

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

Held Friday, March 27th at 5:00 pm, via ZOOM Conference

With:

1. Deputy Mayor Natasha Ayoub - City of Dawson
2. Larry Bagnell, MP Yukon
3. Helen Booth - YG Economic Development
4. Blake Rogers - Tourism Industry Association of Yukon
5. Will Fellers - Klondike Placer Miners Association
6. Peter Turner - Yukon Chamber of Commerce
7. Kat Derusha - Dawson City Chamber of Commerce
8. Mark Mather - Dawson City General Store Update
9. Open Discussion

*With Maria Nyland (Public Health) on the panel to answer questions if necessary.

Number of additional attendees: 26

Kat: It has been a big week for everyone. I would like to say a quick work to all business owners: everything is happening so fast, but we are all working to help you find the financing you need.

Mark: Welcome and thank you to all participants. And also, a big welcome and thanks to our participating panel. Yes, what a week. We need to all stay safe, work with integrity and keep moving together as a community. I hand it over to Kathleen.

Kat: We have Deputy Mayor, Natasha Ayoub, Larry Bagell MP, Helen Booth from Ec Dev, Blake Rogers from TIAY, Will Fellers from KPMA, Peter Turner from YCC, myself representing the Dawson Chamber and Mark Mather for the General Store. I also want to let everyone know this is being broadcast live on CFYT. If you are listening from home and you have questions, please contact us. The meeting minutes will be up on the DCCC website tonight. I'd like to introduce the first speaker: Deputy Mayor Natasha Ayoub.

Natasha Ayoub: Thank you for the invitation and apologies from Wayne for not being able to make the call, I will provide the update for this week: we are dealing with the state of emergency that has just been declared and what that means. The idea behind it is that it would give the EMO and broader society to enforce orders like self-isolation and social distancing measures. In this respect, the Mayor encourages people to reach our offices or our CAO with their concerns.

We've had reports of gatherings of transients in town. The Mayor has spoken to the RCMP about this and they are committed to disperse these gatherings that have occurred in public places. There are places in town to self isolate if needed, and they are letting these people know where they can go. I also want to highlight the volunteer group on Facebook that was formed to assist people in isolation, delivering groceries and performing chores. The civil emergency measures commission or CEMC, consisting of rangers, emergency workers, search and rescue, fire dept and similar organizations, are

gathering to understand what resources and capacity we have. They are meeting pre-emptively. Also, regarding miners coming into town, The Mayor has spoken to the KPMA and they have issued communications to their community. That is all from my end. Thanks

Kat: if no one has questions, we move to Larry Bagnell.

Larry Bagnell: Thank you everyone. Please keep thinking about our frontline workers like health staff, grocery store workers and all essential staff. I am mostly here to listen and take your feedback and provide answers to your questions. Also, I am working round the clock these days and I am available for questions any day, please reach out. Canada.ca is the best place to review all the programs for funding, all the details are there. As of this week, CERB has been announced, which is great news for people who have been laid off. Whether you are eligible for EI or not you can apply for this in early April, as long as you meet the criteria. Also announced were the 75% wage subsidies. Details for this will be out on Monday, they will most likely run up to 3 months for small to medium businesses. Also, loans for fixed costs: up to \$40,000, interest free, guaranteed by the Government of Canada with \$10,000 being forgivable, to pay by December 2022. Also announced today for businesses that have GST, HST or import/export duties payments due, all payments are deferred till end of June. Currently they are negotiating with airlines too, to try and help them. The more feedback we get from Yukon businesses, the more it will help improve all these programs. So if you have feedback, please reach out to us.

Mark: thank you Larry. The comment I have is please see what assistance we can give Air North, they will struggle big time. They are already seeing big cuts in their servicing and they could use a lot of help.

Larry: The minister of finance is now working on a package for airlines. Also landing fees and such are being waived.

Kat: Thank you Larry. Next we have Helen Booth from Economic Development.

Helen Booth: Thank you so much for having me. This week we did announce the Sick Leave Rebate Program, which will allow for employers with workers who have been on sick leave to get those payments rebated, which also applies for self-employed people. This program will be in place for 6 months. We also announced the forming of the Business Advisory Council. We will be sending out a survey to track the impact of COVID-19 not just in individual businesses, but also through cross sectors of our economy. We are trying to be as specific as possible with data, to have a more tailored response. Nominee program: we have suspended the 90 day notice (to seek new employment) for those Foreign Workers that have been laid off for the duration of the health crisis, so hopefully they can go back to their same employer and won't lose their residency status. Please contact our office for questions about these programs, via email or phone.

Kat: Up next we have Blake Rogers from TIAY.

Blake Rogers: Thanks everyone. We are working every day with our tour operators to try and mitigate as much of the impact on our tourist season. Thanks Larry for the announcements today, that is a big relief for our operators. There has been a boost to the Tourism Cooperation Fund, they announced that as well today, thanks to our government for that: It is now a 1.7 million fund. The funding will be available for local and domestic travel as well as international. One thing I'll say about cruise ship season, we reacted pretty quickly when we heard they won't be able to dock in Canada, and this has impacted our

Alaskan market obviously. It is a guessing game in terms of when things will go back to relative normalcy, but we are monitoring this situation, especially because of the big impact this has in communities like Dawson and Carcross. We are trying our best to bring updates that would be valuable for our members. We are working with all other TIAs in the country to get a better picture of the broader impact on tourism across Canada. We are also doing a weekly video conference on Fridays at noon, and a weekly survey as well to gauge the impact on our tourism sector.

Dan Davidson: One of the territories, I think it was Nunavut, is inviting tourists to go elsewhere. Are we thinking of doing this?

Blake Rogers: When the Yukon made the decision to close its borders over the weekend, that decision was something that TIA supported and we thought it was the most logical course of action since public health is paramount. We are looking at the light at end of the tunnel and we are sending the message that we will like to welcome visitors, but only after the public health crisis is over. And we are very careful with the way we are conveying this message.

Kat: If there are no more questions, next we have Will Fellers from the KPMA.

Will Fellers: Hello everyone, thanks for inviting us. I will give you our update: we have been in discussions with Energy Mines and Resources, the Mayor and Dawson medical staff. We have developed a couple of information packages to go out to our members. One of them is an employee tracking form that tracks their previous history before coming to work, in case something develops. We are advising everyone on how to travel minimizing risks, where to self isolate, how to avoid contact on their way. The main thing is to try and get as much information out to our members as it comes in. Currently there are some operations already running and they are self-isolating and avoiding coming to town as much as possible. We encourage people to arrange couriers and boxed deliveries for food to avoid coming into town, while still supporting local businesses as much as possible.

Kat: One of my friends was commenting that she went back to work at camp, and she corroborated that they are having strict measures in place and there is usually one designated person that goes into town only.

Will: We are working to put together information and options for safe operations and we encourage people to be as well prepared as possible.

Mark: I'd also like to say we are supplying the front care workers with the ability to phone in orders pick up orders at the dock with minimal contact.

Kat: Now we have Peter Turner from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce.

Peter Turner: I spent the entire day talking with colleagues across Canada. The Canadian Chamber, at the behest of the provincial and territorial chambers has been lobbying very hard for that hike in the salary subsidies, and we were delighted when it announced. We are still trying to better understand how to navigate this, and are awaiting details on how the Federal Government is going to make it work. Same goes for the paid sick leave announcement, we are holding out for details on how to apply. Northwestel has bumped up caps by a hundred gig, it isn't a perfect solution for Dawson because you

are still on DSL, but it does help to have the extra allowance. News about the Carbon Tax are also announcing soon. That is a Federal tax, and we are lobbying to get it delayed since this is yet another burden on businesses and miners. The Economic Advisory Council is comprised of representatives from different business sectors with hopes to be able to lobby for the concerns of business owners and our Chambers of Commerce. I know we are all overloaded with surveys at the moment, but there are 2 more we will launch on Monday to help Yukon Government collect data about the COVID impact on businesses and also a Canadian Chamber of Commerce survey to get an idea of the impact across all of Canada, and we have an opportunity for the North to be represented in that.

Mark: Thank you Peter for all your efforts and for sharing so much information with our Chamber.

Kat: If you go to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce website, they have great resources for businesses. Thank you so much Peter for all you are doing.

Blake: Thanks to Peter and all his staff, they have helped us at TIA a lot.

Kat: DCCC Chamber update: I want to thank all our members for being patient. We are working very hard to find answers for you, and please keep on sending us your concerns so we can pass them on to the right people and connect you to the resources that might help you. If you go into our website, we have a resource page for all things related to the impact of COVID-19, once again thanks to the Yukon Chamber for all their help on this.

Peter Turner: I will also want to thank you for your initiative of your zoom meetings, kudos to you for coming up with this model and I hope you don't mind me stealing this idea and passing it on to other Chambers of Commerce

Mark: Thanks Kathleen again for spearheading this. For the DCGS update: we have implemented a 2-meter space line with tape on the floor, both for costumers and staff. The 14 day isolation, we can't say enough in regards to asking to anyone that has recently returned to Dawson to please adhere to this. You will be protecting our community and especially our frontline workers. We have installed two sinks: one for costumers and another for our staff, so we can make sure everyone has clean hands as they are shopping. We also have hand sanitizers by the shopping carts, and we wipe the cart handles everyday. We are in the process of producing dividers for our cash register, to protect our workers and costumers. We hired approximately 9 new stuff to keep up with the volume. We are placing orders a week ahead of time to make sure we don't have any shortages. Our suppliers are working with us diligently because they understand how far we are. We have information from Dairyland food: they had major difficulties to keep up with demand, but as of Sunday, things will be back in production. We have milk available in cartons and will soon have plastic jugs back. We doubled up orders for egg products, to prevent any shortages. We are trying very hard to keep the community supplied. We are trying our best to be fully stocked to supply to the placer mining industry as well, which is very important for our economy, as it keeps our community employed and they bring business to town. Thanks so much for everyone's support, we can't say enough about that.

Kat: Does anyone have any questions for Maria Nyland in regards to health? If not, we can move on to our open discussion. Here are questions and comments that were passed on to us:

Dominion station update: “We have stopped the use of people doing lotteries in store such as pulltabs and scratch tickets to reduce the amount of people. We will have a plexi-glass installed tomorrow to keep customers and staff apart. We have been sanitizing all touchables on a regular basis as well as the debit machines, pop coolers, doors.

Bathroom is being cleaned 3 times a day or as needed. We have asked people only use debit or credit. But because of lotto 649 and others, their prizes are cash payments. So we are doing our best.”

Lee Manning: “As per my telephone conversation. I am concerned about miners coming up from British Columbia and not self containing in Whitehorse. We have had a few enquiries where people are trying to book a room for 1 to 3 nights and saying they’re not self quarantining. Now that the government has made it mandatory for people to self quarantine I still see this to be a potential issue for the community, the question we need to ask ourselves is how do hoteliers do the responsible thing and check reservations. My proposal would be that all hoteliers ring any reservations that they have to check purpose of visit where they’re coming from and whether they need to self quarantine. We need to have a unified approach to this otherwise you’re going to have responsible hoteliers losing out to income and then potentially making it harder to recover after this crisis when less responsible businesses survive. I am not suggesting that we have any irresponsible businesses so I hope that we can find a solution. Working on EMS and Mike working as a nurse we are aware of our resources in Dawson. We are fine but it wouldn’t take much for the hospital to get over run we have to do everything we can to protect the staff and the community.”

Maria: It is important to note there are a couple of different levels of quarantine that have been issued at different times. For example, if you travelled outside of Canada there was one announcement before in early March, and another for people travelling within Canada, and now the Quarantine Act. The international one is mandatory and it is enforceable to a certain degree.

Will: On our end I’d like to say that any information that can be given to the KPMA in regards to that, we will do whatever we can to reach out to these people and solve these conflicts and if anyone is not following guidelines and protocols please let us know.

Blake: It is grey area and we are in uncharted territory. When you have people coming to a hotel from somewhere else, it is very important to have the latest health information and make sure that signage is visible to try and guide people to do the right thing. At the moment, there is no announcement of fines or jail time or the kind of thing you see in Italy for example, so we have to appeal for people to do the right thing. From the tourism perspective, this is not the time to promote people coming in. That said, there will be people still returning, and there needs to be a clarification that the self-isolation is an order and not a suggestion.

Natasha: The State Emergency that was called today will be giving enforcing powers to EMO, which is something to consider. Measures will probably be announced as time goes by.

Question from Joe Cooke: My biggest concern here is that I have a payroll number, business number, GST number, pay me taxes, etc and I’m running a legitimate business but for some reason the government excluded sole proprietorship for their wage subsidy program and I’m worried that the new measures they are announcing will leave me and others like me to just fall through the cracks and not qualify for these desperately-needed aid measures. If there is anyone on the call who can speak to either a) rationale for not helping out sole proprietorship businesses or b) likelihood of this changing

going forward I would appreciate if you could put my concerns on the table and maybe get back to me with ideas. That's my #1 concern right now and any insight would be appreciated.

Larry: The rules for the wage subsidy are being worked on this weekend and will coming out on Monday, and we have certainly made that case on behalf of other businesses.

Question: What happens when big orders for mining camps take a big portion of the stock of the store?

Mark: We're working very hard with our suppliers to make sure we can supply both the community and the placer mining industry sufficiently.

Question: What steps are suppliers taking to ensure that food is not contaminated?

Mark: I don't think there is anything that has changed in regards to production or inspection that would warrant any concerns. If something like that would happen, an order to recall products would be communicated to the Health Department which in turns contacts us and we pull things off the shelves.

Question: What steps are being taken to help Yukoners with rent relief? And how will it unfold for renters?

Larry: The emergency benefit for people who have lost their income will hopefully help with that, as well as the wage subsidy will help businesses keep their employees.

Question: Is there any aid for people whose hours have been reduced and they don't qualify for EI or CERB?

Larry: It would have to depend on each case and whether or not the amount of hours makes the cut. We are looking into that.

Question: Are there talks about direct universal payments to all Yukoners like the USA is doing?

Larry: We are trying to concentrate first on people who have lost their income and have fallen through the cracks and to businesses who are at risk of closing. We want to concentrate on those who need the funds most urgently and help them stay afloat.

Question: What resources and plans are in place for a mass quarantine event?

Helen: The Government of Yukon has a large organized structure across all sectors and levels of government that works on plans everyday, coordinating with health agencies for working out every scenario. They are working on assessing all of this at the moment, and there is a pandemic plan just like there is a forest fire plan and other emergency plans.

Blake Rogers: BDC excluding liquor primary businesses: is there a way that these people can access funding?

Larry: Because when you get your loans, you go through your financial institution, not through BDC (even through BDC would guarantee that fund), I am making this case since the policy of the business' bank might not have those restrictions.

Dina: On behalf of Grenon Enterprises we want to reassure the community we are open regularly Monday to Friday. Our workers are in their own individual vehicles so they are properly isolated, so please don't approach them. We will be out there keeping our services going for people the whole time.

Kat: Any closing remarks?

Larry: Regarding the foreign workers question, those working legally in Canada that have been laid off are eligible for the emergency fund.

Maria Nyland: Please use Yukon.ca and Health Canada websites for your health and food safety information. There is a statement from Health Canada in regards to covid-19 and food production. And it has announced that there are no reasons to date to consider food to be at risk to carry the virus. Please use reliable sources of information.

Kat: Again I would like to thank our panel. We will try to keep a regular schedule and keep up with these information sessions each week

Meeting adjourned 6:31PM PST