was one of the important things to Chekov.

The freezer capacity which is enough storage within the freezer and the ability to go to that Minus 70 range.

But you don't need one of those freezers in every community because of the ability to decant into normal freezer temperatures.

Which will allow that rollout to occur.

>> Pat: Do you have a second question Tim?

>> This one is for either one of you.

I've been reading a number of articles lately dealing with vaccine hesitancy.

One a few things that keeps coming up is the suggestion that perhaps we should pay people to get the vaccine.

Any thoughts.

>> That hasn't come up, no?

>> You know..all kinds of things come up.

In terms of issues that that would entail.

It's bring up questions of those who have been vaccinated already, are you coercing people.

I think we need to be very careful when we draw -- when we go into the line of pushing people or coercing more than they might otherwise have gone and I think our approaches based on conversations and addressing specific questions and looking for other kinds of incentives.

Some people have been holding back for individual benefit and that's normal.

That certainly influence our movement to have differential self-isolation requirements so that people do see an individual incentive.

That's a complicated question.

I would say it brings up all kinds of issues of equity and injustice and the possibility of over coercion but that's not to mean -- perhaps there are other ways to look at other types of incentives.

Is one of the tools that we should continue to look at.

>> I want to add, it's important for us to remember we have been wildly successful with vaccines.

And there have been opportunities for people to be vaccinated.

And we have had much excesses -- as a community.

Having uptake and I think one of the most important things to do, if there is hesitancy is to address the issues.

There's always a number of people who were not prepared to be vaccinated for whatever choice but as Doctor Hanley said, about the individuals that have spurned -- concerns that could be allayed, our goal is to make sure we address those concerns.

>> We will now move to Haley at YUKON news.

>> Reporter: My first question, I hated to always be on these calls asking about vaccine but I'm not familiar with the literature.

Doctor Hanley are we expecting to see vaccines gradually becoming available for even younger children.

>> There is still phase three clinical trials.

For Pfizer and Moderna.

And others.

There's other vaccines in the pipeline.

There are child's for six months up to 12 years.

We will expect and apart from what I understand is, a potential availability of vaccine.

>> Pat: Second question I'm wondering as the youth cohort as vaccinated do you anticipate we will see restrictions or documentation required for the COVID-19 vaccine?

>> It is a good question.

I would say it has not been our practice to either recommend or to put in place restrictions based on vaccine status.

, I do think there is merit in the idea of documentation.

It's not a policy option that has been pursued in detail but I think it's worth looking at not just for COVID but other childhood immunizations.

There is for instance the model in BC, not for COVID but there are other childhood immunizations where documentation is requested and then if there is -- if there are incomplete vaccines released a conversation can take place along the lines of what Minister McPhee described.

Those questions and concerns can be addressed and it's more that rather than saying you must or this vaccine is mandatory.

Making sure that the documentation is provided can be a good way to go forward but currently there is no process in place like that and I don't -- I think we've shown that with protocol and public health measure observance we can also do this very well.

And the vaccines are going to have yet another layer of protection and assurance that we can operate our schools even if the COVID threat continues.

>> Pat: Thank you Haley.

[ Speaking French ]

>> Andre: Could you repeat in French wine we are going to vaccinate youth at this point and why it's important for the whole campaign?

[ Speaking French ]

[ Speaking French ]

[ Speaking French ]

[ Second question in French ]

>> Andre: You have said you are relaxing some of the measures that people who are fully vaccinated will be able to come are to get out to the territory.

Do you have the impression we should have full tourism, or is it going to be still.

[ Speaking French ]

[ Speaking French ]

>> The question has been asked often, are reopening doors to tourism.

What I tried to explain is this may seem paradoxical but we do need to fundamentally recognize this is still a time when nonessential travel is not advised.

And is severely restricted.

What we're doing is laying the roots and laying the foundations for gradual reopening.

This is not an invitation for tourists into YUKON at the moment.



That's not the way Canada is positioned.

We are gradually laying those steps beginning with that ability for people with full vaccine status to be able not to self isolate.

We know that that practically applies primarily because Yukoners with there is almost a natural phasing in because there are few Canadians who would be eligible and we know that week by week, month by month there will be more people achieving second dose.

It's kind of a natural phasing inability.

We can align ourselves when travel opens up and will be well-positioned to move along with that.

>> Pat: I'd like to thank everyone for their time.

The next update will take place on Wednesday May 19th at 10:30 AM.