

COVID-19 Facebook live update: November 10, 2021

>> Renee: Good morning to you all.

I'm Renee with cabinet communications and the moderator for today's COVID-19 update.

We are joined by Premier Sandy Silver and Doctor Catherine Elliott, the acting chief medical officer of health.

Closed captioning is provided by national captioning Canada.

Thank you to Mary Tiessen for providing our ASL interpretation in to Andre Bourcier for providing our French translation.

Following the remarks from our speakers, we will go to the media present in the realm then on the phone lines for around of questions.

I will call you my name in you will each have two questions.

Before we begin, I would like to verify that everyone can hear us?

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

I will now handed over to Premier Sandy Silver.

>> Thanks, Renee.

Good morning everybody and thank you for joining us here.

Glad to be here with Doctor Catherine Elliott on the traditional territory of the the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwächän Council.

Since Friday, November 5th, we have confirmed more than 115 cases of COVID-19.

Our active case count is over 150.

We also have widespread and untraceable community transmission in Whitehorse.

This means there is a high risk of COVID-19 exposure throughout the city and increased risk in our rural communities as well.

To respond to this unprecedented spike in cases and increased risk of transmission, our government has declared a state of emergency under the civil emergency measures act.

Declaring a state of emergency allows our government to implement new temporary measures that have been recommended by Doctor Elliott to rapidly reduce transmission and ensure our healthcare system is not overwhelmed.

These new measures include mandatory masking, limits on personal gatherings, organized gatherings, seated ticketed events and faith-based and cultural gatherings, and restrictions on restaurants, bars, nightclubs, gyms, fitness studios, and personal services.

A more detailed list of measures is available online at Yukon.ca.

We are urging all Yukoners to follow these new measures immediately.

They will be enforced under the Civil Emergency Measures Act as of November 13th, and will be in place until at least December 3rd of this year.

By taking these steps now, we hope to be able to stop the wrap -- rampant transmission we are currently seeing in the territory.

Dr. Elliott and her team will be -- continue to actively assess the COVID-19 risks in the territory and I just recommendations as necessary.

We are also fast tracking the proof of vaccine requirement for designated settings to align with these new recommendations.

As of Saturday November 13th, you will be required to prove that you're fully vaccinated, two shots, to access a designated setting.

The list of designated settings has been finalized, and will be available online today at Yukon.ca.

The list is based on the BC model.

We have been saying that for a while.

With Yukon specific considerations, as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of health.

For example, proof of vaccination will be required to access personal services-- personal service establishments such as hair salons.

Starting on Saturday, people will be required to show on paper or the digital copy of their proof of vaccination credential, as well as a piece of government issued ID in order to access these establishments and services that are on the list of designated settings.

Yukoners can request their proof of vaccination certification, credential online, and that is -- at Yukon.ca/vaccine-proof.

You can also access this service over the phone via the COVID-19 Infoline.

And that number is 1-877-374-0425.

This line is open seven days a week, 7:30 AM until 8:00 PM.

A Yukon specific QR code reader app is being developed support local businesses and organizations to verify vaccination status.

This app will securely verify an individual's proof of vaccination credential.

It will be available to read any QR code that follows the government of Canada's specifications for proof of vaccination credentials.

This app will be made available for free on app stores in the coming days.

We will be supporting our business communities, and other impacted organizations as we implement this requirement.

Officials will be hosting information sessions for businesses and organizations on the new app starting this week.

I do really want to thank the businesses that have already started to adapt these measures and that are working with their clientele to help them adjust.

We ask Yukoners to be patient and respectful of businesses and organizations, as they introduce these new requirements.

Please remember that these measures are designed to protect public health in to keep us safe.

I also want to provide additional information about the new vaccine requirements for employment that we announced last month.

This requirement will apply to all territorial government employees, including teachers and all front-line healthcare workers.

It will also apply to volunteers, including firefighters-- volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services volunteers, volunteers in government, education, healthcare settings, and consultations and contractors who routinely work in Yukon government workplaces and environments.

As we announced last week, employees will be required to have their first dose of vaccine no later than November 30th, and their second dose no later than January 30th.

This will ensure that employees and front-line healthcare workers that have not been immunized have enough time to receive both doses of vaccination before the new requirements come into force.

We recognize that there is a very small number of people who are eligible for vaccination but cannot do so, for specific medical reasons.

These individuals will be accommodated.

Those employees who do not meet the new vaccine requirements will be placed on leave without pay until they meet the requirements.

We are following the recommendations of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and her team as we work through the implementation of this requirement, and our focus remains the protection of the health and safety of Yukoners.

We continue to encourage all eligible Yukoners to please get vaccinated.

We will continue to provide information about the safety and efficacy of vaccines.

We continue to work with unions to ensure that we provide a workplace that is healthy and safe for our employees, and that allows them to continue to safely serve Yukoners.

This vaccine requirement also applies to employees and our partner organizations that the government funds to provide services to vulnerable people.

Officials will be working directly with those organizations to help implement these recommendations.

We have learned over the past 20 months that following the science and the advice of public health experts is the best way to navigate through the pandemic.

We have also learned that COVID-19 is not finished with us.

Even if we have had enough of it.

This vaccine requirement for employment will be in effect until general public health concerns are reduced to a level where workplaces can operate without COVID-19 related restrictions, as advised by the office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

The vaccine remains the best form of protection against COVID-19, and they are also our way out of this pandemic.

We know that these new measures are broad and will have significant impact on Yukoners.

We need to take swift and decisive action to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the territory.

This is not easy, but it is necessary to protect the health and well-being of all Yukoners and maintain the capacity of our healthcare system.

It is necessary to protect family and friends and neighbours right across the Yukon.

Before I pass the mic off to Doctor Elliott, I need to address some very concerning reports that we have been receiving about the treatment of our front-line healthcare workers at our hospitals, nursing centres, and health facilities across the territory.

We have heard that community nurses and other front-line staff are being insulted, verbally abused, even physically abused.

By individuals that are angry about these new requirements.

And there are growing concerns about their safety.

This is absolutely unacceptable, and needs to stop.

Our territory has a dedicated team of healthcare professionals that have been working flat out for 20 months to help all of us.

To help our families, our neighbours, our friends to stay healthy and safe.

These people are our friends, our family, our neighbours.

Not very Yukon of us.

Each and every one of our healthcare front-line staff, they deserve respect.

They deserve gratitude for their work for what they do every day to protect us.

If you disagree with the policy, that is fine.

Take that up with me.

My government is responsible for the decisions that we make to protect the lives and the livelihood of all Yukoners.

Our front-line staff are doing their best to support the health and well-being of Yukoners.

They are heroes.

There is no room to disrespect these individuals.

They deserve better.

We are grappling with the stress of the pandemic but we all deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.

I hear a lot of conversations about civil liberties.

The first word is civil.

We have a role to play in keeping our communities safe.

We need to come together as a territory to increase vaccination rates and to keep each other safe and healthy.

Follow the Safe Six.

As I said last week, it is especially important to stay home if you're sick and arrange to get tested.

Our government introduced a paid sick leave rebate program at the onset of the pandemic.

It is still available to employees and self-employed individuals as well.

Employees can receive -- employers can receive up to ten days wages if an employee is sick, self isolating, or caring for kids in the house will.

You can find details about this on Yukon.ca.

We have reopened the drive through testing facilities as of today to help meet the increased demands for testing.

The drive-through facility is open 8:30 AM until 5:30 PM.

Seven days per week.

It will be open tomorrow during Remembrance Day.

No appointment is necessary to get tested, just drive up.

The drive-through is located at 91628 Alaska Highway at Centennial motors, and it is in the wash bay.

As we work to limit transmission, be sure to mask up wherever you go.

And please, I'm begging you, get vaccinated.

These vaccinations are safe and they save lives.

The vaccine clinic here in Whitehorse is open five days a week.

Vaccines are also available in all Yukon communities at your local health centre, and you can find more information about the vaccines and how to get your shot by going online at Yukon.ca/this-is-our-shot.

These vaccines are safe, effective, and they save lives.

Increasing our vaccination rate will also lead us out of this pandemic, and move us toward that path of recovery.

Thank you everybody, appreciate your time today.

>> Thank you, Premier Silver.

Good morning everyone.

I would like to again begin by acknowledging that we are on the traditional territories of the the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwächän Council.

And to thank the people of this land for the stewardship in this beautiful place yell share and call home.

I will start with an update on the COVID-19 activity in Yukon.

Over the pandemic, there have been a total of 1,135 people who have had COVID, and 965 people who have recovered from COVID in Yukon.

Sadly, ten Yukoners have died from COVID since the beginning of the pandemic.

As of this morning, we have 156 active cases in Yukon.

In the past week, we have had seven additional hospitalizations.

And there are eight people currently in Yukon hospitals.

We have had no medevac's to hospitals in the past week.

Over this past week, we have seen a sudden in rapid increase in our case counts.

The average number of new cases each day has arisen from ten to 30.

The percent of cases who were fully vaccinated has increased from June to present, and is currently at 50 percent.

While the risk of infection and severe COVID amongst the vaccinated is lower than the unvaccinated, we are seeing cases amongst those who are vaccinated.

Test positivity is over 20 percent, which indicates that there is a lot of undetected infection.

We have community spread in Whitehorse, and clusters in a number of communities including Carmacks and Watson Lake.

I would like to let the people of the communities know where we have active cases.

There are two active cases in Carcross.

I do want to add here that these numbers reflect people's residential address, so please don't go around trying to figure out who is who unless you're there to support them.

And also know that residential address does not necessarily mean people are in those places.

So here we go again, case locations.

Talked about -- two active cases in Carcross.

22 active cases in Carmacks.

Two active cases in Dawson City.

Two in Haynes Junction.

One in Mayo.

1 in Pelly Crossing.

14 cases in Watson Lake, and 108 active cases in Whitehorse.

This fall, the Delta variant has changed the picture.

This virus is more transmissible, it causes severe COVID in younger adults that is more severe than we saw in previous strains.

This is different, and it puts our healthcare system at risk.

We're seeing a higher proportion of cases amongst those who are fully vaccinated.

Many of our population benefited from the early vaccination program here.

This means that now, it has been a while since people had their second doses and it makes sense that their immunity is dipping.

What we know from the sciences that this waning occurs first in those who are older.

These older people are also more at risk for severe COVID.

At this time in Yukon, we have a high burden of disease, so people are exposed to more virus.

This also contributes to the rates of infection amongst those who are vaccinated, and this is why we have started a vaccine booster

program for those who are 50 and older.

There will be more opportunities for boosters and expanded recommendations, so please get your booster when your turn comes.

Boosters are given when it is more than six months about a person's second dose.

-- after.

This is a challenging time.

We are seeing more COVID infections and more severe COVID than any of us had hoped.

Our healthcare system is strained, but not overwhelmed.

This is why we need to take action now.

In response to this very serious situation, I have recommended that the government make time-limited measures.

The situation is serious, and significant measures are needed.

These measures are needed to curb transmission and prevent a worst toll of serious COVID and protect our healthcare system.

These measures will take about two weeks to make a difference and bend the curve.

If we follow them, if we do the right thing.

We need to do it now and do it well to avoid healthcare overwhelmed.

Our team has been monitoring the COVID situation, and this is why we are requesting this now.

We will continue to monitor and recommend that we remove these measures as soon as it is safe to do so.

These measures are needed to protect our healthcare workers.

Our healthcare practitioners are working around the clock.

Many of these are the same people who've been working tirelessly for the past 20 months of this pandemic.

I want to recognize and thank all of our wonderful nurses, physicians, pharmacists, healthcare practitioners, support staff for their dedication and professional caring over these past weeks and months.

I am disheartened to hear that some people have been lashing out with unkind words and actions towards our healthcare staff.

This is unacceptable.

These are the people who are caring for us.

These are the contact tracers, our immunize earth, our testers, our nurses, our pharmacists, our lab technicians.

All the people who keep our healthcare system running across the territory.

These are the people who are working tirelessly to support Yukoners and their families, to support all of us who are working late nights, over weekends, early in the morning, missing time with their own families.

And they are doing this to support hours.

To all of these people, I thank you.

Your incredible work and dedication has not gone unnoticed, and we could not do this without you.

With our rise in case counts, we are pleased to see many people are getting tested.

The premier has just described the efforts that have been made within the government to open new testing -- a new testing centre that will be open seven days a week, and also expand the services at the COVID testing and assessment centre here in Whitehorse.

If you live outside Whitehorse, please contact your local healthcare Centre and book a COVID test if you need one.

I know the increased number of cases and exposure notices in the schools have caused great concern for students, parents, staff in their families.

I appreciate everyone who has gotten tested or taken their kids to get tested.

For those who have taken their kids out of school when they have been sick, even though that is not always easy.

And for those teachers, support staff, and other staff who have stayed home when they are sick.

I understand these are stressful times.

We have excellent testing capacity, and we have space for all students who need testing.

We are looking at all options for testing and will do what it takes.

We need to balance people's desire for testing with the need to protect our labs and testing space for those who needed.

I understand there is a request for rapid testing in a schools and I can appreciate families want to do all they can to protect themselves.

For all of those families, there is room for you to get tested at our testing centres and community centres using high standard of quality tests.

Please take the test to keep yourself and others safe.

With community spread in Whitehorse, anyone who is out and about in Whitehorse should self monitor for symptoms.

And if symptoms arise, isolate yourself away from others and if you need it, seek testing.

For Whitehorse, we will now focus our contact tracing efforts on those people who are most at risk and those who are not eligible to be vaccinated.

If you have children in schools or daycares, you can be confident we will continue to notify parents and caregivers and post exposures in these settings.

On Yukon.ca.

We will also post information about outbreaks.

Given that we have community level transmission in Whitehorse, we are now no longer issuing exposure notices for other settings as we consider all community activities to be a potential source of transmission.

Flight exposures will continue until November 15th, 2021, at which point they will discontinue as the Public Health Agency of Canada

is also ending its COVID-19 flight exposure reporting.

Vaccination rates have been rising.

This is what is making a difference.

We now have more than 90 percent of those 12 and above with first doses, and 86 percent with second doses.

Each person who gets their shot is a person who is more protected.

Less likely to get infected to spread the virus, and to get severely ill.

This is what we need to do now.

Over 2100 people have gotten their booster shot, and this is 2100 Yukoners who have increased their immunity.

The vaccine is safe, the vaccine is effective.

The vaccine is good medicine.

We're all working hard on developing and planning for the time when we can offer vaccine to children in Yukon.

That time is near, hopefully.

We will have some information from the federal government and NACI by the end of the month.

If all goes well, and the vaccine is approved.

If you're feeling anxious and afraid just now, understand that this is a normal reaction to these times.

Please do those things that keep you healthy.

Reach out to someone to talk.

Go outside and enjoy nature.

Look at the beauty of the winter frost, and trust that we will get through this together.

If you need more support, call 811 and seek mental health support.

I want to acknowledge that Monday was a day to honour our First Nations, Inuit and Metis veterans, and a time to acknowledge the suffering many felt to the policies of the time.

Tomorrow is the day to honour all of our veterans for the sacrifices they made in very challenging circumstances.

We can learn from their strength and courage, and find the strength and courage we need now to do what we need to do.

Here are some simple steps that you can take now.

First, please get your first dose, your second dose, and your booster dose when it is your turn.

If you know someone who is not confident about getting their shot, please listen kindly to their concerns and help them get the information they need from their healthcare provider, from 811 or from Yukon.ca.

These people will also need special protection.

They are more vulnerable.

So, please take care to protect these people from getting infected.

Second, please follow the measures to keep us all safe.

Wear a mask, keep your safe distance, keep your group sizes a small, and bring your proof of vaccination when you're out and about.

Take special care with our elders and seniors, those who are immunocompromised, and those who are not vaccinated.

We need to wrap the blankets of protection around these people now.

Third, get your flu shot, because it stops transmission of flu.

It protects those people who are most vulnerable, those elders, those with chronic disease.

And those who are pregnant.

Fourth, as you make your plans for the coming holidays, plan for small gatherings and gather with those who are vaccinated.

With the measures we have now, we hope we will be able to reduce the measures by the time the winter holidays come.

Nonetheless, we will still be in a pandemic, and we will need to be cautious.

Please do these things with Grace, and with kindness.

And knowing that you're helping yourself, you're loved ones, and particularly helping everyone who may need healthcare over the coming weeks.

[Speaking Indigenous Language]

Thank you, Merci.

>> Thank you, Premier Silver and Dr. Elliott.

We will now move on to the question and answer session with the media.

A reminder to reporters, please identify which speaker you would like to answer your question before you start, and please also remember to mute and unmute yourselves.

As there are no reporters in the room, we will go to the phone lines in we will start with Dirk at the Canadian press.

>> Reporter: This is for the premier.

Can you elaborate a bit more, how you think Whitehorse got to this situation where you're now declaring a state of emergency?

>> I think as we identified with forging ahead in our document for the new normal this summer, we knew that we needed to be prepared for outbreaks.

With a small jurisdiction, small populations, that comes with smaller numbers of emergency beds and those types of things.

We also knew when we lead Canada back in the early summer and vaccinations, we knew that with pockets of the community, even having larger rates of vaccination, we will still have areas and demographics that will be low in vaccination.

Being able to predict when it is going to happen is not something any jurisdiction can-do.

But being prepared for the inevitable is something we put a lot of time and energy into.

So over the weekend, seeing numbers increase.

The long weekend efforts with everybody, but knowing that this is the inevitability really helped the professional of our health and services departments and teams, and the Chief Medical Officer of Health and her team, allows us to move very quickly when these types of outbreaks exist.

>> Renee: Do you have a follow-up?

>> Reporter: Yes, I would like to ask Dr. Elliott if she could also elaborate a bit more on the vaccine.

You're suggesting that it is waning for people who have been double vaccinated?

>> There are a number of reasons for people who have had two doses of vaccine are getting ill.

And getting infected.

The most important thing to know is that the vaccine reduces your risk of infection, and it reduces the risk of severe illness and death should you become infected.

What we are seeing now in terms of these infections has to do with a number of factors.

One of the factors is that we have more COVID circulating in the community and therefore, we are all more exposed took over then we have been in the past.

The highest exposures occur in close quarters with high respiration rates.

So if people are breathing quickly, it's the time to have more space.

Another contributor for many people, it's been a long time since they had their second dose.

It is normal for vaccine immunity to wane over time, and many people know that children, for example, have five different times when they get various vaccines up to kindergarten.

This is to boost the immune system.

This is the medicine that teaches our immune system to react quickly and effectively should we become infected.

Because we are seeing that there is some waning in this immunity and that is what it looks like at this point, to the best of our knowledge, in addition to the fact that we are all exposed a little bit more, we are offering boosters to those who are 50 and older, those who are at most risk for severe disease, and who were among those who were first vaccinated.

This is something that is occurring across Canada, and we are watching closely.

And we will move to increase the vaccine distribution
broke -- vaccine booster program when the time is right.

Emerging everyone to get their booster dose if you're eligible, and when it is your turn.

Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you.

We will now move to John at CKRW.

>> Reporter: Hi.

My question is directed towards Dr Elliott.

It was mentioned that rapid testing would be explored for schools.

I just want to know, what goes into that exploration?

What exactly is your office doing to figure out whether or not rapid testing should be put into schools.

>> Thank you for this question.

I know many parents, teachers and students are concerned about COVID-19 in schools.

And I know one of the tools that people are asking for is rapid testing.

The first thing I need to say is we do use rapid testing in Yukon.

We have the rapid PCR testing, which is used throughout Yukon where and when it is necessary in order to help people have a rapid result.

We also have gold standard testing at the Whitehorse General Hospital, is where the lab that conducts the testing with swabbing and simple testing from all over the Yukon, as well as at the BC CDC.

I must admit I have had to ask myself, why would people want a lower quality test when we have such a strong and high quality testing system?

As a human, as a parent, I understand that we want answers.

And we want to be sure that we are keeping everybody safe.

As a Doctor, I too want to be sure that we are keeping everybody safe as best we can.

We're looking at rapid testing.

It has been used in many rapid-- I think home testing is what is being asked.

It is being used throughout Canada and various places to greater or lesser extent.

We have used rapid antigen testing in times of very high prevalence when we need to test a lot of people quickly in we don't have the capacity to have those appointments available.

The other thing is that health Canada is working rapidly to license home testing throughout Canada, and we are optimistic that these sort of test kits will be offered not just wherever we can get anything but also in our own pharmacies here in the near future.

Because of the demand and the concern, we are looking at what the role might be of home testing in Yukon.

So this is what we are looking at at this point, in terms of-- will people still stay on isolation if they test negative?

These are the questions for you.

If you test negative in the morning, will you still isolate all day?

Because you might be infected, but the fight -- virus might below.

It might be at noon or 6:00 PM when you're out and about.

Will you still isolate?

If you have a rapid test, will you do a proper sample?

It's not very comfortable.

That's what you need to do, and I think many people will do that.

If you have a rapid test, will you still follow the guidance of the health professionals, or will you make your own choices based on what you read somewhere else?

I think where in when we need rapid testing, we will have it.

I also want to urge those people who just really want to get tested to reassure themselves, or for other reasons, to know there is a private testing clinic in Whitehorse.

And you can seek that out if that is something you're interested in at this time.

We have a high-quality lab system, a high-quality sample collection system, and a high quality testing system.

We are expanding this system to meet the demand, and we do not want to overwhelm the system by having extra tests for those who are not needing it to know what the proper way to keep us safe is.

If we overwhelm the system, we will see that people who are sick will not have access to testing like we do now.

These are all the things that are coming into consideration.

The quality of the tests, the capacity of the testing system, making sure everybody has the tests they need when they need them, and trusting that people will do the right thing.

Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Follow-up?

>> Reporter: I do, this one is directed for the premier.

Mr. Silver, I'm just wondering if there is anything you can say to the public in regards to why they should trust the Yukon government on this, seeing as the COVID-19 response has been a little bit lacking in the past few weeks to even months.

The government has dragged its feet on getting on top of these outbreaks.

What do you have to say to that?

>> I would say that over the last 20 months, we have been using the exact same modus operandi, which is to follow the recommendations from the CMOH.

We saw a rolling average of ten cases per day increase overnight on the weekend, and we are reacting.

>> Renee: Thank you.

We will now go to Tim at the Whitehorse Star.

>> Reporter: Good morning.

Can you hear me?

>> Renee: We can, thank you.

>> Reporter: Okay.

My first question is probably for the premier, referring back to the suggestion that there is abuse happening of front-line officials.

Can you give us an example of something more concrete?

How many of these things are going on, more details and what is happening?

>> I think I am comfortable with my statement so far.

As opposed to focusing my ire on some individuals who are doing things that are not indicative to what it means to be a Yukoner, I want my comments also to focus in on how important and valuable the services that are being provided by front-line workers are.

I mean it when I say these people are heroes and they need to be treated that way.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Tim, follow-up?

>> Reporter: Yes, this next one would be for Dr Elliott.

Can we expect to see these booster shots every, say six to eight months in our immediate future?

>> I think it was a few press conferences ago I said, if I could predict the future I would be a different sort of person, not a human person.

These are things we are learning as we go through this pandemic.

What we know now is based on how long we have had this vaccine, and all of the millions of doses that have been given out around the world and the close scrutiny and careful examination of the evidence.

What I can tell you is what we know now, and that is that people who are 15 and older are encouraged to get a booster.

We are seeing signs that people who are vaccinated or getting infected, and the shots are still protecting us from severe outcomes, from hospitalization, and from death.

And what the booster does is it helps your body remember how to fight this virus when it enters the body.

And it gives your body that medicine it needs to react quickly so you don't get sick.

Will we see more boosters?

You know, 12 months after the first series or 18 months after the first series, or every five years?

I think we need to wait 12 or 18 months, and watch what will happen in the science.

What sort of variants we have at that point, how we have learned to adapt our society to reduce infection.

And all of these things, we will know when the time comes.

Thank you.

>> Renee: We will now move to Haley with Yukon News.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

My first question would be for Dr Elliott.

When it comes to the different mandates and decisions, it is a balancing act between personal freedoms and health.

I think a lot of people are feeling a little scared, maybe, the recent spike in cases.

I was wondering if you could explain how it went from very few restrictions to a state of emergency.

Did you consider implementing some lighter restrictions before we got to this point?

And why are why not, that kind of thing.

>> A lot of people wonder why and how we are here now.

Many people don't want to be here now, I would count myself among them.

How did we get here?

I think I have been over a few things, as I spoke earlier.

We have a more transmissible virus that is causing severe illness amongst younger people, young adults.

We have not seen that in the past.

It is winter, people are moving indoors.

And people are having a large number of contacts because these healthy relationships and contacts are the things that help keep us healthy and going.

For well over a month, I have been recommending that people wear masks in indoor spaces and particularly those who are most vulnerable, including the unvaccinated, keep their group sizes small.

Here in Yukon, and if you look across the country and many places, there has been a sudden in rapid increase over a very short period of time.

And now is the time to act.

This is why we need a legal lever on top of the recommendation at this time.

Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Haley, follow-up?

>> Reporter: I do.

My second question was about the testing availability.

I was wondering if you could give us an idea what the turnaround time is for tests right now, and whether we should be concerned about our testing capacity being overwhelmed?

>> So I do follow the turnaround time for testing.

I don't actually have today's number in front of me right now.

It has been sticking pretty closely around the 36 to 48 hours Mark.

We are not concerned about our testing capacity at this point.

We are expanding our testing capacity to meet the need that exists.

We are watching it closely.

We will continue to do that and to get the tests that people need when they needed.

Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you.

John, Yukon sports report?

>> Reporter: Hi my question is for Dr Elliott.

As part of the state of emergency, activities in schools are suspended until further notice which is notably, all of the high school volleyball this semester and basketball next semester.

Obviously, I think it has come up in the past but people are questioning why school sports are being suspended but club in recreational sports are being allowed to continue.

Can you sort of elaborate on what this tension is being made there?

>> Thank you.

School sports are a really important part of health and well-being in schools, and something that many young people train for, work hard for, and look forward to.

There are a lot of positive physical and mental health benefits of school sports.

The recommendation to suspend sports between schools is a short-lived, temporary measure that we're using to reduce group sizes and contact sizes and mixing in our community.

This is a short-lived measure.

People, young people are still encouraged strongly to train, to work hard with their teammates, to play scrimmages and games within their schools.

I think many of them will know that the Olympic athletes that went to Japan this summer, many of them trained at home and saw their coaches through zoom, and struggled in some of the same ways

that you will struggle now for this short-lived time.

I am hoping that we will be able to get these things back and going as soon as possible, and we will keep monitoring and working on it.

The question about other activities that are not suspended, I think people will find that we have done the best we can to keep things going while reducing the risk.

And for many sports and clubs, this means proof of vaccination.

Either they have opted for themselves or because of the age of participants, they will need to do this.

And we have also recommended a number of other measures in terms of group sizes, capacity limits and other things to keep those things going.

It really is a balance, and I'm sure any of us, if we stay up late at night and look into all the nitty-gritty we can find consistencies -- inconsistencies, that is true in all areas of life.

The important thing is we do what we need to do to keep our group sizes small, to keep our contacts few, wear your mask, keep your distance, get your vaccine, and put that blanket around those who are most vulnerable including elders, seniors, the immunocompromised and those who are not vaccinated.

Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Follow-up?

>> Reporter: No, thank you very much.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Vincent, Radio-Canada.

>> Reporter:

[Speaking French]

>> Interpreter: So Dr Elliott, can you please tell us in French why we are now in some of the most restrictive measures that we have seen in a few months, and what measures are being taken right now to make sure that we can have a way out of this situation?

[Speaking French]

>> Renee: Thank you.

[Speaking French]

>> Reporter:

[Speaking French]

>> Interpreter: So Premier Silver -- Dr Elliott, to answer the concerns of parents, can you please repeat in French what you said about the rapid testing for the schools?

[Speaking French]

>> Renee: We'll now move to the final reporter on the line, Anna at CBC.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

First question is for Premier Sandy Silver.

I'm just wondering what happens when someone, if they decide not to comply with the new state of emergency, what kind of enforcement the territory is going to have in place for those who do not comply?

Thank you.

>> Under the civil emergency measures act, we have provisions for enforcement.

So being in that state of emergency, we have the authority under that act.

There is other authority as well under the other acts, public health and safety act.

But, yes, we are now standing up, similar if what it -- if you were paying attention in the summer and in the previous year when we had CEMA enforcement officers out.

We have taken folks that are certified from energy resources, our department of liquor as well.

So it will be the same model where we have those individuals in substantive roles doing the enforcement.

There are two different acts in which restrictions can be adhered to.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Do you have another question?

>> Reporter: I do, this question is for Dr Elliott.

So the list of designated areas came out this morning in on that list, it's as proof of vaccination is not required for essential services like health care, grocery stores, thanks, et cetera.

How did your department or EU personally come up with the recommendations of which areas you need to show proof of vaccination and which ones you do not.

>> Thank you.

I think, you know, we need to strike a balance with these policies.

In keeping people safe and healthy, and also ensuring that those people who are not ready to get vaccinated have access to the things they need and have other tools to support themselves and function in the ways that are important.

Unvaccinated people will be able to access all healthcare and all important services such as drugstores, getting groceries, et cetera.

Nonetheless, it is still also important that we reduce the risks for everybody, including those unvaccinated people by reducing the capacity of the virus to spread throughout our society.

And therefore, there are some areas that proof of vaccination will be required.

These include restaurants, certain nonessential types of retail, and other local places.

These are the considerations that we have made.

So for example, people need to access a daycare and they have to walk through a place where proof of vaccination is required to access that, provisions will be made for these things.

So it is really striking the balance and ensuring that people who are not yet there with vaccination are able to access what they need and have those blankets of protection as well for them, and for the rest of Yukoners.

Thank you.

>> Renee: Thank you.

That now concludes our COVID-19 update.

Stay tuned for our next COVID-19 update next week.

Thank you again to Premier Silver and thank you Dr Elliott.

Thank you also do all the media on the line and everyone who tuned in to watch live on Facebook.

Stay safe and stay kind, everyone.