



## **Statement: NWT Chief Public Health Officer Denounces Those Ignoring Travel Order**

***YELLOWKNIFE(MARCH 28, 2020)*** -- NWT Chief Public Health Officer Dr. Kami Kandola offered the following response a story published in NNSL on March 27, 2020 detailing a brazen lack of consideration for public health by an individual crossing the NWT boundary:

“Last week, we declared a Public Health Emergency in this territory. We took aggressive measures to protect our friends, families, communities, and healthcare system by restricting cross-border traffic, and establishing isolation areas in Hay River, Yellowknife, Fort Smith, and Inuvik.

“We did it to slow the spread of the virus, and make sure those coming from hotspots in the south were in locations with the necessary level of health services to treat those who fall ill.

“And we committed to paying for accommodations and necessities for anyone who didn’t live in these centres. It helped avoid returning residents stopping to stock up in a small community, and risking exposing community members in doing so.

“When Mike Harrison chose to ignore this order, he decided not to do his part. He chose to prioritize his own personal comfort over the safety of our territory. And he chose to go on to embolden others to ignore our medical direction by touting his act in the media.

“Mr. Harrison returned from southern British Columbia and through Alberta – two epicentres of this pandemic in Canada. He fits the profile of a risky returning resident – the exact kind for which we instituted these orders.

“In spite of his assertions, he did not do anyone any favours by avoiding additional stops for gas. There are good guidelines to be followed when making these kinds of stops.



“But if he returned to his homestead, hundreds of kilometres away from a hospital and off-grid, and became ill with COVID-19 he’d caught down south, this could put unnecessary strain on our medical system at the time it needs it least.

“It could cost an avoidable Medevac trip, or cause him to unknowingly spread the virus with mild symptoms if he went to town in Fort Simpson, where there’s less robust medical services. These are exactly the kinds of situations we’re looking to avoid right now.

“There is no denying there are inconveniences we’re all now facing. But pandemics are more than inconvenient – they’re an extraordinary challenge that we need to make sacrifices to overcome.

“And that means playing on the same team as the thousands of Northwest Territories residents who are doing the right thing – protecting our elders, our families, our loved ones, and our communities by doing their part.

“Needless to say we will be investigating this matter.”