



COVID-19 livestream transcript: Tuesday, January 25, 2022

>> Renée: Good morning to you all. I'm Renée Francoeur with Cabinet Communications and the moderator for today's COVID-19 update. We are joined today by the Minister of Education, Jeanie McLean and the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health, Doctor Catherine Elliot. Thank you to Mary Thiessen for providing our ASL interpretation. Please note, there is no French translation today. Following the remarks from our speakers, we will go to the media on the phone lines for round of questions. I'll call you by name and you will each have two questions. We'll then circle back for another round with reporters, time permitting. Before we begin with our speakers, I would like to verify that everyone can hear us. If any of the reporters are having problems, please email ecoinfo@yukon.ca. I will now hand it over to Minister McLean.

>> Thank you, Renée. Good morning, folks. I'm joining you from the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and to Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Thank you so much to those First Nations who continue to host us in such a generous and wonderful way. Thank you for joining the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health Doctor Catherine Elliot and I for today's COVID-19 update. Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the deep grief so many Yukoners are feeling today. So many are struggling throughout our territory. Last week, I joined my colleague Health and Social Service Minister Tracy-Anne McPhee, as we declared a substance use health emergency.

This follows a drastic increase in overdose related deaths in our territory. Our hearts go out to the families, friends and communities, mourning the loss of loved ones due to opioid and substance use, suicide, and mental health. The loss of young people I think is the hardest loss for all of us. The loss of their contribution, what they-- their potential could have been. We hear your call for help, and we are here to stand with you, support you and fight against this crisis. What do I miss, I miss being able to come together and to grieve together and to support one another, together. This is the way Yukon does things, we do things together. And we do-- and this is what has been missing for so many of us throughout the pandemic. I want to note that there are many ceremonies happening throughout the territory. I attended the Sacred Fire that was hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations on Friday and that fire burned throughout the entire weekend with an intent to bring people together and to hold space for people as we grieve as we go through these losses. And I know that Carcross/Tagish First Nation is having ongoing sacred fires and ceremonies and are holding a prayer circle today. So thank you to all

of those who are doing their part. And I know that we're all feeling the weight of this and I know we are also tired. It feels like the pandemic is never ending. And now we are seeing these other devastating impacts in our communities. I think a lot of these issues were present before COVID-19. And now they are much worse.

On Friday, Dr. Elliot reported another Yukon resident had died of COVID-19. This is the 16th person in our territory. This is such sad news. We send our deepest condolences to the families and friends of this Yukoner. I've always said that one death is too many. And so today we stand here, marking this incredibly sad reality that we've now lost 16 people. I know now more than ever, we need to come together, treat each other with patience and kindness, show our resiliency and lift each other up. That is what Yukon does best. That is such an important part of the values that we carry as Yukoners. It's a challenging time. We are in a phase of the pandemic, in a new phase of the pandemic and each time we transition into unfamiliar territory, we feel more anxiety and uncertainty. As leaders we're responsible for guiding you through the reality of this pandemic. That is our job and we take it very seriously. We are on the pathway to addressing some of these long standing issues affecting our communities that the pandemic has highlighted. It is why we remain solid on keeping schools safe and open. And the experts agree with us. We know this is one of the best ways we can support the wellbeing of our children, their learning, their development and their mental health. Every child matters. I remained focused on not leaving any child behind. Today marks three weeks since our schools reopened after the holiday break. For many of our schools that means three weeks of in person learning for students. At some schools, we've have had to move to periods of remote learning as we have faced operational challenges related to staffing.

This is primarily due to isolation requirements and illness among staff. We know all of this hasn't been easy on students, families and school staff, school bus drivers and many others in our communities. I want to say to the teachers and school staff adapting and being flexible right now. Thank you. To the teachers on call answering our call outs, thank you. To the essential staff working behind the scenes and sometimes out in the schools, thank you. To the students and the parents dealing with this stressful and rapidly changing time with patience and resilience, thank you. I also want to say thank you to all of those frontline health workers and those providing mental health, wellness and addiction supports in our communities, as well as First Nation governments, staff who are supporting are their citizens, and all of us as well. Because of your hard work, we still have the satisfaction of seeing the smiling faces of children who were able to learn at school, see their friends and stay connected to their teachers. It truly takes all of us to have the resolve to keep our schools safe and open. I now want to take the time to address some of the changes families are experiencing that have certainly that we've certainly heard are causing additional stress and concern.

I'll talk a little bit about the attendance based surveillance. We know that families are have expressed concern about the shift away from receiving notifications from school--or Yukon

Communicable Disease Control when there is a positive COVID-19 case identified at the school. For years, attendance based surveillance has proven to be a successful tool in helping YCDC to identify, respond and manage to--illness and manage illness within schools. We will be relying on this process to manage ongoing cases of COVID-19 within our school communities. In this process, it will be important that parents and guardians of students advise their child's school when their child is absent due to illness. That being said they do not have to be specific and share that their child has tested positive for COVID-19 using a rapid test. The school only needs to know that your child is ill. Doing this will allow principals to track absentee rates within their schools and notify YCDC when there is an above average--when there there's above average numbers of absences due to reported illness. Based on the information provided, YCDC will evaluate the information provided by schools on an ongoing basis. I know this feels like a dramatic shift. However, if there is an increased risk to the health and safety of students, or school staff, we will take the steps necessary to introduce additional health and safety measures. And we will make sure you are notified of any changes to your child's school if we receive advice from YCDC, or the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health that additional measures are needed to keep your school low risk.

I want to let you know today that YCDC will also be making this change with early learning and childcare programs in the territory. As of tomorrow, Wednesday, January 26, exposure notices in these settings will also end. The programs, like schools, will report to YCDC when attendance rates are below average due to illness. YCDC will use this information to make decisions about how to manage cases in these settings. The acting Chief Medical Officer of Health can share more information on how this process works when she gives her comments. Moving on to rapid tests. To further help navigate the ongoing pandemic together I want to address how our communities, our schools and our early learning and childcare programs will support the Government of Yukon's changing testing strategy. We have heard the call from Yukoners who are requesting the use of rapid tests to better monitor COVID-19 especially when it comes to our schools. Rapid tests, as we have heard from the acting Chief Medical Officer of Health are not necessarily foolproof. The most important thing you need to know is if you have symptoms, you should assume you have COVID-19 and follow the recommendations for isolation, which can be found online at yukon.ca. A negative test is not a substitute for being vaccinated and following public health measures. Still, they are an additional tool that can be used to support learning to continue in Yukon schools with the intent to reduce transmission of COVID-19. I'm happy to report that as of Friday, January 21, our government began rolling out rapid tests to schools and licensed early learning and childcare or ELCC programs in Yukon communities.

The distribution process continues and we will be hearing directly from and you will be hearing directly from your school or ELCC program about how and when to pick up the tests for these settings during regular hours. Additionally, rapid tests are currently being distributed in our Yukon communities at large for Yukoners living outside of Whitehorse. You do not have to be

symptomatic to pick up a rapid test in the communities. As these community distribution sites and pick up details are confirmed they will be added to yukon.ca. Yukoners will receive one test kit per person as part of this initial distribution. Rapid tests will be expanding into Whitehorse schools and ELCC programs in the days ahead. That being said, rapid tests continue to be available in Whitehorse at the Takhini Arena drive-thru for symptomatic Yukoners. Thank you to everyone who is working hard to coordinate and distribute these tests to our communities. We could not do this without you. That's for certain. In terms of school operations, as we are entering into this new phase of managing the pandemic, I want to remind Yukoners, we will continue to do everything we can to keep our schools open and safe for in-person learning. Every school in the Yukon has an approved operational plan for communicable disease to ensure that the health and safety of students and staff. We have also updated the traffic light checker tool on yukon.ca to help you know when your child can go to school or return to regular activities. This is what it looks like. It's on yukon.ca and I know that Dr. Elliot will be talking a little bit more about that. With these measures in place our schools remain low-risk settings and positive places for children to continue learning. Every school in Yukon is prepared to support students with flexible learning, ready to pivot to online learning or learning packages if a specific student needs that. Again, we want to make sure that every student has what they need and that there is no child left behind. We will make the decision to move a school to remote or blended online learning if we need to do that. I know not knowing whether your child's school might be impacted by these day to day operational challenges create some uncertainty. I want you to know we are taking every necessary step to share updates with families and school staff as quick as possible. You will be notified directly if your school has to pivot to remote learning. And we will continue to post regular daily updates on yukon.ca about school operations. Thank you to all of you for your ongoing patience, your kindness, your resiliency. As I wrap up my comments, I'd like to remind folks that January 28th, is Bell Let's Talk Day. A day to destigmatize mental health. I've noticed this year's campaign is a little bit different. It includes let's keep listening, and keep hope. So you can go to all social media platforms and look for #BellLet'sTalk for more information. And I really encourage folks to work with this campaign. It's been really successful. And now I think more than any other time we need to be talking to each other and listening to one another and holding each other up. So I'll now turn over to Dr. Elliot. So thank you so much for tuning in today and being part of this update.

>> Thank you Minister McLean. Good morning everyone. Bonjour. I want to take a moment to reflect on where we are as a territory. As Minister McLean has shared, many of us have suffered and are still suffering losses. Losses from substance use, losses from mental illness, and losses due to COVID-19.

We also know and can see that Yukon and her people remain strong and resilient. And it is Yukon as a whole that stands together with those who are suffering right now. If we look

outside, we can see that the days are getting longer and the weather is warm right now. Although we know that there are likely cold snaps ahead, we can all feel spring around the corner. I want you to remember that there are 23 more minutes of daylight since our last update on Thursday last week. And I'm really so grateful for the return of daylight and looking forward to the longer days that we will share together. I'll now turn to an update on COVID-19. There is one person in the hospital in the territory with COVID-19. The average new daily case count is 39 over the past week, and 32 over the past three days. There are 211 active cases in the territory. We have declared outbreaks at Whistle Bend and Copper Ridge long term care homes. Over the course of the pandemic, there have been a total of 2,981 people in Yukon with COVID-19 and 2,796 people have recovered. We have lost 16 Yukoners in this pandemic. Minister McLean spoke to the successes of schools and how we continue to build and ensure that we can offer as much in-person learning as possible during this time. We should all be very proud of the work we have done to keep schools running for Yukon students. Whether you are a parent or family member, a caregiver, a staff member or a community member who's followed public health measures and kept your vaccines up to date, thank you. We have used a sound approach to keeping students and staff safe.

This is the approach we have taken since day one of this pandemic. It involves a review of the most recent scientific evidence and medical recommendations made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health or the acting and then applying this to the Yukon context and what is best for our health, our society and our territory. I want to reassure parents, children and staff that this current approach to managing illness in our schools is grounded in science. And it has proven effective time and again throughout this pandemic. As we are now in the largest wave of the pandemic Yukon has ever seen, we have added extra layers of protection including full-day masking increase the capacity to shift from in-person learning to remote learning and other measures as necessary. The strong working partnership between YCDC and Yukon schools, between the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Department of Education is well established. And the operational plans we've developed with our educators are solid and they're working. Parents, you know your children best, caregivers, grandmas, you know what's right for them. And you remain our first and best line of defense in helping limit COVID-19 risk in our schools.

Please make sure that your child's COVID-19 vaccines are up to date and talk to your child every day to see if they have any new or worsening symptoms and make use of the stoplight system to determine the responsible next step whether it's going to school or isolating at home. By now you've likely seen the stoplight info in our schools and on yukon.ca and I'm going to walk you through it now. So the first thing to do when you click on yukon.ca stoplight is to find the age and the vaccination status of your child so you know you're looking at the right version. Here I'm going to walk through the information for children who are five and older and who are fully vaccinated. You see on the screen here, the red light symptoms. They are cough, fever,

chills, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. The symptoms are the same in every stoplight. If your child shows signs of any one of these symptoms and they are up to date are fully vaccinated if they've had two doses of vaccine, they should self-isolate until seven days have passed, and the child feels well, and a fever any fever has ended. Next slide. If your child has any of these yellow symptoms, headaches, sore throat, runny nose, congestion, fatigue, aches, nausea, loss of appetite, etc, this is a yellow light.

It means your child should only return to school or regular activities once this symptom goes away. If your child has two of these symptoms, it's a little different for people who are-- I'll just say it's a little different if you're if you don't have your two doses. Next slide. This is the green light, this is no symptoms. Your child can attend in person learning and regular activities. So I said, it was a little different depending on your vaccination status. Children who have not had two doses of vaccine will need to isolate even if they only have two yellow symptoms, and they will need to do so for 10 days because they are more likely to get infected and to transmit the virus longer. A more detailed breakdown of the traffic light system is available at yukon.ca/traffic-light. I encourage all parents and students to familiarize themselves with this simple tool and know how to keep our schools healthy. Okay. In addition, the class or school may need to move to virtual learning for other reasons. As Minister McLean has noted, families can stay up to date by assessing the daily snapshot of school situation on yukon.ca. Parents will also be informed directly about any changes in school operations. I'll turn now to testing. We have heard from the school communities requests for a testing program. And as Minister McLean has explained today, we are pleased to add that for schools and early learning programs and to add these locations to the testing distribution program. At home rapid tests will be available for staff and students at schools and early learning programs throughout the Yukon. This is in addition to the drive-thru distribution, which is available here in Whitehorse at to Takhini Arena from Monday to Friday 7:30 am to 3 pm.

Schools and early learning programs will provide information directly to parents and caregivers for how to pick up a test. Yukon.ca will list all of the places and times for people in the communities to pick up an at home rapid test. We continue to make updates to that page as distribution centres are confirmed. Here's how it works. We encourage people before they have symptoms or while they don't have symptoms to pick up the test kit. And if they do get symptoms, they can take that test and know whether they should isolate at home. If you have symptoms and fit the new criteria for lab-based PCR testing, in Whitehorse you can book this through the testing and assessment centre or go to the drive-thru testing site in Centennial Motors. This is in the wash bay, Centennial Motors wash bay across from the airport from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm and no appointment is necessary. If you're in a community and you need testing, you can call your health centre. If you have COVID-19 symptoms and you can manage at home you can choose to either do an at-home rapid test, or you can simply assume that you have COVID based on the tools and self-isolate until your symptoms have fully cleared up. If you are

experiencing extreme difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or a child has a prolonged fever or is very unwell please seek further medical assistance by calling 811 or reaching out to your health centre or your health care provider. If you're extremely ill please call 911 and seek emergency care. This is the same as it's always been.

As we navigate this current wave of the pandemic, I want to thank families and school communities for your attention and patience and flexibilities, as the schools inevitably shift from in-person to remote learning, if the circumstances require it. And to all Yukoners, thank you for your resolve for your stamina in responding to the ever shifting sands and conditions in this pandemic. This pandemic wave that we're in right now is like a snowstorm. One might say a blizzard. The snow is falling heavily now and it's time to go slow, and to go cautiously. Like all snowstorms, this will end and we will carry on. This is a time to find the simple ways to enjoy life, to slow down. Take care and do things carefully. Perhaps find joy in the visit in a friend outside, in sitting by sacred fire, or in gazing at the beauty around you or the sunset. With the longer days and warm weather ahead, we will emerge from this time. And it will be important to take this emergence slowly and go step by step to take care of ourselves, our loved ones in our communities.

[Speaking Indigenous Language] Thank you. And Merci.

>> Renée: Thank you, Dr. Elliot. And thank you, Minister McLean. We will now move on to the question and answer session with media. And I would like to note the Deputy Minister of Education, Nicole Morgan is on site to also provide any technical answers to media questions regarding the operation of schools. Thank you to the Deputy Minister for joining us. 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 will now go to the phone lines. And we will start with Luke at CKRW.

>> Luke: Hi, this is a question for Dr. Elliott. I know you mentioned parents trying to make sure that their children are up to date on all their COVID-19 vaccines. As of Monday, I believe the vaccine numbers for the 5 to 11 age group was at 57%. I'm just wondering if this is still a little bit lower than you'd expect. And I'm wondering if maybe something is can be done to try to encourage more parents to have their children vaccinated.

>> Thank you, Luke, this really important question. We are pleased with the progress of the pediatric or the childhood vaccination program for COVID-19. And we would like more children to be vaccinated than are vaccinated right now. The more children who are vaccinated, the more children who are protected from COVID-19 and transmitting it to those around them who they love. We know many children are around people who are vulnerable to the severe outcomes of COVID-19. Perhaps it's an elder or grandparent, perhaps it's a dear friend with a chronic disease. And we want these children to help protect all of our society. Luke, the question also is about how can we promote vaccination. We're going to talk a great deal about

this on Thursday, when it's Pediatric COVID-19 Vaccination Day across the country. So I'll be pleased to answer many questions at that time and to be joined by Dr. Katherine Smart. For now, I think what's important is to know you can get your child vaccinated right now by booking an appointment online. There are many clinics and communities and we have this amazing system in Yukon, where if there's demand for a clinic and there's not one planned, we shift things around, and we book that clinic. So it's a really incredible and responsive system. So this is really the time to have those children vaccinated. Many children are also coming up on being getting their second dose. And I think that's really exciting for our territory that will help children with two doses of the safe, effective COVID-19 vaccine. These are the ways we help ourselves, move into the next phase of the pandemic into the endemic phase and keep ourselves and our children healthy and safe. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you, Luke, do you have a second question?

>> Luke: Nope. Just the one question for me. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Haley at Yukon News.

>> Haley: Thank you. Sorry for the delay there. I guess my first question has to do with the outbreaks at the two long term care homes. I'm wondering how much of a threat omicron poses to elderly residents who, you know, have two shots and are boosted. How worried are you about those outbreaks?

>> Thank you, Haley for your question. I am concerned that we have outbreaks at long term care facilities. This is really the biggest number of outbreaks we've had and number of people in long term care being infected by COVID-19. On the one hand, we have some great strengths here. We had a booster program where there was extremely high uptake amongst long term care residents. And we launched this really early in our, in our county-- in our school year this year. And it's a very exciting thing. I would also say that our long term care facilities are run very effectively. And there are many, in fact, most residents who have their own room, which does make a difference in infection control. We have initiated before COVID-19 even occurred in Yukon operational plans for the long term care facilities. And we have improved these and built upon them throughout the pandemic. When we have an outbreak, we're able to put that focused attention on those areas in those situations, and work with the staff and management at the long term care facility. Because we've had a long term relationship with these facilities not just through the pandemic. But for influenza, norovirus, and other infectious diseases, YCDC works very closely with them and the medical health officers come in to help out when there's outbreaks. We know that COVID-19 is most dangerous for those who are older. And there are many ways to protect older people. Some of the oldest people live in long term care facilities. And when I see there's a number of older people infected, I am concerned. And I want to assure you that everything is being done to take care of these people, including involving their physicians and health care providers, the nursing team and the public health team. We

continue to do all we can in this circumstance. And as well. I hope and pray for the best outcome. We use the science and the evidence to protect people and keep them as safe as possible. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. Haley, do you have a second question?

>> Haley: I do.

Yeah. Thank you. My second question had to do with hospitalization numbers. I know Dr. Elliott, you mentioned this's one person hospitalized with COVID-19 in the territory right now. Do those hospitalization numbers, does that include people who've been MediVac'd to the south, like, out of the territory?

>> Thank you for the question. I monitor hospitalizations every day. And I have a look at how many people are admitted. How many people are MediVac'd, and how many people are discharged. This includes on the weekend. We don't get our data feeds on the weekend. But I do like to monitor because I think it's really important. It the numbers that we say when we say this many people are hospitalized in Yukon. At this time, we did have one person who has MediVac'd and we're monitoring that situation. They are not included in those numbers at this time. It is something that I am working to get the data stronger and more available. And as soon as we can, we will be able to share, you know, greater detail with that. It takes time because we need really good numbers. We want to be sure that we're reporting the correct information. And, and you can imagine people at the hospital are working as hard as they can. And our teams are managing a number of things. And this is one of them. That is a really high priority right now. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Tim at the Whitehorse Star.

>> Tim: Yes, good morning. Thank you. First question would be for Dr. Elliot. Just following up on what you're talking about. You said there's currently one person in the hospital, is that in regular or intensive care?

>> The last I looked the person was in on in regular care. Not in the intensive care unit.

>> Renée: Thank you. Do you have a second question, Tim?

>> Tim: I do. And again, it would be for Dr. Elliott. I'm just curious because I'm seeing references on social media etc, are there other respiratory illnesses other than COVID going around? Are we simply going with COVID is covering everything.

>> Thanks for that question, Tim. It's a great question. There are certainly other respiratory illnesses going around. We're seeing a large number of cases of people with RSV or respiratory syncytial virus in the territory and although we haven't had a big flu year, that's the other one, the respiratory disease we're watching. We always are on the lookout for tuberculosis, which

exists, as well in Yukon and something that we manage very closely. And so people who become ill are tested for any number of things based on the medical workup and assessment. And all of these diseases, each one needs a special treatments and special approach. And that's why we do these diagnostic workups. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Jackie at CBC.

>> Jackie: Good morning. So my first question is, I'm wondering what the watermark now is to lift restrictions now that we're watching or monitoring cases differently. And I'm wondering, in particular, if there are any options for sports groups or other activity groups to run activities that are modified level until we can lift restrictions, we've been hearing from a lot of groups who are kind of in a wait, "hold to see" if they should just cancel their entire winter seasons. So what are we looking at now to loosen or modify restrictions?

>> Thank you so much for this question. I know there are a number of sports teams, adult and children, teams that are really looking for when they can get back to their indoors team sports. And I think it is important and it's really inspiring to see how people have modified their ways of doing team sports. I know there was some effort put to, to move some of the hockey to outdoors, outdoor hockey, and the weather is really being cooperative in that regard right now. And other groups, children are playing outside, you know, soccer on the street or other ways, finding other ways to exercise together in ways that are, are healthier, I really would like to get indoor team sports back as soon as possible. So I'm watching a number of indicators. I'm watching the percent positivity and the case counts, both of which are steady, right now. I know I'll get asked, so I'll just let you know. The exact percent positivity is now 38%. It does fluctuate from day to day, and that's on the higher end of what we've seen. So I continue to watch this. It may just be a natural fluctuation or, you know, a number of people got tested on a particular day, or it may-- it's certainly when we have an outbreak and we test a number of people that also impacts this. So I continue to watch that. The case count again is going to-- you're going to see day-to-day fluctuations, but the overall trend is stable right now. This is telling me that we're in the middle of the omicron wave, we haven't started to see that decline. We also see that in our schools surveillance program we have a number of people who are still off school. I will continue to monitor this. I also monitor the hospitalizations and we're watching very closely because we're seeing now that the frequency of hospitalizations, maybe increasing or again we may be in that day to day fluctuations. So I'm watching the hospitalizations very closely. We know from patterns in other jurisdictions that first we see the wave of cases and then we see a wave of hospitalizations. And I'm encouraged that we haven't seen a high number of hospitalizations, I'm very encouraged that what we've been doing is working. However, we still have a little while, a week or two of watching this and seeing where it goes. All of these things together will be the things that help me put together the puzzle of where are we at now and when is the right time to lift restrictions. We did the right thing and introduced

these before we saw that hospitalization peak and we will lift them as soon as possible because I know it is hard for people. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. Do you have a second question, Jackie?

>> Jackie: I do. I've gotten a couple of messages from parents. They say that for vaccination clinics or vaccine appointments for kids 5 to 11 there's only appointments open for tomorrow. When will there be more appointments available for that age group?

>> Thank you, Jackie. for that question. I'll tell you a little bit about how the website works. Appointments are constantly being put online. And they're really tinkering it based on the demand. So we want to have enough appointments to get Yukoners boosted and we need more adults to get boosted at this time. We also offer appointments for children and we want to help our children get their first dose or second dose. So parents can watch that site every single day because it does change and when you see a number appointment times on the site please be aware that that doesn't mean that one child can be vaccinated at that time, it means that there's a whole series of appointments at that time for children. So the website really is a great demonstration of how nimble this program is and how responsive it is to the needs here in Yukon. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Patrick at MediaQ. Patrick at MediaQ? Hearing nothing, given the time will circle back for another round of questions. As CKRW had no further questions. I will go to Haley at Yukon News.

>> Haley: No further questions for me. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you, Haley. Tim, Whitehorse star.

>> Tim: Yes, hello. Just wanted to return back to my question about some of the other viruses going around. So Dr. Elliot, how would you go about separating? Are you still saying that even if it's something other than COVID if you have COVID symptoms, you should isolate?

>> Thanks, Tim, for this question. So the symptoms of COVID 19 do overlap with a number of other viruses, some of which are circulating here in the territory. The first point is to recognize that, for all of us, our risk of being exposed to COVID-19, right now is very high, because we have the highest activity of COVID-19 in the territory we've ever had, the symptoms, and the algorithm, for lack of a better word of the red symptoms, which are very common, the most common for COVID-19. And some are very specific to COVID-19, such as loss of taste and smell. That algorithm of the red symptoms and the yellow symptoms is based on the frequency of those symptoms in COVID-19. We know that some of those symptoms are seen with other illnesses. But in all likelihood with that constellation of symptoms and with the epidemiology we have right now in the territory, it's a good predictor of COVID-19. If children get more sick and need medical attention, and their health care provider thinks, well, maybe this could be

something else, they will be offered that test. If parents or families or caregivers or youth are concerned whether they want to test themselves to see if the test will show them that they have COVID-19, these are other options that people can take. This, the treatment of these many of these illnesses is very similar, which is stay home, take care of yourself, keep your germs away from others, and rest and get back to activities when the time has passed. And you're feeling better. So we're very confident in this approach and I hope that explains a bit of the science behind it and how it works. Thanks.

>> Renée: Thank you. Tim, did you have a follow up?

>> Tim: No, I don't.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Jackie at CBC.

>> Jackie: Hi, thanks. I just wanted to flag that my colleague Vincent Bonnay wasn't given any questions. But I do have some follow up questions, but if we could loop back to him after I'm done, that would be great. So I just want to follow up on my question about what Dr. Elliot, you mentioned, you were monitoring when it comes to lifting restrictions. I'm wondering, do you have any exact figure you can provide us. You mentioned you were looking at percent positivity, hospitalization? What is the sweet spot we need to hit for some of these restrictions to be lifted?

>> Thanks, Jackie, I think really to understand the answer to this question, that is how do I make a diagnosis at a population level based on all the different tests that we're doing all the different indicators that I have? It really helps people to think about when they visit their health care provider. They share their history, you know about which symptoms they have, there might be some tests and the health care provider might also do some further tests to help them determine what the best course of action is, whether they need a treatment or they need to rest or other things. It's very similar in my work, except my patient is the population. So there's a number of different things that I look at, such as the number of hospitalizations, the number of cases, the percent positivity, the school surveillance program and the absenteeism. I also look at worker absenteeism, and all of these things together helped me get the picture of what's happening here in Yukon. I also use the science and evidence that I know about this disease, about COVID-19 and omicron variant in particular, and what we continue to learn from those provinces and territories that are a little further along in their wave, all of these things together paint a picture, that helps me make a clinical medical diagnosis. It's not an algorithm, it's not a "If This Then That", "If This Then That". If it was, you know, you wouldn't need a Chief Medical Officer of Health. But it's a medical practice, and it's a diagnosis and treatment course at a population level that I'm doing. So that's how it works. And this is why I come regularly and I'm on the radio regularly is to help people know where we're at this point in time, because it affects all of us so much. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. And thank you for the flag Jackie regarding Vincent Bonnay. I'll add him into our list here. Apologies, Vincent. Jackie, did you have a follow up to that?

>> Jackie: Yeah, honestly, I'm kind of confused about the answer for when vaccine appointments will open up-- more vaccine appointments will open up for kids. Do you have like are there any confirmed dates beyond tomorrow at this point?

>> Yeah, Jackie, we'll continue to offer vaccine appointments. If you see appointments for tomorrow, and not Wednesday or Thursday or Friday and you need to get your kid in check that website every day and you'll start to notice that there's always new days put on every single day or every two days. And if you're in a community and you'd like to get your child vaccinated, call the health centre and talk to them about the best way to get your child in to have them vaccinated. We are continuing to promote childhood vaccinations. And I think it's just about that checking and taking the different approach depending on where you are in Yukon. The vaccine program has also offered special programs for children who don't do well in a large-- a large vaccine clinic, perhaps they have special medical needs or emotional needs. These things are also things that the vaccine program does. So there are many vaccine appointments that are offered when you see a few times on the website. And also there are openings consistently, new openings. Thank you.

>> Renée: Thank you. We'll now move to Vincent Bonnay, Radio Canada and apologies Vincent, I did not have you on my list here. Please note that there is no French translation today. Thank you.

>> Vincent: Yeah, thank you. Yeah, just a quick question.

[Speaking French].

>> Renée: Thank you. Dr. Elliot, could I have you briefly respond en anglais? The question--

>> --the same though.

>> Renée: Okay.

>> When was in our media notes? I--thank you.

>> Renée: It was regarding the traffic.

>> Yeah. Perfect. Thank you. Vincent, do you have une autre question?

[Speaking French]

Could you just--

[Speaking French]

>> Renée: Thank you. As that question was on public health measures, we will not repeat an English. Vincent, do you have a final question?

>> No, I'm good. Thank you. Merci.

>> Renée: Thank you. Well, that concludes our COVID-19 update for today. Our next COVID-19 update will be on Thursday, which is National Kids and Vaccines day, and it will feature Minister of Health and Social Services Tracy-Anne McPhee, Dr. Elliot and Dr. Katherine Smart, so stay tuned. Thank you again to our speakers. And to all the media and everyone who watched live over Facebook, stay safe and have a wonderful Tuesday.