

Public information Session #3

Dawson City Business Owners and the Impact of COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Held Thursday, April 2nd at 12.00 pm, via ZOOM Conference

With:

Mayor Wayne Potoroka - City of Dawson

Hon. Larry Bagnel, MP Yukon, Parliamentary Secretary for CanNor

Helen Booth - YG Economic Development

Blake Rogers - Tourism Industry Association of Yukon

Kat Derusha - Dawson City Chamber of Commerce

Kat Derusha: Welcome everyone. Should we start with you Wayne?

Wayne Potoroka: I have the Mayor's update: What we all know is what we hear from the CMO: 6 cases in the Yukon, of we 3 have recovered. No community transmission yet, meaning all cases are related to international travel and have not spread, which is great news. We are in meetings daily with health officers and emergency preparedness staff. They are still working on a number of issue. For example, determining what will constitute an essential service, and working to reduce non-essential travel between communities. I am told we are getting that list today. We have questions around construction season as well. I'm happy to report that in the mining community, the majority is abiding by the rules and guidelines to self isolate. We don't have a civil emergency bylaw yet. I don't think that is imminent to do at the moment, however we are having meetings around these issues. The RCMP as been conducting patrols on the streets and their reports are good: people are following all the guidelines. They have not received any more calls about people who should be self isolating and aren't, which is also good news. But please call if you have these concerns.

Hotels have stepped up to help. We had 4 people self isolating in the Triple J, and there are more coming. We are getting calls from people returning to the territory with no place to isolate, who need that assistance and we are happy to help. We talked about the need for something in town, perhaps a check-stop on the other side of the bridge. If the situation deteriorates maybe something like that could happen. Perhaps, have a kiosk with information on how to self isolate, how to get groceries delivered, a list of resources, etc. We also made sure there is information about this at the airport. Masks and gloves are in short supply, as well. The RCMP are waiting to hear orders about enforcement of regulations under the quarantine act, expecting that on Friday. I have heard of about 40-50 swabs done at the hospital. Results that came by are so far all negative.. I have reason to be optimistic after sitting at all those meeting and seeing that everyone is on the same page and everyone's response has been great.

Jackie Olson: I am just thinking about truck drivers. We all saw on facebook that there were four trucks parked on front street, with truck drivers sleeping inside. I wonder if there is any way we can support truck drivers, they need to eat and rest too. And I wouldn't want them to get the message that they are not welcome in our town.

Wayne Potoroka: Mike (fire chief) would be a good person to contact for this, they can reach out to truck drivers. If they need takeout food we can help with that.

Jackie: Hotels that have entrances on the outside perhaps can set up so they can have a bed and not sleep in their trucks. Something to consider.

Helen Booth: Hope everyone is doing well and staying safe in Dawson, thank you for having me.
Economic Development Update: The temporary event support program was announced yesterday by minister Pillai. For any event that was expected to happen this year and was cancelled due to COVID-19, it can provide financial relief to businesses and NGOs for planned events from march to July.

Pat Brooks (Goldrush Campground): May is gone for us, we suspect that June is gone as well. But we are waiting to see where the country is going. I can provide some info from the perspective of the Canadian Camping Association. People are coming back from across the line, and there are people in RVs that are full timers and don't have a permanent home. Their recommendation is that we only accept RV's, they specifically said no tents. Also, to not open our physical store, to try and manage all bookings online or over the phone, and try and keep people apart from each other in the campground. Also, to not open our washrooms or laundry facility because people would gather in those places. It would be impossible to keep social distancing guidelines in those conditions. There are a lot of restrictions for us.

Diane Brooks: Personally, we are not coming up until the go ahead for travel is given, but we encourage other campgrounds that will remain open to consider these guidelines.

Kat Derusha: That is something to thin about, what to do if people don't abide?

Diane Brooks: If someone doesn't abide by the guidelines, normally it wouldn't be such a severe issue, but in this case it absolutely is. We are all in this together and we have to look out for one another, this should be enforced.

Pat Brooks: if the authorities say we have the go ahead to open the campground, we would still think about Dawson's safety as most important.

Kat Derusha: what can be said on the same subject about hotels?

Blake Rogers: Maybe I can take this chance to give the TIAY update: one of the things we are identifying are questions about if to accept guests from out of the territory, and questions about hygiene measures and such. We are trying to distill that information from multiple sources into some clear guidelines that we can distribute to hotels and establishments. I am hoping to have more resources we can share about this subject next week, such as documents that can be posted at establishments that detail this to the public. We want to make sure our workers are safe and, also, this is an opportunity for the industry to help contain and limit the spread. Once we can share this info, we hope this will help answer these questions, especially since information changes each week. Even when now we are not promoting travel at all, we still acknowledge there are people trickling through and there needs to be a set of guidelines in place to accommodate this. We also want these resources to be specific to the Yukon.

Re: Jackie's comment: If anyone knows which services are still being provided in town and in what form, for example for restaurants that still do takeout, it would be helpful to know and compile them in a list. People know this information by facebook posts and word of mouth, but we would love to help promote that more widely. If we have a list of who is doing what, that would be so helpful.

Kat Derusha: We can gather this information and pass it on to you.

Blake Rogers: That would be great. There are elements people have not considered yet, like campgrounds and things like that, as Pat brought up. We are happy to help provide clarity as much as we can.

Maria: Yes, thanks Pat! I'd be interested in seeing those campground guidelines you referred to. Can you email them to Maria.Nyland@gov.yk.ca? I'm the public health nurse-in-charge here in Dawson. I've had multiple questions from hotels about health guidelines, there are multiple pages from Health Canada. It would be great to share that info between us, if you have something more succinct and Yukon specific, it would be great.

Blake: Yes, it is a great idea, I can send them to you.

Jackie: One of the things we are talking about to send to the minister Pillai is considering local procurement, that includes YG and mining and all of us. How do we do that? Anyone has ideas on what that would look like?

Blake: Great question. TIAY started a campaign to support the restaurants and businesses that are still open, particularly to support restaurants that are in turn supporting local farmers. As you know, this is the start of the new fiscal year, so he had some funds from last year that had not been used. We have invested leftover CanNor money in gift certificates and gift cards to encourage people to spend locally. It isn't the total answer but it is a good gesture and it helps right now.

Kat Derusha: The Dawson Chamber has had a similar initiative for a long time, the Shop Dawson gift certificates that are redeemable in businesses all over town. It is our way to promote local shopping.

Jackie Olson: Maybe a campaign to push that initiative further is what is needed!

Kat Derusha: I think we have Larry Bagnel on the call next.

Larry Bagnel: The announcement this week has more details on CERB and wage subsidies. The wage subsidy is available to NGOs and charities, up to a maximum of \$847 a week. To be eligible, you need to have a loss of revenue of 30% from last year. One of the arguments that were made before was that bars and restaurants were excluded from the funding efforts: Ottawa got that message and they have now been included for the business account loan. Another of the problems since the announcement is that March this year compared to March last year, is not a good comparison for Yukon seasonal businesses. So I made this case to Ottawa as well.

CERB: There are more details and FAQ online about it. If we lose this summer in tourism, business owners still have fixed costs they will have to pay all winter without any summer revenue. I also brought this up to Ottawa, since our situation in the Yukon is so specific.

Pat Brooks: As the current regulations exist, we fall totally out of the parameters. Are there any provisions for seasonal businesses like us?

Larry Bagnel: Exactly, because a business like yours would have not made any revenue on March anyway, this is what I am bringing up to Ottawa.

Jackie Olson: We have comments from businesses that have invested a lot of money to get their business up and running for the first time, and for similar reasons they don't seem to be able to qualify for any of these programs.

Larry Bagnel: They are currently trying to sort this out, and this is something the government is aware of.

Jackie Olson: On the wage subsidy: is it deferred, is it a loan? Is this something businesses will have to repay?

Larry Bagnel: No. This is a grant to subsidy those wages, not a loan.

Wayne Potoroka: I am assuming you heard about Paul mc Donagh (Westminster Hotel)?

Larry Bagnel: I heard his interview on the radio, but I did not talk to him. The emergency loan of \$40,000 that was announced earlier, they have made that eligible for bars and restaurants now. Because it is 100% guaranteed by the Government of Canada, banks don't have any excuses to decline people. Of that loan, \$10,000 is forgivable, which means that if you pay it up in time you get to keep that \$10,000 as a grant. NGOs are also eligible for this.

Wayne Potoroka: I will urge you to keep a strong connection with DCCC and all the chambers as they distribute this information.

Larry Bagnel: Yes. As soon as this situation developed, I made it a point to ask all these organizations to give us feedback from their communities.

Blake Rogers: we appreciate everything that you did, it is good to know Ottawa is listening.

Kat Derusha: We are so thankful for everyone's effort and work to answer these questions.

Larry Bagnel: There are still some cracks and people who fall between those cracks. It is good to keep track of all these cases and keep communicated, because this is how we can bring them forward for solutions.

Kat Derusha: Do you have more information about the cancelled events fund?

Larry Bagnel: Yes, all that information will be updated soon in the YG website.

Question from Jesse Cooke: I'd love a quick update from Tracy — The Westmark may not have any news at this point but if she could speak for a sec I would appreciate it.

Tracy Abbott: We are on the same boat as anyone else. Like most businesses, we won't be opening in May either. We are awaiting directions from our corporate offices for what our next steps will be.

Jackie Olson: I just want to say, that if anyone has questions or comments as to what I can bring forward to all the boards and committees, please send me an email. Dawson is a very strong community, and all we will figure out a way to get through this together.

Kat Derusha: Update from the Chamber: We are trying hard to get all these answers for our community, and these sessions have been fantastic. We are so thankful for all of you and your hard work. Another thing, we are also having a meeting for the hotel industry soon. I will send the details when I have them. We are looking for, like Larry said, to know who is falling through these cracks, we are trying to make sure everyone is included in these funding efforts. At the same time, we are trying to keep our members as updated as possible. I would like to also mention the KPMA is doing great work in ensuring that returning miners self isolate. And, there will be another update from the CMO later today. We will try our best to stay as updated and communicated as possible. Stay healthy and stay inside.

Thanks everyone and talk to you next week!

Meeting adjourned.