

## COVID-19 Facebook live update: September 9, 2020

>> Pat: Good afternoon.

I'm Pat Living with the Department of Health and social services and moderate a further COVID-19 update for Wednesday, September ninth.

We're done by Yukon Minister of community services and Yukon chief medical officer of health, Dr Brendan Hanley.

Standing at interpretation is being provided by Mary Tiessen via zoom and Andre Bourcier from French language services directorate will translate any questions from the French speaking journalists.

Following our speakers we will go to the phone lines for questions from reporters.

We also have some reporters here with us and the room.

We will call you by name and you will each have one plus -- one question plus an additional question.

Before we began, I would like to verify that everyone can hear us.

>> Reporter: Yes.

>> Thank you.

If any reporters are having a problem, please e-mail Alexis Maller right away and we will try and fix that.

Now we will begin.

Minister Streicker?

>> Thank you, Pat.

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

I would like to begin by acknowledging how fortunate we are that we are currently -- we currently have no cases of COVID-19 here in the Yukon.

This has been possible thanks to the collective efforts of Yukoners over the past several months, and I want to say thank you -- say thank you to everyone who has taken steps to keep our community safe.

Although we currently have no cases, it is important that we do not become complacent.

We are not out of the woods yet.

Continuing our new normal depends on everyone taking personal responsibility and continuing to practice the Safe Six.

It also depends on our isolation requirements, border controls, in enforcement rules.

This afternoon, I want to spend a few minutes discussing what our government is doing to continue to protect the health, safety, and livelihoods of Yukoners.

First, we are extending the state of emergency in the Yukon.

Without the state of emergency, all of the ministerial orders we have made under the civil emergency measures act would expire tomorrow.

That would mean, for instance, that we would no longer be able to enforce South isolation if an individual has travelled outside of BC or the other territories.

We also would no longer be able to enforce border declarations nor any other measures that have been implemented to protect Yukoners from the spread of COVID-19.

It but also mean that orders we have put in place to support businesses and individuals impacted by COVID-19, such as the residential landlord and tenant order which provides a fiction protection for essential tenants as a result of COVID-19 would stop.

Another order we have put in place authorizes the extension of time lines under the societies act, the business corporations act, and the partnerships and business names act.

This ministerial order provides flexibility for societies and businesses to hold online ATMs and to meet filing and compliance requirements when legislated timelines maybe difficult to meet.

These too would end tomorrow without the state of emergency.

I want to be clear that extending the state of emergency does not indicate any change in the risk of COVID to Yukoners, and it may be cancelled at any time.

However, as long as of the pandemic continues to pose a risk to the health, safety, and livelihoods of Yukoners, we may continue to extend it until other options become available.

We will continue to evaluate the need for this tool as we progress, along with the ministerial orders we have put in place.

Our objective is to remain responsive to this dynamic situation that we find ourselves in and continue to be able to support Yukoners impacted by the pandemic.

We will also repeal any orders that are no longer necessary to the current pandemic situation.

The orders we have issued are not intended to be permanent.

They are introduced as temporary measures to support Yukoners and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

To that end, today we are repealing five ministerial orders and allowing one to expire in 90 days.

First, the property tax relief order temporarily extended property tax in local improvement charge deadlines from July 2nd to September 2nd, 2020.

Many Yukoners paid their property taxes before the July 2nd deadline, but many other Yukoners and Yukon businesses paid by the September 2nd deadline.

As that date has now passed, we can safely repeal this ministerial order.

The remote cannabis sales order allowed cannabis licensees to conduct online and telephone sales with in person pick up to support physical distancing in an uncertain retail environment.

While we are repealing this order, we recognize that it was a welcome opportunity for licensees and customers, and we look forward to discussing the possibility of adjusting policies to allow for online sales in the future, but not to use pandemic tools.

The self isolation exception for traditional activities order exempted individuals from specified first nations who entered the Yukon with the express purpose of engaging in aboriginal and treaty rights from the requirements to self isolate.

Since we created a mobility bubble with British Columbia, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, this order is no longer required.

The virtual commissioning and witnessing order enabled important legal documents like wills and powers of attorney to be witnessed remotely.

As we are now in phase three of our reopening plan, We Believe it can be repealed at this time.

The driver medical order temporarily exempted drivers who are 70 years of age, or have a commercial -- commercial licenses from having to submit a medical examination certificate if required.

Since in person care with physicians has resumed, we are letting that order expire in 90 days.

This will provide a transition period to ensure there is sufficient time to get a medical exam.

Individuals who are required to submit a medical examination certificate will be notified by the Department of highways and public works.

And finally, the amendment of government contract provisions order temporarily provided deputy ministers the ability to amend government contracts where the proponent was adversely affected by COVID.

This authority was put in place to accommodate a nimble response to the pandemic, should it have been necessary.

With the situation today being more stable, existing contract management procedures are able to manage any pandemic related changes.

That may come forward, and as such, we are repealing this order.

As long as the state of emergency is active, we can adapt and react quickly to the impacts of the pandemic.

Here at home, or outside the Yukon, in order to safely maintain our new normal.

While we wait for an effective treatment or vaccine, public health measures need to remain in place to limit the risk of infection in Yukon.

The World Health Organization continues to consider COVID-19 a pandemic, and there is an increase in the rate of infection in other jurisdictions in Canada including British Columbia and Alberta, and in the US, including Alaska.

When we first declared the state of emergency here in Yukon on March 27th, there were just under 60 cases in Alaska.

When we extended the emergency on June 12th, there were a little over 600 cases in Alaska.

Today as we again extend the emergency here in the Yukon, Alaska now has had just under 6,000 cases.

Keeping our territory safe and healthy remains our top priority and requires us all to work together.

Again, we are fortunate that we have had a total of 15 cases, none requiring hospitalization, and currently have no cases of COVID-19 here in the Yukon.

Thank you.

>> Pat: Thank you, Minister Streicker.

Dr Hanley?

>> Thank you,, and thank you, Minister Streicker.

Good afternoon.

While it is good to note that some of the ministerial orders have now been rescinded, it is important that for the moment, we keep the overall CEMA state of emergency in place, at least for the next while as we move from summer, such as it was, into the Yukon fall.

We really don't know what lays ahead of us and we need the ability to respond quickly in the event that some unexpected event does happen.

We only have to look to Ontario and BC to see changes they have recently had to make.

In Ontario, they are delaying to -- they're moved of these three for a month as case counts continue to rise.

As you will have heard, night clubs and banquet halls were closed yesterday in BC, along with rule changes on how late alcohol can be served and how turned up the music can be.

They are having to take a few steps back because people were continuing together and be exposed to COVID in these venues.

This is the essence of what Doctor Henry calls BC's second ripple, likely one of many ripples ahead.

Back in Yukon, continuing CEMA gives us the tools and flexibility to respond quickly to a changing picture in Yukon if we need to.

We opened the BC bubble on July 1st.

More than two months later, we have had only one case.

People continue to come and go.

Yukoners are leaving the territory for a variety of reasons, are there to BC, the North, or further afield for holidays and get-togethers, taking students to university, or visiting with loved ones who are a la.

They come home, self isolate if required, and still we have no new cases.

This success is, for the most part, still do -- due to Yukoners following the Safe Six.

So thank you for doing this, and please keep it up as we head out of the summer.

I still receive or hear about questions about either moving back and mandating self isolation for travelling to BC but also on the flip side, about why are we not opening up to other jurisdictions.

My answer for now, in short, is still that it is best to stay where we are, while we observe -- observe the increasing COVID activity in many parts of Canada.

And also while we continue to get children settled into schools and while people correspondingly move back into workplaces.



Schools will work to support the well-being of students and teachers back into school which has been our priority of late.

The Department of Education is working with schools as they implement the health and safety guidelines at school levels.

Schools are continuing three weeks in to settle into new routines, with staff and students continuing to adapt.

With the sports and recreation, and contact sport guidelines now out, we are working with the Department of Education and the Yukon schools athletic Association and school principals to determine what that means for school sports and how kids can get back into the game.

I have said that phase three will be a long phase, with restrictions lifted slowly.

One of these is the playing on wind instruments, and recent media coverage questions why the city and school bands cannot practice fully with all members on all their instruments.

As a musician myself, a wind player in fact, I understand the frustration of not being able to play in a group or as part of a larger band.

And I also understand the disappointment of cancelled concerts and events.

But I do want to assure you that we have been working on guidelines for lower risk playing of the wind instruments and hope to have these out soon.

So hopefully players are practising at home and have been keeping their chops and shape.

We are only a few people, the same team working on guidance for return to schools, returned to sports, returned to worship, use of nonmedical masks, and the ones working on how to put a pandemic orchestra together.

We don't make our decisions lightly.

We review the evidence, look at the plans of the jurisdictions, and way they risk before we make a decision.

The opening of school in the beginning of sports is presenting a whole new set of challenges for everyone.

We now have bubbles and cohorts and everything in between, and I hear regularly from people who are trying to figure out what it all means.

I just wanted to go over a few of those points.

The social bubble is the family and friends bubble.

No more than 15 people in total, and no more than ten at a time.

A group is the larger group or sports group and remains limited to that activity.

A child should stay with his or her classmates while at school.

An individual playing sports will be put into a mini league, with three or four teams playing together, organized as per the sport guidelines.

They should stay within their mini league teams while playing the sport, and no drinks after the game unless in a well spaced way that adheres to public health guidance.

So we will continue to work on clarifying our guidance on bubbles and gatherings.

in rural communities where populations are small, families may be related and interact with each other at school and in community activities, and it can be harder to define where a bubble begins and ends.

That may be okay, but if there is one theme to emphasize and repeat, it is to keep your social circle small.

Be deliberate, and aware of who your close interactions are with.

We don't have to look far to see the consequences of ignoring this advice.

The weather this week is reminding us but fall is well on its way and we will be spending more time indoors than out.

With people closer together, it is of utmost importance that we continue to follow the Safe Six.

We wash our hands, cough away from others into an elbow or sleeve, stay two metres apart from those not in our bubbles, and most important of all, stay home and away from others when sick.

That is all for today.

Thanks.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will now go to the phone lines.

We will begin with Hailey, nuke -- Yukon News.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

I was wondering if there is a response to the tourism industry Association of the Yukon's letter requesting that the bubble be open for winter tourism operations?

[ Inaudible ]

>> I actually probably could not give you an up to date response, because I have been away for a few days.

I know our team has been working on a response.

And I will -- I do have conversations, and have enjoyed a conversation a few weeks ago with the tourism industry.

It is definitely a challenge to reconcile the incredible impact that the pandemic has had on Yukon tourism.

I think that we have to, and without giving a yes or no to the question, I just think we have to be very careful about maintaining the best image possible for Yukon for future.

And this is a just a bad year for tourism and I think it is going to continue into Yukon -- into winter to be a bad year for tourism.

A lot of winter tourism depends on international tourism, of course, and that is beyond our control is a territory.

And I really think we have to start thinking of what can we do to make this an ideal place for tourism as we move beyond into the late stages of the pandemic and beyond and make sure that we welcome people from all over the world while, when we are able to.

So I think in general, we have to take a longer-term approach.

We have enjoyed a little bit of tourism over the summer with the opening to BC, but recognizing that this is really more of an opportunity for Yukoners to get out, rather than any realistic impact on the tourism industry in Yukon.

It has taken a huge hit, and I think we have to lay the groundwork for recovery in the longer term.

[ Audio Difficulties ]

>> Speaking with Minister Dendys earlier today, I know she was on a call with her federal, provincial, territorial counterparts, talking about tourism across the country.

So I know that she is working closely with our tourism operators here.

I think that we will do our best to take the recommendations that Doctor Hanley and his office give us regarding travel.

And I think we will continue to work with the tourism industry to find ways to support it over the long-term, and both through our business relief programs but also through programs that are specific for tourism.

So no response to the letter that I know of yet, but of course I would need to turn to Minister Dendys for that specific information.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up question?

>> Reporter: Yeah.

I guess my follow-up is, a part of the latter was really asking for a solid, kind of yes or no as to whether things will open up.

Is there any plan or cutoff date where we say, no, we are not opening things until the spring?

Is there a plan to put that out there at any time?

>> Do you want me to start?

Okay.

You know, Haley, I appreciate the importance of the ability to plan for our tourism operators.

And when Minister Dendys has spoken with our tourism operators, and when I have been on their calls to talk about COVID and enforcement, the challenge is that we are not able to predict where things are going.

I mean, who would have thought of the turn for example that happened with our neighbours to the south, with Alaska and the US?

Those things were not necessarily predictable.

So we have to remain somewhat responsive.

I think that what can be offered is the ability to stay in close contact and work with tourism operators.

I just don't know how much predictability we can give.

I think, you know, we will have to wait for Minister Dendys to respond directly to the tourism industry.

I am sure she is working closely with them.

>> Pat: Thank you.

>> Yeah, I don't know if I have much to add.

I think its just-- again, I can sense or hear the frustration and again, I did hear directly from representatives of the tourism industry, asking for more of that predictability and certainty because of course, tourism takes planning.

So I have to agree with the minister.

It is a difficult thing to establish certainty, when we are really looking at phenomenon that change from week to week.

So I hear the concerns, and we will do what we can I think to at least let people know what, you know, what we are thinking.

But establishing that firm of a deadline at this point is not possible.

Is not realistic.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move to Gabrielle, Whitehorse Star.

>> Reporter: hi.

I have a question regarding the length of the state of emergency.

I am curious, for things like enforcement of rules, is there a way to legislate those aspects in a different way so that the state of emergency could end, or is the state of emergency necessary for the length of COVID being a risk which could be, say, another year?

>> Any changes to legislation of course have to go through the legislature.

We have a civil emergency measures act which is pretty out of date, and I think as we have worked through it with the various departments, we can see that it did not really anticipate a pandemic like COVID.

So there are definitely things that need to be improved and the legislation.

Today, what we need to do is focus on how to support and keep Yukoners safe.

That is our most important and pressing issue.

I'm happy to have conversations about how we can improve the legislation over time.

That would be great.

Our legislation basically leaves it that if we wish to have requirements for legislation, if we wish to have enforcement or controls, those require us to use ministerial orders under the state of emergency.

I think the important thing for us to do is to acknowledge that our primary concern needs to be to navigate the pandemic as fast as we can, and we will look to try to improve the legislation in the future on a go forward basis so that the next time we are dealing with something like COVID were we have better tools at our disposal.

>> Pat: Thank you.

Follow-up?



>> Reporter: My second question is looking for an update on the auto students who did not self isolate before moving into Yukon University.

Is it safe to say at this point the students have not experienced any symptoms?

I know people who were on campus on those two days have been told to self monitor and I'm wondering how long that should continue for.

>> I don't have the timelines with me.

I have not heard of any issues associated with that incident since, and I believe that at least a week, if not ten days at this point.

So they would have received instructions, usually to self monitor for a period of two weeks from the time of exposure.

That will be coming close, but I could not tell you the exact date.

I think you could probably do the math based on the date, the date of exposure.

But again, keep in mind that the response that Yukon College made, they did a lot in a short time.

They went to extraordinary lengths to ensure continued safety for opening of the University.

I think that, you know, the risk from any one person, again coming from another province is going to be very low.

So I think all of this was very much precautionary action.

Swift, and prompt, and very thorough.

And I have not heard of any issues arising since then.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will go now to Claudiane, Radio-Canada.

>> Reporter:

[ Speaking French ]

>> Interpreter: So Dr Hanley, Kenny please explain and French our rationale for either opening the border or closing the border with Alberta and British Columbia, for example?

[ Speaking French ]

>> Pat:

[ Speaking French ]

>> Reporter: To Minister Streicker, just looking at the unemployment rate obviously having gone up in July.

Ontario and Québec today were meeting to see how they can collaborate to kickstart the economy.

Is Yukon looking at doing anything similar or looking ahead at how to get the economy back on track, if you can give me that in French?

[ Laughter ]

[ Speaking French ]

>> I will start in English, Claudiane.

If I can do a few words in French, I will do my best.

Of course, our Department of economic development and Minister Pelee have been working very closely with the business advisory Council to talk about the recovery plan.

I know they have done a lot of work on it.

Yes, I understand that our levels of unemployment have gone appear in the Yukon, absolutely.

But when I look at those unemployment levels compared to the rest of Canada, we are still in a better position generally.

So it's an issue, absolutely, but also it is an issue everywhere.

And comparatively, we are doing well.

I know that Minister Pillai is working closely on this, and I don't have news for you today.

I expect that he would be the right person to pose this question to directly.

But I do know that they are looking at various facets around economic recovery.

For example, working with my own department on things like investment in infrastructure and land development, because those are important parts of the economy that community -- community services works on.

And I can say from that perspective, housing starts, infrastructure across all of our communities, we are actually in a bit of a boom right now.

So the challenge of COVID of course, and as the earlier questions alluded to with tourism, is that it has got a real different impact depending on which sector we are talking about.

We will have to have a sector targeted approach to try to have as part of the recovery program.

Okay...

[ Speaking French ]

Just to say that I think the recovery plan is coming.

>> Pat: We will move now to the reporters in house, and we will begin with Tim from CKRW.

>> Reporter: My question is for Dr Hanley.

Good afternoon.

Just wanted to-- has there been any discussion about, again early in the game and I'm as cautious as anybody else, about implementation of a vaccine?

We are hearing more stories come out each day about vaccine development.

I get it is not going to be until early next year, potentially, but have those discussions started with health Canada or at the federal level about potential-- and I stress potential-- implementation in the territory?

>> Yeah, so discussions, I guess there are many levels of discussions.

And definitely it is part of our discussions already with my

counterparts around the country and with the Public Health Agency of Canada on early planning.

Of course, one of the leading organizations is the national advisory committee on immunization, which is already looking into vaccine products.

As they are coming through the pipeline, but also on implementation planning.

Locally, our current focus is on the influenza vaccine and that will be available later this fall, in late October.

And we will be giving more details about the flu campaign and really using that as-- using that campaign as kind of a template for how we would do the COVID vaccine at the same time.

There are going to be differences in the influenza vaccine.

We are anticipating and hoping for more people to get the flu shot this year than last year, and planning accordingly in terms of our orders and supplies.

So we are putting in place-- of course, to do a flu campaign while in COVID times means we have to observe all of those public safety measures in terms of how we do spacing, how we do appointments, so the immunization program and community nursing have been working very hard and putting plans for that influenza campaign in place.

In much of it will be paralleled when we get to that fortunate time of having a COVID vaccine available.

>> Pat: Next question.

>> Obviously before we get to a vaccine, it is still practising the Safe Six.

Mya now my hands are a lot more moisturized then they were in March and April.

I have not been washing them as much and fortunately.

Are you seeing Yukoners may be leading up a little bit?

Is this a concern to you?

>> You know, it is always a concern because it is hard to keep up.

It is hard for any of us to consistently keep up a practice, so we all need reminding.

Yourself, and myself included.

We need to remind ourselves, we need to remind each other.

We need to get better at reminding each other and being humble enough to relearn when we forget.

So I think it is natural.

It is natural for any population to stray, to forget, and it is more challenging when we don't see COVID activity.

And of course, we have seen so little in the last few weeks.

I don't think-- I don't sense that there is a deliberate disagreement or discomfort with our measures.

I do see kind of a general relaxing from time to time.

I don't know that I see or hear anything consistent.

I do think though that we need to take every opportunity to stay attuned to the risk because it really is all about managing their risk.

I think one of the best ways to think about it is to act like we have COVID amongst us.

Because it is that unanticipated introduction of a case that can lead to an outbreak and to transmission in our community.

So always act as if the person that you don't know may have been exposed, may potentially be transmitting, and keep that in mind.

>> Pat: Thank you.

We will move now to Philippe from CBC North.

>> Reporter: Thank you.

A question for Dr Hanley.

I believe it was a year ago or a bit more that the government changed the pharmacists act.

One of the changes in the act was allowing pharmacists to give vaccines.

There weren't any last year, but do you know this year if Yukoners will be able to get their flu vaccine at shoppers drug Mart or some other place similar?

>> Good question.

We are anticipating that pharmacists will be able to help with the flu campaign this year.

But I don't have details at this point in terms of who will participate and who will not.

But we have been working very hard on making sure that all of these steps have been in place operationally to allow pharmacists to administer influenza vaccines.

More to come on that.

>> Reporter: My second question would be for Minister Streicker.

Does the emergency declaration change anything about the legislative assembly operates?

>> No.

I think that we don't have anything in that emergency declaration that speak specifically to the legislative assembly, but I know that the legislative assembly office and the speaker have been working on a plan about how to conduct the business of the legislature in a way that will be safe and how we can make sure to still connect with Yukoners because of course, as you know, the seating and therefore both the media and guests of the legislature, it can be close quarters.

So we are going to have to navigate that and a way to make sure that it is safe for all members and for the Yukon.

>> Pat: Thank you.

I would like to thank everyone for their time today.

Our next COVID-19 update is scheduled for Wednesday, September 16th, at 2:00 PM.