

**Thank you Secretary Young... and to everyone for joining this virtual meeting today.**

**Most importantly, I wanted to thank you for all your work during this once-in-a-century pandemic.**

**Over the last 18 months... we've been through a lot together... and I know you've sacrificed time with family and friends... vacations and more... and not just because of the virus, but because you were serving the people of Vermont.**

**With your help... we got creative to overcome some pretty major obstacles... and it led to setting up the best contact tracing and testing systems in the nation... And finding a way to fly tests across the country... And making sure our hospitals had enough PPE... and putting together the best vaccine program in the country.**

**As a result... Vermont has been... and is still... a leader in our pandemic response... with the lowest case counts, hospitalizations and deaths in the continental U.S. .... And we have more people who are fully vaccinated than any other state in the country.**

**Throughout my life... whether its business, politics or racing... I've been fortunate to find success. So I know first hand that no one can do it alone... it takes a talented team... and in this case... our success has absolutely been a team effort..... Across every agency, department and division.**

**I know every single one of you has contributed in some way.**

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**Like never before... so many agencies... departments... boards and commissions... the judiciary and legislature... municipalities... non-profits... businesses and everyday Vermonters.... came together to focus on the safety, health and well-being of Vermonters.**

**Here just a few of many, many examples: ...**

**To support vaccination clinics... TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY FIVE state employees from NINETEEN agencies and departments offered to redeploy staff to help the Department of Health as vaccinators and Intake or Exit workers.**

**Dozens of employees from many different agencies stepped in to give a hand processing Unemployment Claims that were coming in at a rate we've never seen before.**

**And, working together across multiple agencies... the State used \$5-million-dollars to create an "Economic Stimulus Equity program" .... Making sure those who weren't included in the individual federal stimulus program ... but should have been... received a check.**

**And of course... so many more... which we'll hear about throughout this event ... including outbreak prevention... addressing food insecurity and homelessness... connecting Vermonters with broadband so they could participate in school, work and healthcare... and the I.T. needed for the administration of new grants, built from scratch to get billions in federal aid out the door.**

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**And... let's not forget... you've been doing all this work while keeping the wheels of state government moving.**

**On top of all the new COVID-related work... you each have your own day jobs... serving and protecting Vermonters... managing programs... fixing roads... expanding broadband... building housing... and so much more.**

**And collectively... we've continued to work to grow the economy... make Vermont more affordable... and protect the vulnerable by building safe and healthy communities.**

**Your hard work and dedication are like none I've ever seen.**

**We're very fortunate to have you as public servants.... responding to the needs of 625,000 people.**

**Together with fellow Vermonters... we've been united in our commitment... sense of duty... care and respect for one another.**

**Fate can have a funny way of putting the right people in the right place at the right time, and I think that's exactly what happened here.**

**As Governor, I'm very blessed to have a team with so much character, commitment, competence and chemistry.**

**Thank you all for going above and beyond... I'm very proud of how we, as a state, have conducted ourselves during challenging times.**

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