

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

Held Friday, March 20th at 12.00 pm, via ZOOM Conference

With:

Mayor Wayne Potoroka, City of Dawson
Jackie Olson, Klondike Visitors Association
Blake Rogers, Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon
Kat Derusha, Dawson City Chamber of Commerce
Peter Turner, Yukon Chamber of Commerce
Mark Mather, Dawson City General Store
Maria Nyland, Yukon Public Health

Attendance: 55 participants.

12:00 pm – Meeting starts

Wayne Potoroka speaks:

Thanks to DCCC for pulling this together, it is a very important thing that we remain united as a community. It has been a hectic week. When the CMO put out his recommendations, those were something we can actually work with. And the things we have done from the City such as closing facilities have been proactive measures. We are trying to find creative ways to keep us healthy and active from the Rec Department. It is great that everyone is paying attention to updates and developments, so everyone is informed.

We also want to keep up to date with the announcements of funding coming from the Government, and figure out how that money gets dispersed. Our staff has been connecting with business owners and service providers in other communities as well. Fire Chief Mike and Cory have been working out a contingency plan so we can assist our community if it comes to that.

We are also looking into tax breaks, and deferrals of fees and charges to assist the business community. Let us know how we can help and let a council member know. I am so proud of this community, especially the business community, you have stepped up and contributed to the wellbeing of this town.

Kat: Thank you, Wayne. Does anyone have questions for the mayor?

Mark Mather: I appreciate the information about tax breaks and referrals, I think that is something that small business owners and property owners will struggle with.

Blake Rogers speaks: Thanks to the DCCC for organizing this call. I would like to echo what the Mayor said. Everything is happening so fast and it is hard to keep up. It is a difficult time to make decisions. At the same time, I know that a lot of people in the tourism community are struggling and there is a lot of anxiety. We are all working hard to try and find solutions. Everyone coming together is very heartening!

TIAY is working on a video conference to be held next Monday for tourism operators and we encourage you to attend.

We are starting to see these patterns and trends show in the responses of people to the developments, like the cancelling of the AWG. The Government responded quickly with the announcement of the stimulus package. We are trying to do week to week update through our surveys. We need to be able to stay on top of this week after week to see how everyone is responding. It is really important for the info to be collected and filtered so policies and initiatives can be put in place effectively. I have sent a link to Kat for a new survey for tourism operators. We are working with other tourism associations, TIA Canada, with YG, with other Chambers and NGOs, to do this as effectively as possible.

Peter Turner speaks: Thanks to the Chamber for setting this up. We have published and are updating daily a covid19 info page especially for the business community in our Yukon Chamber website. The Government has announced 10% payroll subsidy for small businesses, I would like that number to be higher but it is a good start. Details are being worked out, but as soon as we have that information, we will share it in our page. Up to a total of 25,000 dollars per employer, and it all depends in the size of the business. We hope this includes NGO's like Chambers, but we don't have clarification on this point yet. Caps for internet for this time period might be removed. We are supportive of this because it is supportive of working from a distance.

Stimulus package: we are trying to get some clarification on that. I met with the Deputy Minister of Economic Development One, and of the items in it is paying 14-day isolation period with sick leave for covid-19 affected workers. Another point is cancellation of events, there might be funding for the cancellation of Gold Show. They are establishing a business advisory council as well, so I encourage to reach out to your Chamber so they can convey those issues to us.

Impact to businesses: we are gathering information, probably in the form of a survey. Data gathering is one of the critical things for us to be able to provide the Government with arguments to request their support.

Kat: There was a statement from Trudeau that it would take 3 to 4 weeks for funds to start trickling in, would you say that is accurate?

Peter: The situation is changing every day, I would say that it is accurate.

Sarah Cooke: Anything coming down the pike for businesses that have to close to cover operating expenses?

Peter: That would have to come from the Federal Government, and not Territorial, but I would like to gather that info and pass it on.

DCMF: I have a similar question regarding DCMF

Peter: It sounds from the Premier's press relief that if DCMF has costs that it has already incurred, it would appear from that statement that there are funds available to offset some of those costs. These would be territorial funds. I would take a shot at pursuing that. Justin Ferbey's office (Economic Development) would have the details behind that press release.

Brad Whitelaw: what about help for employees that I would have to lay off?

Peter: If you lay off people they would be eligible for EI from day one. The decision of keeping them employed or not is up to the individual businesses.

Kat: With the massive spike in EI applications, what can we offer to businesses and people around town as consolation for that?

Peter: The challenge is that they are scaling up the volume of applications to 20 times what it was designed to support. We are a very resilient community. Good news is that there is money and resources, the bad news is that the systems will be overloaded.

Joe Cooke: Any special considerations for people in the nominee program? How does this affect immigrant employees?

Peter Turner: That's a good question. That is a grey area at the moment and it is something we need yet to understand. There are also people who were queued up to come here to work in the summer, and now everything has changed. I don't have the answer now, but I will pursue it.

Mark: We have been facing this at our business. We have 3 nominees approved and they were finalizing their process and all 3 are put on hold, and we had to cancel airline tickets. And we are not sure what will happen with those people until this is over.

Maureen Caley-Verdonk: Have you heard if Income Support with YG is stepping in to help?

Peter: I have not heard anything about that. I would like to try and see if I can find anything out on that front.

Kat Derusha speaks: DCCC has cancelled Gold Show. We are compiling an info sheet along with the Yukon Chamber with resources for every business owners. We will all work together to find these answers. Applying for funding is a big question, and we will try to assist our members in this.

Maria Nyland speaks: I am the nurse in charge at the Dawson Health Center, I would be the arm of Yukon Communicable Disease department in Dawson. If you go to Yukon.ca there is a section about Coronavirus. Please go there first if you have questions: this is the main place to go for information. The press briefings are on youtube as well. One thing I want to share is that there is a task force that the Yukon Government has created, focused on communities and first nations, we included. I don't have one particular number of people in the team to pass out to you, but my manager is one of the leads in that task force. If you use the self assessment tool on the website and you think you need assistance, you can call 811 (it might be very busy) or if not call the Dawson Hospital. I wouldn't recommend the YCDC number for Dawson residents. If you do have questions, just call the hospital or 811. For businesses if you have questions about events, you can call us to 993 4300 to help you and advise you. The local health team has been meeting together daily, our workload is heavy but manageable right now. We feel very good about the team we have right now.

Maureen Caley-Verdonk: Do you know if the Yukon will be able to process test results or will these continue to be sent outside?

Maria Nyland: It is DNA type testing, it is complex and expensive, and I have not heard about this happening in the Yukon so far. There is a backlog, but it is catching up. We are expecting this to speed up.

Kat: Will delays be longer for the communities?

Maria: I have seen a variety of length for tests, I can speak for Dawson, but for other communities it will be different depending on their transport capabilities.

Jackie: Did you say that people from other parts of Canada don't need to self isolate? There will be students coming home from university in the next week due to closure. Calgary has some cases.

Maria: Right now, the instructions are not obligatory to isolate for people travelling within Canada, unless they have symptoms. If you have symptoms, you should isolate even if you haven't left Dawson.

Mark: We are providing hand sanitizers at the counter and taking as many measures as we can. Are there any other protocols we should be following as a primary business?

Maria: Wiping high-touch surfaces and cleaning is very important. Insist that sick employees stay home, also insist that if costumers are sick to stay home.

Richard Porteous: I know respirators are important for treating those with serious respiratory issues due to the virus. do you feel we have enough capacity to manage the potential situation?
Another question, I work with a fairly large amount of cash every day. Should I be using gloves while handling it?

Maria: I am not the person who knows how many respirators are in the Yukon, and I have not heard any concerns around that. If someone is seriously ill, we will medivac them if we don't have the capacity to treat them. 2nd question: it wouldn't hurt to wear gloves, but more importantly don't touch your face when you deal with cash. And of course, wash your hands, soap and water is excellent if you wash for long enough.

Mark Mather Speaks: We are finding things somewhat challenging, but we are trying to stay calm and cool and take a break. We have moved to two trucks a week, our wholesale is somewhat behind 24 hs in supplying service. In regards to supplies across the board, we have been told by our suppliers that there is no need to be in fear of shortages, they are giving us some priority due to our circumstances. I have been dealing with that daily and I have been arguing that we are one of the farthest stores they supply.

We've had people come to the store who are prepared to volunteer at the store, and we are trying to hire more staff to deal with the increased influx of volume. We feel that within the next day or two we will want to implement the social space protocol of 6 feet apart while customers are shopping. Our staff are frontline workers and we want to take good care of them and protect them.

Thanks everyone for coming forward and assisting us in putting this together. We hope we have helped business owners with this information and we hope we can share more resources to find the government help we need.

Michelle Carmichael: Just from previous meetings I have attended, I know there is a lot of people who are not very comfortable with technology. How can we help those people work from home and stay

connected?

Kat: Maybe we should reach out to Yukon College to put on something and give out information to those people on how to set up home offices and use technological resources.

Mark: also, there is a group of ladies that are assisting by delivering groceries to those who cannot leave the house, I think this is a great idea. They have made posts on facebook and I encourage everyone to consider this.

Ed Peart: How is everyone feeling about this summer season coming?

Mark: I think we are all feeling a lot of anxiety and I don't think anyone knows how things will play out, we have to pull together and work with each other. Hopefully we can make the most out of this summer.

Stephen Lancaster: Hoping to have business back to normal by July.

Kat: I think we should wrap this meeting soon. I'd like to thank everyone that spoke and everyone for attending.

Meeting adjourned 1:21 pm