

COVID-19 Facebook live update: May 5, 2021

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

We are joined by the Honourable Sandy Silver and Doctor Brendan Hanley.

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

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

I'd like to verify everyone can hear us?

If you are having an issue please e-mail ecoinfo@gov.yk.ca.

Premier silver?

>> Thanks for joining us Hanley Mary and myself on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and the Taa'an Kwächän Council.

We are happy to be here with everyone watching from their screens to give you the weekly update.

This is mental health week.

We know people are experiencing an unprecedented amount of stress and anxiety.

The theme of mental health week is understanding our emotions.

Naming express saying and dealing with our emotions is important for mental health.

This mental health week is important and hashtag get real is all about how you are feeling.

You will see various posts servicing asked to name it, don't nominate it.

You might already know how important this topic is.

In March the Canadian premiers launched podcast about promising practices and I'm proud to say the Yukon and Saskatchewan lead this initiative and I included some of my own examples and insights.

Now more than ever I believe we need to talk about our mental health and how to normalize our struggles.

We need to learn as we continue to adjust to long and lingering impacts.

For those of you in need of mental health supports you are not alone and resources are available.

The mental health and wellness hubs provide services and counselling services are available by calling 18664563838.

That's 18664563838.

I want to thank all Yukoners who take the time to check in on friends and colleagues, neighbours and family.

It is the difference to do so.

It's not only mental health week but you might be able to see the stunning red dress pin I'm supporting which is a gift from the Yukon government employee, aboriginal employee forum.

I want to thank Cheyenne for aboriginal employees former member, in the play with the Department of Health and social services for this pin she handcrafted.

It is one of the ways I am participating in the national day of awareness for missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and girls.

Jayme Black first introduced the symbol of the red dress through the red dress project and Doctor Hanley has a handmade pan on as well.

For the record Mary is wearing a pain that Mary designed herself.

Which is cool to see.

To pay homage to the original project the aboriginal employees form is displaying it's own red dressed installation here in the front courtyard and the empty red dresses signify the loss of thousands of Indigenous women and girls and two -- and LGBTQ people to violence.

I encourage all Yukoners to learn more about this initiative.

To learn more about Yukon strategy to help missing and murdered indigenous women and girls visit changing the story to upholding dignity and justice.

Thank you.

Now on to the COVID update.

I must thank you for the effort to help the territories stay safe strong and healthy.

We have one case since last week and the individual took all the proper precaution and there's no risk of exposure.

And it's been heartbreaking to see what is happening to our closest neighbours and our hearts go out to our friends and family in the Northwest Territories with the school outbreak and facility shutting down.

We must continue to stay on guard and practice safe six plus one.

Encouraging vaccinations.

We are fortunate to be in the position we are in.

Yukoners can still have a meal at a restaurant for example.

74 percent of eligible Yukoners have now received their first shot and 65 percent have received their second.

The nations eyes are on the Yukon.

This is great news for our territory and our country and it's at a significant accomplishment.

The success of our vaccine rollout means we are closer to lifting restrictions.

I'm excited to announce we plan to adjust travel restrictions in the coming weeks.

As of May 25th people who are fully vaccinated will no longer be required to self isolate for 14 days upon entry to the Yukon provided their vaccination status can be confirmed.

I notice his locum news to Yukoners who have been patiently waiting to visit family they have not seen.

We still must take precautions to protect against the spread of COVID and variants of concern.

Those individuals whose vaccination status cannot be confirmed will need to isolate for 14 days.

As we move in to the spring we are once again seeing an increase in travellers heading to or through the Yukon thanks to the measures taken by our government with our federal partner at The Canadian Border Services Agency and public health agencies of Canada.

We have been successful in mitigating the importation risk of COVID-19.

There has been no known cases of COVID-19 linked to the estimated 20,000 plus individuals who travelled through the Yukon from Alaska since the beginning of the pandemic.

Anyone entering Yukon is required by law to fill out sign and submit a declaration form which outlines their recent travel and in self isolation plan.

These are collected at the Whitehorse airport and at the border.

All flights are met upon landing in Whitehorse and the border information stations and Watson Lake have once again increased their operation hours to 18 hours per day to meet the rising number of travellers.

Over the winter the Public Health Agency of Canada and Canadian border services agency introduced much stricter public health measures that support the efforts to keep Yukoners safe.

Nonessential travel to Canada remain severely restricted meaning travelling into or through Canada for tourism and recreation and shopping is not permitted.

Anyone entering Canada whether they plan to stay or are in transit to are from Alaska must provide proof of a valid negative COVID-19 test result from the previous 72 hours.

Travellers are tested upon entry to Canada and during there following self-isolation or transit.

For travellers in transit to and from Alaska a hangtag -- hang tag enables enforcement officers to identify who should remain on the travel corridor.

The travellers must strictly adhere to public-health guidance, avoid making unnecessary stops, wear a mask outside and practice physical distancing at all times.

We are redeploying signage to remind travellers who remain on the highway corridor and complete their transition and to travel respectfully.

The government of Yukon's CEMA investigations unit investigates complaints and infractions including any reports of travellers who have strayed from their approved travel corridor.

Bylaw services work full time and side-by-side with investigators assisting with investigations and regular patrols to monitor the presidents and compliance.

In the past Weeks Avenue charges have been issued under the civil emergencies act, four for failure to self isolate, two failure to provide a declaration and one was for failure to transit through the territory as required.

I want to thank all of our partners who are helping with the enforcement effort.

We will see March travellers in the coming weeks and is important we treat them with respect.

Please call the enforcement line, one 8773740425.

Or e-mail COVID-19 enforcement at a dot, you know,.ca.

-- covid19enforcement@gov.yk.ca.

Doctor Hanley and I have been asked numerous times how Yukon is using rapid tests and we happen provided them by the federal government.

We have begun implementing point-of-care testing using the rapid testing.

We are doing so through occupational screening for essential workers who must travel consistently for work purposes which includes the screening of flight crews and out of territory healthcare workers to reduce the burden of self-isolation on these individuals who are consistently travelling.

We hope we can use this point-of-care testing to identify cases that are hard to reach with routine testing programs and implement rapid testing capacity and remote and rural locations as well as rapidly characterize potential outbreaks through proactive screening.

We continue to explore areas -- we explore which areas would benefit from implementation of rapid testing.

Doctor Hanley and his dedicated team are closely assessing the implementation of these devices within communities.

It is important to remember rapid testing is not a foolproof strategy as test accuracy is not perfect.

We know the incubation period is up to 14 days meaning a rapid test for the general population is not a sound idea at this time.

Testing works best when someone is symptomatic which is why I encourage you even when you are vaccinated to seek testing if you have COVID-19 like symptoms.

Seeking testing when sick is a key part in reducing possible transmission.

It will continue to be vital.

As of May 25th bars and restaurants will be able to return to full capacity for indoor table service.

I want to thank each and every one of our local restaurants and bars for their hard work to adapt to the restrictions we have put in place.

Your efforts will soon be rewarded as you welcome more patrons to your establishment and Doctor Hanley will have more to share in a moment.

We have a lot of work to do to prepare for these changes.

We would not be in this position without the many sacrifices Yukoners have made and I encourage Yukoners who have not yet received their shot to book an appointment.

I encourage people to speak with friends and family to encourage them and get there shot.

The more people who receive them the safer we will be and the sooner we will be able to return to the normal way of living.

The clinics here in Whitehorse is still booking appointments for first and second shot and you can phone one 8773740425, 1-877-374-0425, for assistance.

Thanks everyone and thanks for your patience and vigilance.

Be kind to each other and look at each other.

Thank you very much for your due diligence.

>> Thanks premier silver.

First I want to thank Angela for the red dress pin I am now wearing.

Thank you Angela and thank you Ronnie for presenting the spin to me just before coming here.

Ronnie also works for the Yukon government and is herself wearing a stunning red dress and pendant.

It was a gift to her.

One year ago today I sat in the same spot and shared with the Yukon public we had no active cases of COVID-19 in the Yukon and we had only 11 confirmed cases up to that time.

At that time I accredited our ability to keep our numbers low in large part because people sought out testing when they had symptoms.

And people were following the public health measures and guidance.

We have had 82 cases with just one active case.

12 months on we have had no community spread.

Still we can credit our success to the Yukon faith that the safe six plus one will help protect them.

Our ability to test and carry out efficient and effective contact tracing and to those doing what they need to when identified as a contact when travelling into the territory or when becoming a case.

One year ago I said the following, we will get back to a place where we can do all the things we value at whatever distance we choose and we will get back there on the safest path so we can get back there together.

Vaccine is now a reality and is boosting our return.

Vaccine plus all these measures we have in place individuals who are fully vaccinated and to leave the territory for any reason will not be required to self isolate upon return.

We also need to credit those citizens who have done the right thing when testing positive and those who have self isolated after returning.

Our most recent case provides a perfect example of following public health measures.

Because this person did everything we could ask this case did not have contact or crossover.

I commend them for being so aware and informed and because of his diligence there is no public exposure notices linked to this case and the person is recovering well.

One short paragraph in French for soundbite.

[Speaking French]

>> This is one giant leap in our path forward as the premier has indicated.

There are details we're working on such as a verification process for determining vaccine status for Yukoners and nonYukon Canadians.

There is also a number of caveats.

We are still in a time when nonessential travel within Canada is not advised and when many provinces and territories have travel and other restrictions in place.

In BC nonessential travel between regions is not permitted although we hope this will be eased in the weeks ahead.

And the point is this change in self isolation requirements is not about an open invitation to travel outside Yukon.

It is more about recognizing your risk is very, very low.

And your risk of passing on to others is also likely to be very low, the risk can no longer be justified by asking fully vaccinated people to self isolate when they travel.

The next point is when people do travel I'm still asking you to do the right thing.

Abide by all public health measures and whatever province territory or region you are staying.

You should wear a mask and all settings where you are required or recommended to.

Avoid parties and social gatherings to perceive the prescribed limits.

Observing Ollie's public health measures will mean your risk will remain very, very low.

When you return even though you don't need to self isolate anymore you maybe screened out of higher risk settings such as hospitals and long term care.

We will be in a transition period to get to this new place and you should avoid large indoor social gatherings and as a return traveller there maybe certain premises that will not accept your entry.

Don't assume you can make appointments within two weeks of travel.

Be safe and book for after that period.

But we will work with everyone to clarify the direction and increase your ability to move around.

In addition although not required to self isolate you should self monitor for symptoms and ensure if any symptoms develop that could be COVID you self isolate and arrange for testing.

Please note this does not yet applied to children who cannot yet be vaccinated.

And who will need to self isolate.

It doesn't apply to those Canadians including those in the Yukon who were not fully vaccinated with vaccine approved by health Canada and we are working on potential alternative options for these groups.

Children and the partially vaccinated.

I am helping this good news will be welcomed by many.

We are only at this point because of all that has come before us.

The sacrifice that has been made in the restrictions faced and the fact that 74 percent of eligible adult Yukoners have had at least their first shot and 65 percent their second.

Two shots plus two weeks will be the ticket to travel.

As I've seen from my earlier statement self-isolation is key so while we are lifting restrictions on self-isolation we are enhancing self-isolation rules for those who are not.

Self-isolation has been a key part in keeping us safe and has been a critical part in our journey.

I happen recommending that self-isolation after travel outside Yukon but within Canada should take place in one of two ways.

The traveller should isolate at home, alone or if their house stay in the household all must self isolate together.

I strongly encourage returning travellers to follow one of my recommended options below.

Option one is to self isolate alone or with your travel companion in a place not shared by others which means you need to find accommodation in a hotel or separate legal residence or vacation home or in AirBNB that allows you to safely isolate or option two, self isolate in a shared space where all household members will also be required to self isolate.

This means even if you plan to self isolate all other members of the household must self isolate as well.

But there is one important exception.

If you choose option two any fully vaccinated household members who have not travelled are not required to self isolate and can go to work and into the community.

We will have more information and detailed guidance in the coming weeks.

Until then self-isolation remains mandatory as per usual with strong recommendations from the weeks previous as per the guidance above.

Incoming travellers who are fully vaccinated must isolate for the 14 day period until the transition date of May 25th.

It's distressing to see not one but both of our northern neighbours facing a surge in cases after many months of limited exposure.

We are fortunate and in a unique position but our situation could change despite our growing vaccine uptake.

As long as we have significant numbers of people susceptible to COVID infection.

I know there has been lots of concern around the recent school related outbreak in Yellowknife and we are keeping in touch with our partners and I keeping a watchful eye on the outbreak.

Were there lessons for us?

Our schools have done well all year with well-established protocols and practices and we do know the newer variant strain can spread more easily amongst schoolchildren so especially as we approach years and and recognize teachers and students and support staff are all tired, we must continue to adhere to the rules and the guidelines.

It is critical people including children who were supposed to be isolating or as cases or contacts must not attend school or mix in any public setting.

And a child with symptoms should stay out of the school or use the traffic light guidance to know when it is safe to return to the school setting.

To minimize the outbreak potential posed by any one case all school should be adhering to health and safety guidelines including mask use and common areas handwashing and physical distancing.

Windows can be open more and more to increase ventilation and more time can be spent outdoors.

As far as Canada situation goes case activity remains high but there are areas where the infection numbers are leveling off.

Currently of a number of average cases per date was at its lowest level since the end of March as the latest round of restrictions

bring a third wave of the pandemic gradually under control.

Candid as vaccine curve is now surging ahead with millions of doses on the way.

As we know, this virus will try to strike anywhere it sees a point of entry.

Let's not forget we are still not completely immune to this virus.

It's great to see the growing pace of vaccination with promise the rest of the country will soon catch up to Yukon.

I'm sure some of you have begun to hear stories from family members and friends who were bulky in their first appointment or have received their first and some their second dose.

This brings a sense of anticipation that has been hard to find.

As of yesterday we had administered just under 26,001st doses and over 22 and a half thousand second doses and we continue administering vaccines within communities through our rural health centres and we will no longer send out mobile teams but will be scheduling appointments through the health centres and immunizing when we reach a certain number.

If you've yet to receive your first or second of zero not to read the related.

I can't stress the importance of receiving both shots to be fully protected.

While One-Shot helps it will not last and does not provide for strength and protection two doses offered.

The second shot is often the one you will feel more.

Be prepared with a rest day the next day, please don't let that inconvenience get in the way of getting full protection.

You maybe wondering where we currently stand in the progress.

What follows, I will give the percentage of individuals in each age group.

We are doing better.

Especially younger Yukon adults who were catching up on their elders.

Our numbers are by percentage of eligible adults, in the 18 to 29, first dose uptake 60%.

30 to 39, 69%.

40 to 49, 73%.

50 to 59, 75%.

60 to 69, 83%.

70 plus has reached 90%.

Ninety seven% second dose uptake.

On another positive note as the premier noted we will see further changes.

Bars and restaurants will resume full capacity increasing the number of tables and this does not mean dancing and hanging out will be reintroduced but we do look forward to further changes ahead if may manage well.

Spacing requirements at bars encounters will not change.

You will still be required to stay at your table after arriving to a restaurant.

We need to be cautious knowing these could turn into less undesirable situations if not handled correctly.

I recognize many businesses have been requesting changes and have had to show great resilience.

As a premier mentioned I agree that Yukon restaurants and bars have done a fantastic job in maintaining safe environments and I'm keen to give them a chance to welcome more people in and make the businesses more viable.

I hope this provides a bit of relief to these establishments and shows Yukoners we're moving forward and are seeing COVID-19 fade in to the background.

For some of you these updates may not answer all of your questions or concerns and for those who have lingering questions you do not get the answer to I invite you to take part this Saturday morning and a live Q&A event with myself and Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Doctor Theresa Tam.

Not to mention one of everyone's favourite Yukoners Gertie pandered will be monitoring the conversation.

We will take questions.

Please feel free to message us by Facebook or e-mail at HSS at YUKON.ca.

You can also ask alive question to Doctor Tam are to me.

It will take place at 10:00 AM on Saturday so keep an iMac out for any social media posts or head over to the health and social services Facebook page to register.

You are welcome to participate in this unique opportunity to speak with leading health professionals.

And I need to think her deep for his inspiration to put on this event.

To end on an important note as the premier talked about its mental health week and Yukoners can get ready to #at real.

This is all about how we're feeling and naming it.

We know that the pandemic has brought more challenges to Yukon mental health.

Over one fifth of survey respondents that we administered in August 2020, over one fifth reported most days since the pandemic were quite or extremely stressful.

Almost half of respondents reported negative impacts because of someone else's mental health issues during the pandemic and negative mental health impacts were more likely to be reported among females and in some cases transgender individuals among -- then among males and more among younger age groups.

This is consistent with other survey results we've seen.

Especially during these times of uncertainty change, high stress and isolation, it's normal to feel worried unsure and lonely, moody and depressed.

Good mental health does not mean feeling happy every day.

We are encouraging you to embrace all your emotions and get real about how you are feeling.

You could take a few seconds during the day to check in with yourself and ask yourself whether my feeling right now.

What words and thoughts go through your head?

If you need support with your mental wellness or substance use issues there are many resources, please use the services and from reverie you are.

That's it for today.

Stay hopeful, stay well and take care of each other.

Thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you both.

I'd like to go now to reporters and we will begin with Jackie from CBC.

>> Reporter: Hello.

We heard the NWT is introducing Pfizer shots for teens.

Is the Yukon going to be doing that and if so what are some of the logistics?

I know we chose Moderna because we can't store Pfizer.

No?

[Laughter]

>> Listen, I know --

[Laughter]

>> We've always said Whitehorse was ready and willing from the beginning and it would've been harder to transport it because of the fragility of the vaccine.

Canada made the decision to go with Moderna which we were thankful for.

I will let Doctor Hanley does heal have more information the Northwest Territories and what they are doing but but the last conversation they had, we talked about how proud we were of Yukoners and the vaccination rate and we are ready willing and able to take on Pfizer as we see these results ahead of these trials.

So the message to Ottawa is bring it on.

>> I can add a few words to that.

It clearly is something we've been keeping a watch on.

And is a confrontation between where is it going to follow.

And operationally it would be an advantage to stick with Moderna because we done it all over the Yukon and we note the approach and we have the training.

And we do anticipate it will not be far behind and we will likely be on time free when the ideal time to vaccinate is it is great news that they have come through and Canada is I think the first contrary to have this regulatory approval.

We are in a really good place as a country but in the Yukon we are in a stable place.

I can't wait to have my kids vaccinated.

But I want it to be done with the right product at the right time.

We're looking at all the options and taking some accounts and figuring out how we would do it.

>> Follow-up?

>> Reporter: This is in regards to the upcoming fire and flood season.

Do firefighters need to be called in from outside, will they get exemptions for self-isolation if not fully vaccinated?

>> I consider couple things.

We do already have -- we have a number of processes in place to accommodate people if they are critical or essential such as the essential workers through our alternate self-isolation plan program, critical workers who are exempt from the self-isolation but do have an understanding and requirement they observe self-isolation when not at work and have safety protocols.

Regardless of the vaccination we already have ways to accommodate people who are critical workers and if we were in a wildfire situation needing outside workers we would be making allowances for them to work.

In a Safeway without needing to do that self-isolation.

Of course the picture is changing rapidly, many have first responders will have the opportunity to be vaccinated and it could be many of them have had their first doses.

And there will definitely be a number of ways to accommodate that need.

And it would also be able to offer vaccine.

For for rotational schedules.

We will move now to Hailey from Yukon news.

>> Exciting news.

My question was more of a clarification.

The need not to self isolate anymore.

Does not apply to just Yukoners or is that all Canadians who have been fully vaccinated?

>> I can take a stab at that.

Does apply to all Canadians who were able to show that documentation.

This is aimed at Yukoners but without a practical point of view it will be easier to phase in Yukoners because we know the verification process will be a lot easier to carry out and it does not exclude Canadians who can also provide certification.

There is not many Canadians who have have that opportunity.

That's why on a practical level this applies more to Yukoners then to nonYukon Canadians but we are rapidly working out how we would carry out that certification process.

There is also federal efforts to do the same and so we look at there.

We know more and more in the weeks to come, Canadians will have had their second dose and be considered fully vaccinated.

We will get there but practically speaking we are seeing this as an opportunity for Yukoners to help Canadians with a similar status.

>> Pat: Premier silver.

>> I agree.

It's obvious that if the Yukoner was coming back to the Yukon and could sign a waiver or sign a declaration saying you can access this part of my health record, because we've done such great work to modernize the health system here we have that ability to do that right now.

We will work with other jurisdictions to see how that is going to work but we have to curve of not only leading in vaccinations but also our data sharing.

It is good news for all vaccinated Canadians.

And they also need to respect other jurisdictional guidelines as we move forward.

>> Pat: Hailey D. have a second question?

>> Reporter: Thank you.

This would be more for premier silver.

About a month ago it was mentioned at the first ministers meeting the idea of eventually opening up the border with Alaska.

Is there a status update on that?

I know they are still reaching a higher number of vaccination but is out a possibility?

Alaska might open before the southern border.

>> I don't think the federal government has considered regional.

That's not something they've ever considered however we have seen anecdotal information of special cases.

I have made known to the federal government how closely connected we are to the V. beautiful brogue of Skagway and how many connections we have two friends and family but at the same time on a much larger scale we have jurisdictions like Ontario saying please shut down Pearson International Airport and the conversation goes over to BC who we are in lockstep with in terms of the border and making sure the federal government has a consistent message when it comes to how they will apply that.

I don't see a lot of forward progression since the last time we talked about it and if anything the conversation a switch in to the larger jurisdictions seeing much more problematic pathways forward.

>> We will move to Luke.

>> This is a question for both Premier Silver and Doctor Hanley.

>> Reporter: What you say to those who are frustrated because they can't take a trip in the next couple months because kids are vaccinated?

>> I say what we've been saying for the last several months.

We need patient and to make sure we're doing things for the safety of all Yukoners.

And we are in a very lucky place year.

That Locke did not come by chance, it came from the due diligence of Yukoners and the managing work health and social services has done.

We are leading Canada and a lot of pursuits.

There is a brightness ahead and we still need people to remain vigilant at home and that's what's going to keep us safe.

>> I would agree.

I could understand why parents might feel, what about us by think of it as a phase one and this is a big step not just for Yukon but for Canada and we need to do this with care and if you can just imagine from a practical standpoint we are seeing surges in COVID activity that are primarily led by newer restraints of COVID and who were these infected and we know that the variants because they are more transmissible and because older adults are increasingly guided vaccinated we are seeing younger people getting proportionately more head and the virus affects children more than the previous traditional COVID virus.

Children are affected.

I'm not sure -- I have kids that are not currently eligible.

I'm not sure I'd be travelling even if we were welcome in other parts of Canada, I would not travel into COVID prevalent areas with my kids.

I don't want to get exposed to COVID especially variants COVID and I don't want them to be carriers back into the Yukon either.

That's kind of the reality we have right now and when we have the opportunity to vaccinate our kids it'll be very different.

We do recognize that kids often can be close with their parents and not necessarily get exposed depending on the age of the kid or what the relatives are, there are so many variables but the risk is real.

>> Pat: Luke, second question?

>> Reporter: Just the one.

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

>> Reporter: Hello.

My question is for either premier silver Doctor Hanley.

Do you have any description of how this process will work?

Can you expand?

>> Sure.

I can take a look.

It'll be quite different what happens within the Yukon versus the rest of Canada at least for now and I think the federal Minister of health discuss this not long ago and I think there is movement at federal level to have more of a uniform certificate of vaccination and I will look forward to that.

We do have a documentation system and we do have constitutes an immunize station registry known as the panorama data system.

When you going get your shot, if you did, you -- your vaccine dose

and the lot number gets entered into the panorama system so that information can be accessed assuming we follow consent and privacy rules.

If you were coming into the territory from travel outside and you say I consent to have this information released and that information can be accessed by healthcare providers and passed on to ensure the certification is there.

That need to be privacy protection processes, the people who access the system our healthcare providers.

That is the basics of the system.

That is an internal system for Yukon residents.

So for people coming into another province we need to have some other way of verifying which might just be documentation from the centre where the person had their immunization.

These are the first apps and it would likely be entered into an app where everyone in Canada when they have their immunization we be able to have that certification easily available.

This would be -- such as Watson Lake, a plan to start staffing.

>> We are looking at changing the hours at the border.

And the folks at community services are monitoring this.

>> Pat: We will now move to Amy.

>> Reporter: How are you factoring in variants like P1 that we know or not as responsive to vaccine?

>> Good question and just to note all of our recent cases in the last few weeks have been variants and this is the expectation as we go forward as variants, the particularly B.1.1.7.

And it can be in BC and other places.

This is the new COVID.

These decisions were made in the full knowledge of variants and the emerging accumulation of evidence around variants.

We have also had a P1 variants.

And we have the same measures and same public health measures.

Which was put in place as we have shown through our recent case management.

I would say the emerging evidence is positive and reassuring regarding the known circulating variants.

The evidence will get better as we go but what we see particularly for the mRNA vaccine but not exclusively is increasing evidence that vaccines are protective against the variants as well.

There maybe differences in the test to but it feels those differences maybe less significant than what you measure in terms of antibodies.

And clearly the message is our best weapon is a highly vaccinated population and I want to also points out one of the other reasons we know that by incentivizing vaccine we will be able to reach a higher population so we know that part of the strategic reason

behind having -- waving self-isolation requirements is we expect it'll be those Yukoners that have been holding out or waiting.

We will see those coming forward.

The more we can do to get higher and higher population the better we will be protected against COVID no matter what the circulating variants are.

>> I just want to make a general comment when it comes to our modus operandi and when it comes to lifting restrictions.

Including vaccine uptake.

But also case count to spread -- always imports and here and other jurisdictions.

Whether it's bubbling or schools or lifting restrictions epidemiology is the primary factor and will follow the recommendations of Doctor Hanley.

>> Pat:

>> Follow-up?

>> Reporter: I am wondering why it's happening May 25th.

We'll be reach a certain level of fully vaccinated people?

What your estimate?

>> The data is more about the recommendation.

As we've done in the past year the political side of the government does not get in the way of recommendation.

Weather is returned to full-time class and that is not getting out.

We always have time then and we have a three week window where we now prepare based on the recommendation.

This is the recommendation and now let's see was physically possible.

It's a credit to the schools to get us to where we need to be.

We are taking a look at enough time for the recommendation to the physical reality of implementation.

>> Pat: We will now move to Lori.

[Speaking French]

>> Reporter: Will there be any kind of verification as to when someone will have received the second dose?

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Another question.

>> Reporter: Yes.

[Speaking French]

>> I was consulting the path forward document and was wondering if we can expect any new directives in terms of return to work.

[Speaking French]

>> The question was about working at home.

We have a hybrid version where we have many people working at home and for most employers and employees, we have quite stable arrangements.

We need to declare one way or the other a natural movement as we open up for people to find the right place and I can imagine work at home arrangement for the place of work.

So rather than a hard call out for everyone to return to work it's more about adapting as we go forward to what works best and what are their current space arrangements.

So as long as all the work safe measures can be adhered to it's up to employees and employers to determine at home.

>> Pat: Vincent from radio Canada.

[Speaking French]

>> The question is about the Northwest Territories to vaccinate youth.

And would you consider the possibility of doing it in the Yukon?

[Speaking French]

>> Pat: Another question?

[Speaking French]

>> Two weeks ago you said it's not because vaccination does not necessarily because it's going well that you would have lesser restrictions or you would change your intake so what exactly is motivating you to look into May 25th as a day to modify this date?

>> I wouldn't say that was necessary the message.

The message was 75 percent as being the marker and Doctor Hanley has been very good over the months of describing that as being what we assumed the willing participant in a region.

I hope that that is clearing up while we were talking about in terms of 75 percent, we were always interested in herd immunity.

[Speaking French]

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

The next COVID update will take place on Wednesday May 12th at 10:30 AM.