

FOR RELEASE #09-149
June 15, 2009

Level Six Pandemic Will Not Change Yukon's Response - MOH

WHITEHORSE – Yukon's Medical Officer of Health (MOH), Dr. Brendan Hanley, says Yukon residents should not view the World Health Organization's elevation of its pandemic alert level to Phase 6 as an increase in the severity of the novel influenza H1N1.

"This notice relates to the spread of the disease and not its severity," Hanley said. "This change will not make any difference to what we are doing now in Yukon to monitor and prepare for the disease."

The MOH said that raising the alert level to Phase 6 signals that the virus is being transmitted (or passed from person-to-person) in at least two regions in the world, in this case, North America and Asia/Australia.

To date, there has been only one confirmed case of H1N1 in the territory and that patient is fully recovered. Hanley says however that he believes Yukon will see increased transmission this fall and winter.

"The territory is continuing to monitor the spread and character of the virus across the country, and within our own boundaries, to make sure we are prepared for anything that might come at us in the fall," Hanley said. He added that a vaccine is expected to be ready for use during the coming winter flu season.

Hanley is cautioning Yukon residents to be rigorous with hand washing and adds that anyone with flu like symptoms should stay at home for at least a week. Symptoms are similar to seasonal flu, including cough, fever, headache, sore throat, fatigue, muscle ache and runny nose.

"I remind Yukon residents that hand washing is the single most important way to avoid getting the flu. We can all help to protect each other and by coughing or sneezing into our arms," Hanley added.

Yukon representatives continue to meet with Canada's Chief Medical Officer of Health and other partners across Canada to continue planning for all contingencies.

-30-

Contact:

Dr. Brendan Hanley
Medical Officer of Health
867-456-6136
brendan.hanley@gov.yk.ca

Pat Living
Communications, Health & Social Services
867-667-3673
patricia.living@gov.yk.ca