

COVID-19 Facebook live update: November 10, 2020

>> Pat: Good morning.

I am Pat Living with the department of health in social services and your moderator for the COVID-19 update for Tuesday, November 10th.

We're joined by the Minister of education, the honourable Tracy-Anne McPhee in the Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of health, Dr Brendan Hanley.

As usual we have our sign language interpreter Mary Tiessen and Andre Bourcier from French language services Director to provide translation.

Following our speakers we will go to the foam answer questions from reporters.

We will call you my name and you will each have two questions.

Before we begin with our speakers I would like to verify that everyone can hear us?

If any of the reporters are having a problem, please a man -- e-mail ecoinfo@gov.yk.ca.

Minister McPhee?

>> Thank you, Mary.

-- Pat, thanks so much.

Thank you, everyone for joining us today.

I am pleased to be here with Dr Hanley on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Taa'an Kwächän Council.

Our government continues to manage the impact of COVID-19 and the pandemic based on Dr Hanley's recommendations and guidelines.

We are fortunate here in the Yukon.

Thanks to the efforts of all students, families, educators, school staff, and community members to stay vigilant and to follow those Safe Six, our communities have kept the

spread of COVID-19 to a minimum.

This has allowed those to keep our schools open, and continue face-to-face learning for all students.

Keeping our classrooms as normal as possible for the vast majority of our students.

As I am sure you know, many jurisdictions across Canada continue to face significant challenges due to COVID-19.

We have had to grapple with significant adjustments to the way that we provide learning -- they have had to provide significant adjustments for how they provide learning to their students, and some schools have even had to close.

Since the start of the school year, we have been continually monitoring and assessing the changes that we have had to make to meet the health and safety guidelines of Yukon schools.

Central administration is working with school administration to ensure we understand the impact of this school year and any concerns are being addressed.

The office of the Chief Medical Officer of pol has also been monitoring activities here and across the country, and continues to provide our government with advice.

Dr Hanley and his team have been working to update the health and safety guidelines for Yukon schools and he will share more details about that in the moment.

As we approach the middle of the first semester and look ahead to the second semester, I want to provide some updates on our decisions and continued work for the remainder of the school year.

Together with school administrators at FH Collins, Porter Creek and Vanier Catholic secondary schools, and with support from the office of the

Yukon Chief Medical Officer of health, central administration staff have been exploring options for returning grades ten to 12 students to full-time, face do these classes while following the health and safety guidelines.

This is truly complex work and has required assessment of many different factors including spacing and facility needs, additional staff needs, impacts on school busing, and maximizing course options for students.

Through this process, it has become clear that under the current health and safety guidelines, we do not have the adequate spacing or staff resources to accommodate a full-time return to class for grades ten to 12 students here in Whitehorse.

To accomplish all grades ten to 12 students in class full-time under the current and health and safety guidelines would require multiple off-site

locations, or at least three satellite style high schools.

We know, based on the resources in the staffing needs at other smaller high school is in Yukon, that this is simply not feasible.

For example,, Watson Lake secondary School, one of our smaller rural schools requires approximately 15 school staff to support they are 80 students.

If we were to establish several satellite high schools for grades ten to 12 students in Whitehorse, we would be looking at accommodating up to 900 students and between 35 and 60 additional staff to support them.

They additional qualified staff to return the student still full-time under the current health and safety guidelines are simply not available.

This is the reality across the country and I want to be clear, it is not that we don't have the

funding for dozens of additional staff.

The staff are just not available.

In addition to a lack of educators for additional high school as, we would need to use off-site locations that may not fit the needs of an effective learning environment.

We would also need to reduce course options including eliminating elective courses for the students.

This would not be in the best interest for the students.

And as a result of these considerations, we have determined that grades ten to 12 students will remain on their current schedule for the remainder of the school year.

With additional supports to ensure all students are successful with the blended learning instruction models.

The health and safety of our students and staff, and our communities must remain the

first consideration in every
can -- decision we make the
school year.

We have seen across the
country that the COVID-19 virus
is not going away.

We need to remain vigilant and
following the revised and
recommendations of our public
health officials.

Our current programming is the
best way to ensure we can
provide course options and
individualized timetables to
prepare our high school
students for their unique future
education and career paths.

While intended 12 students are
only in the class part-time, they
remain on a full-time learning
program.

-- ten to 12 students.

We know that this is working
for some students and it is very
challenging for others.

We are committed to providing
additional resources to ensure

that those who need support in their learning receive it.

We will be working with school administration at these three high schools, Yukon First Nations, School councils, and the Yukon Teachers Association to hear their feedback on additional supports that are needed.

We will also be launching our second learning during COVID survey this month.

It will help ensure we hear feedback from students, families, and school staff on the supports that they need to be successful on this learning schedule.

Examples of supports that we will invest in to support these students include additional staffing to support student needs, supports for teaching and successful work and study skills for students, success coaching, more in class time for students identified as needing additional supports, tutoring options, increased online tools

and supports, and increased capacities and study halls to accommodate additional students for longer periods.

The supports we invest in will be determined by school administration based on the needs of staff's students and the feedback we are hearing from their families.

To date we have invested are committed over \$3 million with federal funding to provide additional supports for students, support continued learning and flexible learning, and for increased health and safety measures like extra custodians and sanitization.

We look forward to continuing this work and providing updates, as we identify these additional supports for our grade ten to 12 students this school year.

As part of our continued assessment of our programs, we have been working to support the music, art, and drama

program for the remaining 20-2020 was clear.

While they have had to make adjustments, we are pleased that experiential learning programs have continued this year.

We recognized the value in the outcomes of the mad program in the immersive, experiential learning that lease kinds of programs offer our Yukon students.

We have now had time to better determine how the grade eight students are lurked -- using the space for learning at the Wood Street Centre.

We have worked together with school administration from FH Collins secondary and the Wood Street Centre in the Chief Medical Officer of health to determine that the mad program can move back to the Black box theatre at Wood Street Centre as soon as possible and for the remainder of the school year.

School administration will be sharing these updates with parents and students of the program about the timing of this move in the coming days.

This move will not affect the move for the graduation for grade eight students.

They will continue to learn in the classroom spaces at that school.

FH Collins administration will be working with their grade eight staff to ensure ongoing success and space for their fine arts and physical education programming for great dates.

Central administration staff are currently working with school administration at these schools to operationalize this decision and ensure that weekend and into follow the health and safety guidelines set by Yukon's Chief Medical Officer health.

We have now provided the program plan for the semester for the mad program and we understand that the program intends to hold the final show.

If needed, we will work with them to find a larger space to put on this final show.

School administration will provide further updates to their school community on the operational plan to ensure that students and families are aware of any impacts to their current schedules.

Last thing I would like to touch on is bussing.

Our school bus system has also been impacted by the realities of this pandemic.

You have had to make adjustments to make sure students can be bussed to school and home in accordance with the health and safety guidelines provided by the Chief Medical Officer.

To date, we are bussing up to 1900 students.

However, the pandemic has reduced our school bus capacity and let us some challenges for families in and around Whitehorse.

I am pleased to share that the three additional school buses that we have ordered have arrived in the territory.

The buses are being inspected to ensure that they are safe to operate.

Additional bus drivers have been hired and trained so soon as the buses are certified for use, we can get them on the road to help pick up Yukon students.

We will work to ensure that these additional three buses are used for the maximum benefit of Yukon students.

We continue to work with families to address their bussing concerns and we look forward to the increased capacity that these buses will bring to our system.

Thank you very much everyone, for your attention today.

And I'm looking forward to answering your questions.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Dr Hanley?

>> Thank you, Minister McPhee.

Good morning.

On your.

--bonjour.

Before continuing on the education theme, a brief review of how her case counts.

I am pleased to report that we have not had any new cases since our last confirmed case on October 29th.

As of today, we have only one active case, with 21 having recovered.

As Minister McPhee indicates, we have been working side-by-side with the Department of Education since the early summer to ensure that our kids make it through this pandemic while preserving their mental health, physical health, and learning potential, as intact as they can achieve.

I understand the stress of being a parent, and anxiety many of us

based as our children returned to school.

It has been a difficult transition over the past several months, but just as Yukon is in a good place right now, so are our schools.

There are still lots of the school year to go, but to date, we have seen no cases in any school in Yukon and no cases that have been linked to schools or school stop.

That is not surprising, as the experience and other jurisdictions is that cases in schools are closely connected to the number of COVID cases in the community.

I am confident that as long as we remain successful in keeping Yukon cases to a minimum, likewise we will be able to keep COVID numbers in schools to a minimum.

But success to date is not mean we can relax.

We are still facing many challenges related to the pandemic.

As Minister McPhee spoke to, our kids have been going through constant changes this school year and staff and school children alike have been adeptly adjusting to the present version of normal.

As you know, in order to meet health and safety requirements and reduce our overall risk of COVID exposure, students in grades ten to 12 were switched to a different learning schedule that minimized the number of students in the hallways, classrooms, and common areas.

As in all aspects of the pandemic response, we have had to find that middle way where we protect our students and staff from COVID risk, while ensuring that their ability to thrive in the -- in the learning environment was supported as much as possible.

We have had to take extra precautions due to the

pandemic, which has meant flexible learning to reduce traffic flow in schools, to limit interactions and between students, between staff members, and between students and staff.

These changes have left a lot of parents and children, and teachers wondering when things will go back to normal.

With the pandemic continuing as a threat, especially as cases increase across the country, we must remain vigilant with our precautions.

We have seen here Avon recently how easily COVID can swoop into our lives.

To keep our schools open, we must continue a COVID adapted different approach to learning.

As we move further into the school year, we are in the process of updating the health and safety guidelines for all Cato 12 students.

These newly updated guidelines include changes to physical

distancing within the classroom, as well as adding clarity to the use of masks in areas outside the classroom where physical distancing is more difficult to maintain.

The requirement of physical distancing will be changing to one metre within the classroom between students, and masks will be not just recommended but required in common areas.

These areas include hallways, cafeterias, libraries and corridors, among other common spaces shared in schools.

The Department of Education continues to keep a close eye on the changes and how students are adjusting, and the upcoming learning survey will be so important to inform how students and staff and parents are all coping.

Their priority is still providing the students and teachers with the resources they need to succeed and to do so safely.

I understand the concerns that parents have been voicing.

I hear them not just as this the MOH, but as a parent that wants the best learning environment and outcomes for my own children.

Right now, we have to keep reminding ourselves that our focus is centred on maintaining the health and safety of students, teachers, and the broader community.

With the right supports, our kids can accomplish great things when faced with new circumstances and even new opportunities, just as we are seeing in these extraordinary times.

Even so, we have to recognize that our children are experiencing these new ways of learning very differently.

Clearly many children are adopting well and even finding new rhythms they have never found before.

But others are struggling more with the flexible learning schedule.

If that sounds familiar to you, I hope you will be able to access the various pillars of support just identified by Minister McPhee that can or will help those maybe finding this transition difficult.

In this pandemic, it is hard to predict the future.

The next few months could change and we may need to adjust once again but we have been working closely with the Department of Education to ensure that all students and teachers are given the support they need as we continue to navigate these unfamiliar waters.

On Saturday, Dr Bonnie Henry addressed BC residents with newly imposed restrictions to slow the increase of COVID-19 cases in BC, particularly in the lower mainland.

The new orders are put in place to combat the recent accelerated growth of cases in this area.

All residents living in these two affected health authorities, Vancouver Coastal Health Fraser health regions, must abide by the following.

They are not to socialize with anyone outside of the immediate household, and this overrides the previous recommendation to stick to a small social group, known in BC as the Safe Six.

Not to be confused with our own Safe Six guidelines.

Outdoor gatherings, and gatherings and restaurants are no longer permitted.

Weddings and funerals may only be attended by the immediate household present.

Travel to and from the affected regions within these two health authorities is highly discouraged unless essential.

These areas include well-known and popular areas to visit for

Yukoners such as of the city of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, White Rock, Surrey and others.

What does this mean for Yukoners?

VC is clearly attempting to slow the spread of COVID-19, specifically within the area is highly affected in these Metro Vancouver locations.

Since we remain for the time being bubbled with BC, these newly imposed restrictions will affect us to some extent.

For those travelling, you must be aware and ready to follow the newly implemented guidelines.

When NBC, he must consider and abide by all necessary gathering guidelines.

This also applies to weddings and funerals.

If you're planning to attend a gathering, wedding or funeral in BC, I ask that you rethink your visit.

Attendees are now limited to immediate household.

Ask yourself if the gathering will still be able to go ahead, would you be able to attend virtually, where will the gathering be rescheduled?

More than ever we need to be as safe as possible.

This may mean delaying a trip or making other arrangements.

Although we are in a bubble with BC, we have to recognize that the risk of exposure to COVID while travelling to the lower mainland is higher than it was during the summer months.

While the interior and the island remain relatively unaffected, travelling to the Vancouver area will require extra caution.

The restrictions I just mentioned are currently in place for two weeks.

This timeline could be extended.

With the holidays upcoming, these new restrictions may need to be reviewed before any trouble occurs.

For people returning or coming back to Yukon, you need to take preliminary precautions.

Before returning to Yukon, it is critical to take deliberate steps to reduce your risk of exposure to COVID before the or travel day.

This is accomplished by closely abiding current provincial guidelines wherever you're.

In particular, rehearse and practice the Safe Six.

Physical distance when in public and in addition, wear a mask wherever recommended or required.

Practice proper hand hygiene, avoid social gatherings, and stay home and away from others if you're feeling ill.

If you're coming back to Yukon from BC, particularly from the more affected areas in the lower mainland, Lalo, monitor yourself for symptoms, practice vigilant physical distancing, wear a mask in public, and be sure to self isolate and get tested for

any symptoms at all that much the assessment criteria.

Wherever you have been outside Yukon, if you're informed by anyone that you may have been a contact of someone with COVID, please call Yukon communicable disease control or your community health centre if you're in rural Yukon.

With all our advice about travel to and from BC, we remain overall in a good position.

With only one active case and Yukon, our public health capacity remains robust, our healthcare capacity is ready.

I sense that people by and large are doing the right thing to maintain COVID precautions.

Labs at this time, we will not be changing our bubble with BC but I assure you, we will continue to monitor closely.

Again, we can't predict what will come over these next few weeks.

You must keep up-to-date on BC updates before any travel, or hosting any visitors.

This is a time to remain alert and vigilant.

But as long as we take the necessary measures to reduce our exposure, we will be in the right place.

Well, holiday lights are being hung and decorations are coming out, and the holiday hustle and bustle is beginning.

It is certainly a time that is joyous for many of us and as we begin setting up decorations and houses and buying presents from the local shops, we need to discuss what this holiday season will look like.

When the pandemic first began, we remain hopeful that things could return to a place where we would be able to celebrate in a fashion that had few COVID dependent guidelines in place.

However, we all now surely realize that the holiday season will not be as usual.

This does not mean the holidays are cancelled, but instead we have to get creative.

With Thanksgiving and Halloween, Yukoners rose to the occasion.

We hosted gatherings outdoors around a crackling fire, raised glasses in a cheer via Zoom and handed out suites from a safe distance.

We have proven time and time again how we can adjust and react accordingly.

This holiday season will allow us to shine and how we celebrate with COVID guidelines in place.

I know that in normal times, many of us would either be travelling or having loved ones come to us for the holiday season, especially those with children in university or college outside.

COVID does not mean they can't come home for the holidays but in some cases, it is worth considering if this is the right time to travel.

Or some, it may be better to wait for the next opportunity in spring or summer, where circumstances may be more friendly for travel back and forth.

For students who are planning to come home for Christmas, or for Yukoners who are hosting family from outside of the territory, I ask that you be cautious and abide by the following guidelines during this holiday season.

If you're coming home from outside Yukon for the holidays, reduce your exposure before travelling.

As mentioned a little while ago, although carefully all provincial guidelines.

Avoid social gatherings, that tested, and self isolate for any COVID like symptoms that may occur.

Avoid unnecessary outings to meet friends or go to -- going to restaurants and bars.

This will help reduce your overall risk before you get on the plane to come home.

Once home, you will need to self isolate if you're currently residing anywhere outside of British Columbia, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut.

Plan your stay around when your family is off from work or school.

Once you leave Yukon to return to school, if your family has been self isolating with you, your family will need to carefully self monitor for symptoms.

When you're travelling, bring hand sanitizer, wear a mask, and maintain distancing measures while waiting for your flight.

If you plan to come home for the holidays, remember it is essential to read the COVID guidelines on Yukon.ca before coming home.

If you're planning to go to BC to meet family from a different province, make sure once you return to Yukon that you self

monitor and again, keep a low and careful profile.

Stay home and avoid going to gatherings or highly trafficked public places.

Even though you will not be under order to self isolate, it is crucial that you follow the same general measures as you would if you had travelled outside of the bubble.

Consider yourself under voluntary self isolation measures.

We all need to be wary of the risks when we are travelling.

This is something that as Yukoners, we need to take seriously.

If we don't, there could be substantial repercussions to our actions.

We have seen the country's case count rise steadily upwards.

One-way travel without due caution, we are increasing the risk to our community.

Once back, we need to be aware of the added risk.

But for all Yukoners, even with an additional risk of importing cases into Yukon from the surging cases in the rest of the country, we all have a role to play in limiting the effects.

We can easily tolerate introduction of COVID cases into Yukon when those cases remain limited to one or two.

It is the outbreak scenario, the spread to multiple individuals that gather for a party or in a work setting, or for a funeral or ceremony that we could see a major setback for Yukon.

Cases will always have a chance to enter Yukon, but we have control over what happens when a case does come in.

That part is up to all of us to manage.

And that is all for my update.

Thank you.

Take care of each other, and stay well.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will now go to the phone lines and we will start with Luke from CKRW.

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

With the news yesterday-- I know it is early boat with the news there has been significant progress on a COVID-19 vaccine, is there any preliminary plan on how a vaccine would get mistreated to Yukoners?

>> Thanks for that question.

We are planning for many different scenarios right now, including possible delivery of the early vaccines, as early as the first quarter of next -- of next year.

But with the Public Health Agency of Canada, with the Canadian immunization committee which has jurisdiction -- a jurisdiction wide representative group of vaccine representatives of which we are a member, and with all of the people that need to be in that

decision-making here in Yukon, here I would say we are quite intensely preparing for various possibilities and really putting those preparations in place.

It is too early to say which vaccines will be the most appropriate for our populations, and of course, we don't have the official efficacy data -- data for any of the vaccines.

None of them have completed phase three trials.

But we are putting in place that early planning that would allow us to participate in the vaccines as they become available and it really becomes a matter of deciding how much is available, which product, and which is most suitable for our populations.

We have a number of very specific considerations given that we are a very small population with a large rural contingent.

So all of that factors into our vaccine planning.

Really too early to be specific on anything, but definitely a lot of planning is happening right now in the background.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Like, do you have a follow-up?

>> Reporter: No thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Dave, CBC?

>> Reporter: Hi.

For Minister McPhee, first when you talk about...

Will all their time we spent there now or will they have to go back and forth?

>> Thanks for the question.

The intention would be that they would spend most of their time at the Woods Street Black box theatre location.

That would be their main place for programming but their programming of course will be declared -- decided by the teachers.

They have been taking some field trips, as I am aware, and they have been doing some learning outside of their current school location.

So that will be up to them.

Their headquarters will be at the Black box theatre at the Wood Street building.

>> Pat: Follow-up question?

>> Reporter: Just one.

And thanks for that.

So what led to the decision to let the kids move back to that school?

>> It was based on our continual assessment of what was happening with those students, and with other experiential programs and in particular with the grey dates that are housed currently, the great eights from FH Collins, as you might know are attending that school for their full day learning.

Once we can determine how those spaces were better being used, it was determined that the

blackbox space in that Would Street School was not being used to its full capacity by the great eights.

So the opportunity to explore whether or not the mad program could return to that space, and in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of health and how many students could be in that building in the way the space is being used, and students moving around was determined that that would be a safe option.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We'll move now to Claudiane, Radio-Canada.

>> Reporter: Yes, for the Minister of education, just wondering abscess so you said 3 million had been handed out.

I was hoping to have a little bit more detail into exactly how that money was spent.

>> Sure.

We have either spent or committed up to about 3 million of that.

As of the numbers I have here on November 9th, there is a little over \$703,000 spent on things that we would classify as health and safety.

Extra custodians, sanitization costs, ventilation costs, sanitize Asian on busing, on school buses, then health and safety training for school staff and health and safety training for teachers on-call.

Or what is known as substitute teachers.

We have spent or committed a little over 1.3 million for what is considered continue learning.

So adopting the programming, moving classes or students from one location to another, special services pay for principals and teachers, school staff to support programming adaptations, and additional transportation costs.

About 907,000 on additional support for students as of November ninth.

Some funding to student support services, we focused on trauma informed instruction.

The virtual study holocausts were calculated here.

-- study hall costs.

Additional costs for school staff to support student learning, and tutoring.

And just under 100,000 spent on flexible learning.

So focus on IT, technology, curriculum training, whether it is Zoom costs or communications, ID infrastructure costs, and I think that is about the best breakdown I can give you.

If you have further questions, we can address them.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Another question, Claudiane?

>> Reporter: This was pretty detailed, thank you.

How will the extra support that you're proposing for students who are not doing as well in the part-time setting, how will that support be determined and where or how will you put the funding in place to provide for that extra time, perhaps, from teachers.

>> Thanks for that.

The question about individual learning programs, I guess I want to be really clear.

We know that in the current ten to 12 situation is working for some students.

But we want to focus on the students for which it is a greater challenge.

We will take direction from the administrators and the teachers who are working with of those students and those families and we urge them to come forward so that we can work with them on individual learning plans.

Does a student need more time in the school building, do they need more supports in the study

hall portion, are they not a strong learner with respect to technology and therefore need more in person instruction?

Those kinds of things will need to be worked on on an individual basis.

The expertise of our students and-- of our teachers and administrators will be where we looked out for that guidance.

And we're very focused on making sure that the learning experience of those students is as strong and supportive as it can be.

There will not be a pot of funds, for instance, for those kinds of targeted initiatives because they are so individual.

We will be working with the schools and school councils to determine individually with families and with students how to best support those students.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Haley, Yukon News?

>> Reporter: Thank you.

I had a question about if there have been any developments on the use of school facilities like gems for external programs, like sports group -- sports groups or girl guides, that kind of thing?

Has there been any update on that?

>> Thank you, for the question.

I know we are all awaiting the final version of this.

I can say that the Department of Education and the Department of community services, as they do every year, has worked with the city of Whitehorse.

But this year we have worked with the Chief Medical Officer of health to determine appropriate guidelines for the joint use agreements which is the document in the rules for how those spaces are used outside of school hours.

Lot work was done sometime ago, and an agreement was reached about how we could safely use those spaces.

That information was communicated to the city of Whitehorse in the city of Whitehorse is responsible for the scheduling of those user groups and schools after school hours.

I understand they are working on that schedule and then will be announcing to the user groups how that will be set out for the next number of months.

I can say that with respect to the work that our department did with community services and the Chief Medical Officer of help that the determination was the spaces could be safely used by one type of user group per evening.

So for instance, soccer groups that might want to be using gymnasiums could use it on a particular evening, whatever that evening might be.

But we would not be switching from the use of soccer group then onto a badminton group, or onto a dance or yoga group or something like that because of

the necessity to clean and
sanitize the space in between.

But we have communicated that
to user groups in the city of
Whitehorse is doing the
scheduling as we speak, as far
as I understand.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Another question?

>> Reporter: Yes thank you.

My second question is sort of
related to Claudiane's question
about student success.

I wonder if there is any change
to the latitude that teachers
have when it comes to
marketing and grading?

I can imagine there are
great -- grade 12 students were
anxious about competing for
spots in post secondary.

How much what's ability to
teachers have if they are seeing
a difference between the way
students were doing
compared -- last semester
compared to this one?

>> Thanks for that question.

I think it is important that we remember that learning and education is an individual pursuit.

It always has been, it always will be.

Students and adults learn in different ways.

They learn a different pace.

This is something that teachers have always had expertise in, and trying to help determine an individual student's abilities and skills and assessing them with respect to their curriculum.

I should comment that the Yukon curriculum, which has been redesigned and implemented in schools over the last three to four years is ideally suited for the kind of assessment you're asking about.

It is about individual learning.

It is about assessing students on their numeracy, their literacy, their skill sets, their critical thinking.

Those kinds of things are much more the future of education and have been implemented here in the Yukon Territory to the benefit of students.

Gone are the days when students were required to memorize certain things and regurgitate them either on tests or in some sort of assessment.

It is really about determining how students are being assessed and achieving these competencies which will lead them into their future.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move now to Gabrielle, Whitehorse Star?

>> Reporter: Hi.

I know that we have done this almost every week, but I know a lot of people are looking at the numbers from BC and are wondering, why not just close the border?

Why not require self isolation again?

Dr Hanley maybe you can speak to that again.

>> Yeah, sure.

I am happy to speak at that and of course, that is a question that we come back to all the time as well because it is a very important question and again, the overall goal-- our pandemic response goal really is to achieve that protection against COVID and to minimize the transmission and the potential serious impact of COVID while minimizing societal disruption.

And that aspect is is an equally important goal.

That is why we are always trying to look and re-examine that right balance.

So having that open-door in the way with BC is one of the ways to redress the balance and to maintain and promote societal functioning, by having that stimulus to economic activity, by having the ability to visit and travel, by having easier flow of goods, by supporting aviation.

I mean, there are so many factors that are part of that package, of having that open border with BC but at the same time, we maintain self isolation to other areas as kind of again, taking on that reasonable protection versus reasonable openness.

So in light of the increasing activity, it does theoretically increase the risk of COVID introduction into Yukon.

But we also know that risk is mitigated or reduced by the overall reduction in travel.

There is not as much trouble lies in the summer.

So again, as kind of a natural mitigation of that introduction risk.

As I said, we are and will always deal with introduction risk.

There is always the risk of cases coming in, people with COVID coming into territory, and that is okay.

It is what we do with that risk to minimize the risk of one case becoming an outbreak, which is why we continually refocus.

So when we look at the equation, yes, we are looking at an increased number of active cases and potentially we will see that number continue to escalate.

We are all hoping, along with BC residents, that these measures aimed at the lower mainland will help to bend that curve and get things back under control.

But we are watching.

About the other important thing is that, BC is still in quite a different place from other jurisdictions.

The BC cases, the majority of cases are linked to known cases and outbreaks, so we have confidence in their public health capacity.

And the same time, on the flipside, we continue to have

confidence in our own public health capacity.

We have only the one active case, we have good surge capacity in our public health ability to contact tracing.

We have good testing capacity, and we continue to maintain that good testing capacity.

And we continue to have that acute healthcare surge capacity.

And the other factor is again, knowing that there has been less risk of introduction from BC, we have not had any cases that can be attributed to the BC bubble arrangement.

All to say that we are still doing okay and way still continue to closely monitor, and it comes back to individuals to do the right thing.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up, Gabrielle?

>> Reporter: Just hoping you could elaborate for a moment on how that risk is assessed, when

reevaluating the open border with BC.

It sounds like we are not seeing a lot of BC residents come up to Yukon at all at this point, and is that part of the risk assessment?

>> Yeah, we do actually monitor-- because we have for the controls, we monitor who comes in by air and by land.

So we actually look at those numbers.

We have roughly 200 people coming in from BC a day at the moment.

I believe the numbers are around 200.

And about half of those are Yukon residents, and the rest are split between BC residents and those coming through BC but are from other jurisdictions and who would be under self isolation orders.

So there is a mix, a large proportion is Yukoners who were going to BC and coming back again.

And again, that places an onus on the Yukon individuals to do the right thing.

So we look at those numbers and we also look at the active case numbers.

Then we do calculations of risk, you know, risk of people coming across with COVID.

Based on, really got those calculations.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move now to Maryne, L'Aurore boréale.

>> Reporter:

[Speaking French]

[Speaking French]

>> Interpreter: So the question is for Dr Hanley.

We see a lot of single use masks on the ground around schools and many places in town.

Do you think that-- and now your saying more of these masks will be used.

Do you think that these masks lying around pose a health threat to the population?

[Speaking French]

>> I'll translate that into English.

The question was about masks.

Laugh we are moving to a school requirement, will we see more masks being thrown away and flying around?

And I agree, but as an environment a problem and one that we need to address as a population, to be better informed and cultivate that habit of properly disposing of disposable masks.

I also encourage the use -- use where nonmedical masks are required to use reusable masks as much as possible.

Disposable masks should be minimized outside of the healthcare setting where they are necessary.

The question was do these masks pose a risk if they are lying around?

Of course, we never know for sure if a mask might be contaminated.

In general, it is not a good thing to touch someone's used mask.

So it is not a good idea for a kid to touch a mask that is used by someone else.

But leave it to proper waste disposal with people who are trained or supervising the area to be able to pick up masks, with proper adherence to sanitation protocols.

>> Pat: Thank you.

[Speaking French]

>> Reporter:

[Speaking French]

>> Interpreter: At the beginning of the school year, views said that reusable masks would be made available to students in school.

Where are we on this possibility?

Is it the responsibility of the parents, or is the school system

going to do something about
this?

[Inaudible]

>> Thank you, for the question.

I understand that the reusable
masks are being made available
in schools.

It is an operational part of the
school plan, and I will
determine-- find out more
details about how those are
being used at individual schools
were with the sanction of school
councils.

I know there are some cases
where school councils have
purchased reusable masks, or
with the assistance of parents
and others, shields for certain
grades.

It is an individual classroom
situation.

Certainly we encourage
students to calm with a reusable
mask that they have been
supplied with by their family, by
their parents, but we certainly

are supporting reusable masks
in schools across the territory.

I just don't have much
up-to-date information no -- or
detail on that but I can obtain it.

>> Pat: Thank you very much.

I would like to thank everyone
for their time today.

Please note that we are
changing the day and time of
our COVID-19 updates
beginning next week.

COVID-19 updates them take
place on Tuesdays at 9:30,
which means the next
COVID-19 update is Tuesday,
November 17th, at 9:30 AM.