



# COVID-19 livestream transcript: Thursday, February 3, 2022

>> Renee: Good morning. I'm Renée Francoeur with Cabinet Communications, and the moderator for today's COVID-19 update. We're joined today by Premier Sandy Silver, and virtually by Dr. Andre Corriveau. Thank you to Mary Thiessen for providing our ASL interpretation, and to Andre Bourcier for providing our French translation. Following the remarks from our speakers, we will go to the media on the phone lines for a round of questions. I'll call you by name, and you'll each have two questions. Should time allow, we will circle back for another round. Before we begin with our speakers, I'd like to verify that everyone can hear us. If any of the reporters are having problems, please email [ecoinfo@yukon.ca](mailto:ecoinfo@yukon.ca). I will now hand it over to Premier Silver.

>> Thank you very much, Renée. And good morning, and thank you folks for joining us. I'm coming to you live in the traditional territories of Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. And I am starting with some very unfortunate news. In recent days, two more Yukoners have died from COVID-19. This is extremely sad news, and very tragic reminder of the seriousness of this virus, and our condolences go out to families and friends. And our thoughts are with them and with their loved ones as they're grieving. Today, to provide additional information about the current situation, I am joined by a familiar face, Dr Andre-- Corriveau, who agreed to fill in on short notice. He's over in Northwest Territories now, I believe, working there as well, but has worked with us as well. It's really great to see André again. He is the Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health for the Northwest Territories. And in true northern fashion, he's lending a hand today. So, thank you very much Dr Corriveau. We continue to experience the impacts of the current wave of COVID-19, and the rapid spread of the Omicron variant. To support our continued response, we are extending the state of emergency, which was declared on November 8th under the Civil Emergency Measures Act. The state of emergency will remain in effect up to 90 days, though it can be revoked at any time, if it's no longer needed. At this time, we still need it to ensure the appropriate public health measures that are in place to limit spread of COVID-19 in the territory continues. Our top priority remains protecting the health and safety of Yukoners, and ensuring that our healthcare system is not overwhelmed. And taking steps to maintain the capacity of our healthcare system is absolutely critical for our entire territory. Our health care system, it has limits. It has limits

when it comes to staffing our facility, for example. We have many remote communities, we are relying on our provincial partners to provide additional capacity, as well. In normal circumstances, this is a concern, but these are obviously not normal circumstances. And COVID-19 continues to spread at an alarming rate across the country, and is putting immense pressures on all healthcare systems. This has been the message for two years, you know, if we don't take additional steps to limit the spread of COVID-19, and to reduce the numbers of hospitalizations here in the territory, we will risk being in a situation where we cannot provide routine medical care to those who need it, for reasons that have nothing to do with COVID-19. And we're seeing that play out in areas right across the country. Now, throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 has added a troubling layer of demands on our health care system, on top of existing needs. But we all have a responsibility to do our best to ensure that resources remain available for those who need surgeries and appointments, to diagnose and to treat, what can be serious illness. We all need to keep this in mind during this very critical period of the pandemic. I know that the pandemic continues to present a number of challenges to every one of us. And we must remember that our individual actions impact our entire community, and we're all in this together. We each have a role to play to prevent further spread, so that we can get through this wave as quickly as possible, which is the goal. The higher our vaccine rates, the more protection we have as a territory, and the less we need to use strong public health measures. So please, I'm again urging that you get vaccinated if you haven't already, and also encourage others to do the same. This includes getting your first shot if you are under 12, getting your second shot if you haven't already, and getting your booster if it has been six months since you received your second dose. Getting vaccinated, just like following public health measures and limiting your contacts, is not just about your own health and safety. It's about protecting your friends, and your family, and your neighbours. And we all have to think big picture, and we all have to come together. Now, I know that it has been very, very hard. You know, we all expected 2022 to be a different year, and it's starting out with this variant. I know that we're all feeling very intense emotions about COVID-19, and the situation that it's put us in. The word "languishing" has been used to describe how many of us feel and how many of us feel mentally, as well when it comes to COVID-19. And I feel that. I know that many Yukoners are feeling burnt out, especially our frontline workers, who have been going nonstop. And I mean it. Nonstop for two years now. From health care workers, to grocery store staff, those who are providing essential services to you, and beyond. You know, you've all been holding such a heavy weight. Taking care of others, ensuring that Yukoners have access to what they need. And, I think I speak for all Yukoners, when I express my gratitude and thanks for your continuing efforts for your community. An expression of gratitude is not nearly enough, and I know that, but I want you to know that you haven't been forgotten, and that your sacrifices to your community, and your commitment to the rest of your community, it's making all the difference. It really is. I've said it before, I'll say it again, these are the heroes, and I know that most Yukoners are treating these folks like heroes. So that's great. I encourage all Yukoners to reach out to a frontline worker that you know, check in on them, as you have been, continue to

do that, and see if they need any extra help or support. Even if it's just a phone call, it means a lot. We are all doing our best when we are helping others, and a lot of people need help right now. There are resources available if you're struggling right now, as well. You don't have to go through this alone. Mental health resources are available for anyone through the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, as well as the Yukon Chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association. You might find these services useful, if you have not used them in the past, rapid access counseling is also available for free. And that's both in English and in French to Yukoners who would like to access these services. I have a phone number here, you can call 867-456-3838. There's also a toll free number, which is the same number. Just 1-866, and then the same last seven digits, which is 456-3838. Now this week, we received new recommendations from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We are working on a plan to slowly, carefully loosen public health measures over the next month. Today, I want to share some of the details of that plan, to let Yukoners know what they can expect, if we're able to keep our numbers down, including our hospitalizations. So, starting this weekend, the limit on recreational team sports, for those under the age of 19, will increase. It'll increase to 25 people or 50% of venue capacity, whichever is less. Now next weekend, and again, this is all based upon the stats that we're monitoring, including our hospitalizations. If we can continue down this pathway, then next weekend, the limit on recreational team sports for those age 19 and up, as well as for arts and recreational activities, will increase to 25 people or 50% venue capacity, whichever is less. Next week, we also hope to be in a position to allow indoor personal gatherings to be up to 10 people, but no longer limited to two households. Then the following week, we are aiming to increase, again, aiming to increase the limit on indoor gatherings, indoor organized events to 50% of venue capacity, and to allow groups of up to six people per table at bars, but no longer limiting that gathering to two households. Finally, assuming that we are trending in the right direction, we are planning to allow bars and restaurants to return to normal hours of operation as of March 1. No longer requiring them to close in-person services at 10 pm. Now, I want to be clear about this plan. It may have to change, if the public health indicators change and result in new recommendations. My cabinet and I are responsible for these decisions about which public health measures are in place, but each one of us has a responsibility in how effective they are. Public health measures, they're like speed limits, they set certain standards for all people to follow, to be safe. But it is still up to the individual drivers to pay attention to the road conditions and to drive accordingly. You know, when the roads have ice fog on them, ice and ice fog, it's not safe to drive the speed limit, as you know. And you need to slow down, not just for your own safety, but for the safety of those around you. These public health measures are set as standards, but each of us have a responsibility in our own lives to make decisions that will keep us all safe, as we move around at work, move around at home, and move around through this current wave. We all have a role to play in keeping the territory safe, and we all need to continue to take precautions to prevent COVID-19 from spreading in our communities. And that includes practising the safe six, and masking up, and getting vaccinated, and limiting your contacts. I know Yukoners want to know

about our current situation. So, starting tomorrow, we will be adding daily information to yukon.ca about our current hospitalizations, as well as the seven day averages in the territory for hospitalizations and cases. We will also continue to provide updates each week, to provide the latest information and answer questions. Thanks folks, I really appreciate the time to showcase what we're looking for ahead. I hope I've emphasized how important it is to follow these rules and restrictions for us to be able to lift them. I think that that's the most important message today. We are all in this together. And our ultimate goal is to have the least social disruption, but we need to make sure that we're monitoring our situation, our hospitalizations, not only here in Whitehorse, but our whole strain on our medical system is really important local indicators that we must balance, as we hopefully get to a new normal, and hopefully turn this pandemic into an endemic. With that, Dr Corriveau.

>> Well, thank you, Premier Silver, and it's good to see you again, and everybody else. And good morning, everyone. As indicated, my name is Dr André Corriveau, and, you know, I'm actually currently Acting Chief Public Health Officer in the Northwest Territories. But this is an illustration of how the three territories have been supporting each other throughout this pandemic, and especially at the Chief Medical Officer of Health level, where we're, you know, in contact on a weekly basis. And-- because you know, it's-- working by ourselves is quite different. Anyway, I'm here to support Dr Elliott, and to provide an update, and hopefully answer some of the questions that people may have that, you know, are more technical in nature. So, here's what's happening around your territory today. And there is 137 active cases. And, the new number of new cases was 22. Yesterday-- as of this morning, four people are in hospital with COVID-19. And as the Premier indicated, unfortunately, there were two deaths, which brings the Yukon total to 18. The average new daily case count is about 21.9 for the past seven days, and 23 over the past three days. And the three day running percent positivity is 40.2%. Over the course of the pandemic, there have been a total of 3,168 confirmed cases, with 3,041 cases resolved. I'm happy to report that the majority of the outbreaks at Yukon's long-term care homes have been declared over now. And outbreak protocols remain in place at one of the Whistle Bend Place's houses, and visitation and restrictions will continue until March 2nd out of an abundance of caution. But, there is, you know, good evidence now that the surge has ended. I would like to say a few words now about some recent recommendations from the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. So last Friday, the Public Health Agency of Canada released the updated guidance from NACI on the recommended use of booster COVID-19 doses in adolescents 12 to 17. And after reviewing this evidence, on the need for and benefits of a booster in adolescents, Dr Elliott's team, as you know, followed suit and the Acting Chief Medical Officer Of Health is recommending a booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine for all Yukon adolescents aged 12 to 17, with an interval of six months since their final dose of the primary series. So, I believe Dr Elliott also mentioned last week, during the Kids and Vaccines Day, that the Public Health Agency of Canada has also recently released updated guidance

from NACI. And so to quickly recap, based on new evidence for the Yukon, we'll now be offering vaccines to the children five to 11 years. A third dose for moderately to severely immunocompromised, and you have previously received two doses of Pfizer vaccine at-- you know, with a third dose 28 days after the second dose. And for people who are-- just to-- to be clear, the-- for people who are immune compromised the-- their primary series is three doses. So, it's not really for them, it's not really a booster dose. That's the baseline immunization for immune suppressed individuals, is three doses, and then the booster is the one that we offer six months later. There's currently no booster indications recommended for the five to 11, of course, because that vaccine only became available, you know, late December. And so we're actually at the stage now where we're offering the second dose for that population. In closing, I'd like to say that, as the Premier said, we all need to do our part to keep Omicron peak as low as we can. And we're in a critical moment right now in this wave and our actions right now will determine how quickly that wave will recede from us, and that we can resume the, you know, our lives. You know, the Premier is-- was very clear on that, too, like, everybody's tired. Everybody's exhausted from, you know, having to sustain our collective actions. And, you know, we, as much as everyone else want to see an end to the-- you know, the public health orders. I think we've all learned together over the past two years, what needs to be done if and when the new variant emerges, the public health measures will remain the same, we'll have to stay up to date with our immunizations, we'll have to avoid the large gatherings that can facilitate spread. And, you know, stay home when we're not feeling well until we have a diagnosis or until we feel better. And that includes for employers to be more tolerant of, you know, employees calling and, you know, indicating that they would-- you know, they need to work from home today, because they don't feel well. And so, I think we will learn how to manage this in the future, but without public health orders. But for the meantime, we're going to, you know, the game plan, as was indicated, is to release them on a gradual basis, so that by the spring, we're, you know, back to normal as quickly as possible. So, there's an expanding network of mental health resources that are available at Yukon.ca. And, you know, we have to rely on the strength of our family, the resiliency of our communities to carry through this phase right now. So, let's reach out to each other and support each other. And thank you. I'll be here to answer technical questions. And I might have to refer more to Premier Silver, since I haven't been in Yukon now for over a month and a half. Thanks.

>> Renee: Thank you, Dr Corriveau and thank you Premier Silver. 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. We'll now go to the phone lines. And we'll start with John at CKRW.

>> John: Hi, I'm not certain who's better to answer the question, but I know that we're talking about trying to keep hospitalizations down as much as possible in order to keep strain off of the medical system here in the Yukon. I'm wondering if we actually have any hospitalization numbers? Because I haven't heard anything.

>> Yeah, as I mentioned, John, in my opening statements, we're gonna start providing those numbers on a daily basis. I have a number, but I don't think it's current to today. I know that there was a number of six was given to me this week. But again, as far as it being the current state over there in the hospital now, I don't have that number. But these numbers will be available on Yukon.ca moving forward. Just on that as well, John, understanding the nature of who's in the hospital and why and also, the amount of staff that we have, as you know, folks are, you know, being taken off of the frontline for testing and other reasons as well. So it's not just the beds that we're looking at. We're taking a look at capacity, a broader sense of capacity here, a broader sense of capacity also in the neighbouring jurisdictions that we rely very heavily on for our medical services to Yukoners.

>> If I may, I'd like to just add in terms of the part of your question that dealt with prevention of hospitalization. So, you know, it's very hard in the territories to accumulate enough data because our numbers, you know, relatively speaking, are still small, but we can rely on the data that's collected across the country and elsewhere. And it's become very evident, even though there were certainly strong signals that Omicron was a lot less severe than previous variants. You know the data is quite striking that the people who do end up with serious illness are either people who are still unimmunized or you know, didn't complete their first series or people who did-- were fully immunized but are past or near the six month mark. And have chronic conditions or, you know, elderly, especially the 70 plus. So the focus on offering boosters is very, very important right now, it's probably the one measure that will make the greatest difference.

>> Renee: Thank you. John, do you have a second question?

>> John: Yeah, I'm curious as to know whether or not we have a timeline set for that the state of emergency is set to expire 90 days, and we're renewing it. And there's a proposed timeline to lift some restrictions, slowly, starting in March, I believe is what I heard. But are we going to see some sort of a physical or digital document that Yukoners can access on the regular to kind of refer back to regarding that?

>> Yeah, John, as you know, the Act stipulates, the civil emergency measure is applied up to 90 days. So that's how the Act is read, that doesn't mean that we have to open it up for 90 days. And really, you know, why a civil emergency measure is open versus why it's not, and how we can actually move forward, once this becomes an endemic, is something we as a government are, you know, we'd love to be able to turn that page sooner than later. But, you know, as Dr Corriveau just relayed, we're not out of this pandemic, yet. And it is very hard to understand, you know, based upon a whole bunch of different information, you know, the tenuous of local data, you know, you could be overrun with six or seven people showing up at a facility, but also to rely on what we've seen in patterns and other jurisdictions, including Northern BC or British Columbia, you know, these are all the parameters that we're looking at, to hopefully get to a position where our immunization is up enough, or boosters are up enough. The outbreaks that we're seeing, in particular social settings are at bay enough, those will be the indicators over a more prolonged, you know, not just daily or over one week...trends, that will get us to a position where we can and will hopefully get rid of the civil emergency measures acts as quickly as possible. But, you know, it's a balance. It's not a guessing game. I gotta tell you, there's an awful lot of information. And there's an awful lot of different walks of life, basically, from medical to business owners, to, you know, to chiefs and councils and mayors and councils, community leaders, you know, there's a lot of information that goes into, you know, where we are and where we need to be. We were hoping today by showing the next month, there is positive in Omicron right now there is positive, if we can adhere to these rules through this month. If we can move every week and see that we can get to that place where we lift a restriction or increase capacity or increase the ability to gather and we don't see pressures on the healthcare system. That is a really good indication of the demise of a civil emergency measure.

>> Renee: Thank you. We'll now move to Hina at Canadian Press. Checking one more time, Hina at Canadian Press. Okay, well, hearing nothing. We'll circle back, Hina, at the end. We'll now move to Stephanie at Yukon News.

>> Stephanie: Hi, this question is for Sandy. I'm wondering about the decision for this weekend to change limits on team sports and recreation for those under 19. And then that begin later for those over nineteen teams. I'm just wondering if you can explain the reasoning behind that. Why not, you know, change limits for recreation for everyone at once?

>> Yeah, it's a really good question. You know, a lot of it has to do with, you know, in the past where we've seen spread, a lot of it has to do also with you know, this is the time of year where we're really concerned about youth and making sure that they have opportunities. We're concerned about everybody but you know, keeping the schools open was extremely important for long term educational goals and mental health. And if we can address them, those concerns and at the same time, make a move that that doesn't cause extra strain on our healthcare systems, that's the approach. So if we did both at once, it might be harder to see if outbreak happens, what piece was responsible. And so, after talking to leaders and organizers of sport with kids, and other parts of our community, we made the decision to do it one week, and then the next, you know, this is our ability to allow kids the opportunities that some of these restrictions didn't allow in the past, but also allows us to monitor, you know, over a really short time, you know, it's just a week in between the two, but it does give us a stagnated start between those two, which will be helping with relevant data as well.

>> Renee: Thank you. Do you have a second question, Stephanie?

>> Stephanie: Yeah, I guess you mentioned, you know, talking with recreation groups. I'm wondering whether you've spoken with the sort of the business community in terms of, you know, the other two changes that will be coming for businesses in terms of capacity, and March 1, bars and restaurants moving back to regular hours?

>> Yeah, you know, again, myself and my colleagues, you know, we're always speaking with owners of businesses in the private sector. Lots of conversations, a lot of frustrating conversations as well. You know, none of us want to see our businesses being restricted. Most people that I do speak to understand what we're trying to balance, and the good news of living in a smaller jurisdiction is the ability to be able to speak to a lot of our amazing business leaders. You know, so I know that folks want to see the order of operations back to normal. But we also know, based upon epidemiology in the past, we do know, the measures that we put in, they're there to stop spread. And to save lives. We're hoping that we can get to a place in a couple of weeks here where the two household restriction gets lifted. And so we get back to a six persons per table. I know that that's not dropping of all of the restrictions, but it's a step towards more business, more movement inside of those businesses, those restaurants and bars. But again, you know, there's seriously concerning peaks that have been forecasted in the Yukon as far as hospitalization and case count. And we haven't reached those yet, you know, those apexes are still to come. And we have to balance the knowledge that we have from our experts in the Chief Medical Office team and how they navigate the challenges of this new pandemic. And we have to take in consideration the science, but also the social aspects, you



know, of this dynamic situation. And we need to work together to ensure that we have the best possible outcomes, you know, the ultimate goal of these restrictions, and the way that we lift them is to have restrictions for the least amount of time possible. And so that's our goal. And we hope that we can get to a place again, this weekend, we'd love to see more gathering of sports for kids. And we hope to see a plunking of our hospitalizations at the same-- as the same rate. What I do have confidence in is, you know, we do have a good population of folks that are vaccinated, but we do need to do more. I think the real message today is if we want to see the least amount of restrictions, how do we make sure that we get people their boosters? How do we make sure that kids from the age of five and up, can get their immunization very, very quickly? Those are, as Dr Corriveau said, that's our ultimate goal. That's what we know will lift these restrictions. The quickest is if our immunization keeps up with the variants.

>> Renee: Thank you. We'll now move to Jim at the Whitehorse Star.

>> Jim: Yes, good morning. My first question is for the Premier. Just curious as to who the-- who is Dr James Talbot that was mentioned in the release? Is he going to be the new permanent medical officer of health?

>> Yeah, I'm not involved in the hiring process as far as that goes. I know that he was planned to join us. He's a visiting locum right now, Jim is and unfortunately due to some unforeseen circumstances, Dr Talbot was not able to join us today, which was going to be the situation. So again, we're pretty really lucky to have Andre here. You know, with his vast experience in a few different areas of health, British Columbia and Northwest Territories in the past and his work here in Yukon as well, it's, I wouldn't say necessarily seamless, Andre, but it'-- it's very quick and easy for Dr Corriveau to come in and to lend some assistance as far as the technical pieces that are over my head, that we would rely on the doctors to relay as far as the epidemiology. But yeah, Dr Talbot, at the last minute really just couldn't join us today. So...

>> Renee: Thank you. Tim, do you have a second question?

>> Tim: I do. And again, this would be for the Premier. Just wondering what the process looks like when you're coming up to the deadline like this to renew the state of emergency. What goes into reviewing all the information and making that decision to extend it?

>> Yeah, it's good question. It comes down to the restrictions and capacity to keep these restrictions in place. You know, a lot of them are subscribed to the civil emergency measure, as you'll recall, in the past, too, when we lifted the civil emergency measure, that also lifted the restrictions as well. So, you know, if you take a look back in time as to, you know, the narrative that we presented, when we lifted the civil emergency measures, and also the narrative that we presented, when we had to put it back in, it does give a really good indication of when in Yukon, that extra layer to protect our society is necessary. And, you know, the timing of it is we came to the end of our 90 days of the current. And I know that when we first implemented 90 days ago, we were very hopeful, because as Andre said, you know, at that time, the forecast that we're getting out of, you know, places like South Africa and a little bit of out of Europe at that time was mild, but concerningly transmissible. Now we have a better understanding of the effects in Canada. In Yukon, we have the ability as well to take a look at epidemiology in other jurisdictions, whether they be larger jurisdictions like Quebec and Ontario, and the millions of people that live there and how that affects the healthcare system. But also smaller jurisdictions like New Brunswick, and, you know, northern British Columbia, and even the island health in British Columbia and the territories as well. And, you know, we kind of are, almost as the sun sets and rises, we're kind of behind as far as the data, because it kind of moved through Canada before kind of getting here. And so it's a wonderful opportunity for us to be able to use epidemiology where places like Quebec, you know, when they were going through their first peak, might not have had that luxury. So, you know, it's one of those situations where we're not done with this pandemic, you know, Omicron has proved to be, you know, milder, but deadly. And as Dr Corriveau mentioned, and, you know, anybody paying attention to The National seeing stories of, of who the patients are, that are still being targeted by this virus and the discrepancies between, you know, somebody who's vaccinated and someone who's not vaccinated. As far as the effect that Omicron has on these individuals, it is very severe for the unvaccinated for the most part comparatively, not only just the time in which you have the virus, but the time in which you can transmit it as well to others. So we're not out of this yet. And we need to get our boosters up to the excellent percentages that we saw a year ago, when we were front-end loaded with our first and second shots. You know, so that initiative now as the Health Canada approved vaccinations for those five and older and as we have the boosters, and as we have more miracles of modern science coming down the pike when it comes to what Moderna is looking at, for variant specific vaccinations and other medicinal treatments. You know, this is a long game and, and we are very, very lucky to live in Canada and to be able to live in Yukon as well and to be able to plan for the future. But right now, it's not a time for us to let the civil emergency measures to expire.

>> Renee: Thank you. We'll now move to Brianna at Canadian Press.

>> Brianna: Hi, there. Thanks so much for taking my question. A lot of them have actually already been answered. But I'm wondering how much you have relied on your provincial partners in recent weeks and in what ways? And then also Renee, Hine is not on the line, so you don't need to loop back to her. Thanks.

>> Okay, sorry, I didn't hear the last part of the question. It wasn't for me, I guess. Okay. But yeah, I can speak a bit to this. I'm sure Dr Corriveau could speak to it a lot more as well. When-- in my role as Premier, we have weekly conversations. You know, over the last two years, with the other provincial leaders, we meet-- I meet with my territorial leaders as well, we have the Northern Premiers conference, then we have the Western Premiers conferences. These calls are fast and furious. There's lots of calls going on, comparing, from a political perspective, the state of each region, and then conversations, again, with-- healthcare conversations with-- with the First Ministers meetings, including the Prime Minister. You know, and that, to me, is a really good check in. You know, you spend a lot of your week researching local data, talking to the chief medical officers of health and their teams about epidemiology in other regions, you get all this information from the private sector, you get different information from chiefs and councils, mayors and councils, you take local, and you apply it to this national lens as this check in point, and, you know, nine times out of 10, we're going through very similar things that other jurisdictions are going through as well, but again, like I said, it's a little bit delayed just because of the geography of where we are in the population. So, it's always a good check-in. You know, as rapid testing changed, as different advice changes, how each jurisdiction is reacting to that, what our coordinated level of ask is going to be for the federal government, how we as a nation can come together to share in resources, that's always been, from the get-go, a conversation that every jurisdiction was willing to go into, and really, it bodes well for the new normal. You know, we keep on talking about the lessons learned from COVID. We have the conduits of communication dialed in right now, and as we move to addressing opioid crisis, as we as we compare mental health challenges right across the country, you know, I'm very confident that the one thing that COVID has allowed is for a better and more coordinated ability to communicate amongst regions in this country when it comes to solving some of the crisis's that COVID brings, but also the ones that are in front of us, as we hopefully move to a new normal. Dr Corriveau, I'm not sure what your perspective would be, but you are the right person to ask when it comes to coordinated efforts amongst jurisdictions in the medical field.

>> Yeah, well, certainly, you know, the same is true in the public health realm, and I mentioned at the beginning that even across the North, the chief from the three territories are in weekly calls, above and beyond the twice a week call that we have, you know, nationally with our other colleagues in the provinces. But, beyond that, I think it's worth mentioning too, that the Yukon, just as the Northwest Territories, we depend a lot also on our most southern-- like, our

immediate southern province. I know for a fact that your department has benefited a lot from support from the BCCDC, and from, you know, Dr Bonnie Henry's office, and their capacity, and they have more-- you know, they're bigger, they have more capacity to provide some additional support in developing tools, or sharing the tools that they've developed, and we rely on the specialists from those, the provincial labs, and the specialists-- the clinical specialists who come to give us a hand virtually, or sometimes in person. I think that's one of the silver lining from COVID, is it has enhanced those supports and collaborations, and hopefully these will persist long term to address other important issues in the health system.

>> Renee: Thank you. And thank you, Brianna, for letting us know about your colleague that was on the line earlier. Brianna, do you have a follow up question?

>> Brianna: No, I'm okay. Thank you so much.

>> Renee: Thank you. We'll move to Claudiane at Radio Canada.

>> Claudiane: Thank you. My first question would be for the premier. We've seen some protests here locally, as well as nationally, asking for lifting all of the restrictions. I would like to hear your comments on those local protests here that we've seen the past couple of weekends, in light of what you just announced coming up in the next few weeks.

>> Yeah, I mean, we live in a democratic society, and I will fight for the rights of individuals to express their opinions, and to gather, and to protest, every single waking hour of my political career, that's for sure. It's extremely important. I worry, as a nation, that we've siloed[?] ourselves too much, and the kitchen tables conversations that we have are just with like-minded people. You know, we all suffer from that. It's how we choose our social media. How we engage online. It's concerning to me. So, I never shy away from conflicting views. I think that that makes us stronger as a nation, when we have the ability to, to express ourselves. I fall short when I see, you know, anger, anti-Semitic, you know, those types of things. You know, anybody who touches Terry Fox's statue, you know, I'll just leave that at that. You know, there's a whole element here, that's really dangerous and really ugly, but we can't lose sight of the fact that people are frustrated. We can't lose sight of the fact that we need to have pockets of conversation, not only politically, but in our kitchens as well, with people that disagree with us politically. I'm really concerned about that. And, you know, I know that maybe the reaction that we're seeing is a result of that, and the more ways that we as a community can actually reach

out to the people that we don't agree with, but show respect to, we as a nation will get over this together. When, when you hitch your wagons to something that has an anti-Semitic, or homophobic, or even disrespectful to, you know, some of our institutions, some of the stuff that we saw in Ottawa. You know, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, those types of things. That's just ugly, and that's just unnecessary, and I don't know how anybody can, you know, agree with that, but don't lose in that that there are people that are just frustrated. That are trying their best to put food on the table. And these are hard times for people to do that, and we can't lose sight of that, even though we see this other ugly piece that I hope nobody likes. But there's an important message there as well. People are frustrated. People want to get back to normal. And I'm urging folks that we all do want to get back to normal, we are all frustrated, and the best way for us to do that is to come together as a community, and to listen to opposing views respectfully. I got to give a shout out to some of the businesses that I have reached out to and talk to, never asked them what their politics is, it's not about that. You know, for them to say afterwards, you know, you got a tough job, and then to explain to me how tough their jobs are. And that information is extremely important. So, yeah, we're in interesting times right now, Claudiane, that's for sure, and I'm an optimistic person, and I know that most Canadians are going to pull through this by increasing how their actions affect our community. And I know that in years from now, we'll all look back at our most trying times, and we'll be our own judges of our own character during these toughest times.

>> Renee: Thank you. Do you have a second question, Claudiane?

[Speaking French]

>> So, the question is for Dr Corriveau. Could you please explain a bit in French the differences in how you are managing the pandemic with the different territories between the two territories? You were saying this morning that you will not remove any restrictions at this time, but at the same time, here today you're standing with the Premier to announce some of the removal of some of the restrictions. What are the difference in management of the pandemic between both territories?

[Speaking French]

>> Renee: Thank you, Dr Corriveau.

If I could--

>> Do you want me to repeat in English, or--

>> Renee: Yes, thank you.

>> Yeah.

So I was saying in French is that, of course, the, you know, the Omicron wave is hitting differently and a different timing from one area to another, so everybody must react to what's happening on the ground in their environment.

So, you know, it's normal that there would be some differences in timing between, you know, the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, and, for that matter, across the country, because we're at different stage in this wave.

The NWT had, you know, a very large wave this time, that's, you know, almost four times as big as any that we've seen in the past.

So, you know, we have to take a cautious approach, but that's no really different than anywhere else.

And some measures were relaxed last week, and, you know, we have plans to relax further down the road, but, you know, I wasn't able this morning in the NWT context to say we're ready to further relaxation right now, but we're headed there, and we're watching the situation very closely.

So it's the same in Yukon, and it's the same elsewhere as well.

So we all have the same end goal in mind, and we all want to see the least amount of restrictions in place.

>> Renee: Thank you.

We'll now move to Jackie, at CBC.

>> Jackie: Good morning.

I think my first question is for the Premier.

I'm wondering if there are any updates on Paxlovid? Health Canada approved it, I guess, about two weeks ago now, so I'm just wondering, has the Yukon procured any? Is any in the territory? What's the rollout plan? Any details you can share would be great.

>> Okay, thanks, Jackie.

Yeah, we received our first shipment.

It was late last month.

And there are only 100 courses for treatment so far, and these will be used where they're, obviously, needed the most.

And we need to keep in mind that this medication is no substitute for a vaccine, and, again, you know, every time we will mention this, it's, you know, get vaccinated if you haven't already, including the booster if you're eligible, and appointments are available at our clinics, and the shots are available and ready, and the vaccine will help protect us, and, yeah, we have received our shipment, and we'll be rolling that out, but I don't have any other updates.

This is pretty much the same thing that we said last time that I was in front of this mic, Jackie, I think you'd asked the same question then.

So-- but, yeah, 100 courses for treatment so far, and that's all we have right now.

>> Renee: Thank you.

Do you have a follow up question, Jackie?

>> Jackie: I do.

I think this could go to either the Premier or the doctor, but in some other jurisdictions, especially in the US, and even the Yukon Supreme Court, they say that cloth masks aren't

enough in this Omicron wave, and especially in light of the new sub variant, that N95s are needed, or at least a medical mask and a cloth mask on top.

I'm wondering if the Yukon will be issuing any updated mask advice. Obviously any mask is better than no masks, but do you have any recommendations, or upcoming recommendations on the use of N95s over non medical masks?

>> Yeah, I don't have anything to update you on, Jackie, on that, but I would really like to get Andre's-- Dr Corriveau's opinion on this, as well, and, you know, with his role over at Northwest Territories, but also his understanding of the most recent information, where he, his mind is going on this, that'd be great.

>> Yeah, so the, you know, the issue of masks is, you know, is an evolving one as well, with, you know, the Omicron variant.

We know, it's like you said, any mask is better than no mask.

We know that a three layer mask is better than previous simple cloth masks, and the medical grade masks are better.

And then the N94 is better as well, again, and then you have the N95, which tend to be, you know, less comfortable.

And if people aren't wearing it properly, and it's not well fitted, it's, you know, it's not really the advantage of using those is, it loses its potency.

So, it's really what's practical, and in the context of the setting, and the risk associated with-- traditionally in a healthcare setting, certainly, there's been a shift for many types of situations where, N95, when it's feasible, and, you know, is the desired level of protection that is provided, because, you know, you're dealing with high risk clients, and, you know, the protection is more critical.

But the mask is not by itself anyway, so, you know, I'm going back to, you know, the immunization level, the other protective measures.

We have data now that shows that Omicron actually can survive, like for a couple of days, on a surface, plastic surface, and even on skin for up to 21 hours.

So, you know, we're back to, you know, washing our hands and disinfecting surfaces.

So it's not that one measure by itself will solve in order to be the magic solution.



Every aspect contributes to it.

>> I'll just add anecdotally as well, you know, my comment in the opening statements about you know, we set speed limits, we set restrictions, but it is also up to individuals to know the road conditions, that metaphor.

I haven't worn a cloth mask, since walking into a local business.

I walked into a local business with my cloth mask on, and sat down and waited.

And as I was waiting, the very friendly receptionist from the business came up and said, Yeah, you need to put on this mask instead.

And I thought that was great.