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75% Vaccination? Time to end all capacity restrictions on Yellowknife businesses.

The Chief Public Health Officer and the Minister of Health have spoken of a target to immunize 75% of NWT residents 18 years of age or older.

This target raises the question across the Northwest Territories: so, then what? What do we get when we get to 75%? That question remains unanswered, so on behalf of the Yellowknife business community and our 379 members, I offer this:

When 75% of eligible adults have been vaccinated, remove all capacity restrictions on Yellowknife businesses.

Now, the scary variants are at the gates and we need to protect our vulnerable populations. Sure. But with safe and effective vaccines readily available, we need to ease restrictions. Northwest Territories residents have, to use your characterization, been good children throughout this pandemic. We have followed the rules, planked the curve, masked up, washed our hands like surgeons and kept the pandemic at bay.

But, as Phase IV of the Emerging Wisely plan notes, a successful vaccination campaign for vulnerable populations should lead to loosening restrictions. If we're following Emerging Wisely, we should be lifting the self-isolation requirements. Pretty soon, we'll have vaccines chasing people instead of people chasing vaccines. Here we are; it's time to start governing, Premier.

The CPHO has done a commendable job, but public health cannot focus solely on epidemiology. It appears as though we are going to be living with some form of the virus for the medium term - now is the time to learn how to live with it and for that, we need you and your cabinet to govern. Figure this out. Make some public policy.

We can no longer simply defer to the directives of the CPHO. Science needs to inform governing - science alone cannot govern. Governing consists of making hard decisions that weigh and balance risks. We have had a year of abdication of governing to an absolute risk mitigation approach. We now have safe and effective vaccines and zero-risk governing is no longer acceptable.

When public health officials have discussed the 75% target, they have not given us the 'so then what?'. That's fine. That's what governing is for. That's where you come in, Premier. It's time to lead.

Tim Syer
President, Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

Submitted to NNSL April 7, 2021

