



SPEAKING NOTES

COVID-19 media briefing notes - Karen Redman

November 6, 2020

New Provincial Framework

Good morning. Thank you all for being here and thank you to Dr. Wang for your continued advice and leadership. As Dr. Wang mentioned, earlier this week the province released the new framework for COVID response. I also spoke earlier this week with Minister Elliott and believe this new framework will balance our community's health and safety and economic recovery. It provides greater clarity on the decision-making process the Province will be using to impose and manage restrictions.

We have received indication from the Province that Waterloo Region will likely move into the Protect category effective midnight on Saturday. By implementing these measures we will prevent spread and further closures. We will remain in this stage for 2 incubation periods, 28 days.

As we learn more about these new measures and the changes required for Waterloo Region businesses, Regional Council as the Board of Health will work with public health and BEST Waterloo Region to get the information to businesses in a responsive and timely manner.

If we want business to remain open, we must follow the measures of regular mask wearing, proper physical distancing, hand washing, staying home while sick and not letting our guard down when around family, friends or coworkers.



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Provincial Budget

Yesterday's provincial budget provided a three-year fiscal outlook for Ontario, recognizing we are in unprecedented times, it focuses on the support needed to manage the pandemic, on addressing the COVID-19 challenges and economic difficulties, and supports key investments to deliver on an economic recovery.

In addition to the welcomed Safe Restart Funding, municipalities were looking to this budget for long term commitments from the province on transit, affordable housing, broadband, long term care and infrastructure funding.

We are pleased that within the budget's 300 pages, the word "municipal" is found over 140 times reflecting a great deal of focus and priority placed toward Ontario municipalities.

Earlier this week we learned of the Region's \$4 million dollar allocation under the COVID-19 Resilience Stream from the province and federal governments under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

This funding will be used towards shovel-ready projects with construction to commence and finish in 2021. Projects may include updates to health and safety related projects in our long-term care home Sunnyside, active transportation projects such as new LRT crossings, or further safety enhancements to Regional buildings.

One the Region's key budget submission asks that came out of our COVID Recovery Committee was to accelerate the reduction of education tax rates in Waterloo Region to provide tax relief to all commercial and industrial businesses and reduce the inter-regional tax disparities.



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The education tax rate is the largest component of non-residential property tax bills in Waterloo Region. The commercial and industrial property tax rate is higher here than the provincial average, putting us at a competitive disadvantage.

The budget announced that the government is lowering the Business Education Tax rates in recognition of this long-standing municipal concern. These rates will be lowered and the Province is expected to adjust payments to school board to off-set reductions in education property taxes.

The Region was pleased to see mention of local infrastructure projects including

- Highway 7 between Kitchener to Guelph
- Highway 401 widening between Hespler Road and Townline Road in Cambridge, and
- Two-Way All Day Go Service on the Kitchener Line. Although we are disappointed that the two-way all day Go Service was not funded in this budget, the mention of milestone projects on the transformation of the Kitchener GO line including completion of the first tunnel in August and completion of the second tunnel expected in December signals to us the governments commitment to this project.

The Toronto Waterloo Region Innovation Corridor is a key part of our region and province's economic rebound.



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Recently the Region partnered with the University of Waterloo's School of Planning to research how COVID-19 might impact the future of our community.

As soon as we accepted the pandemic as part of our new normal, we reached out and asked the University to help us answer the question: how has the pandemic changed our community, and how can we shift our development practices to address it?

The University looked at the economy, infrastructure, housing and social implications. A virtual research symposium was held in August and the papers are now posted online. The research papers include 13 recommendations – many of which we plan to use in our review of the Regional Official Plan. For example:

- We need to plan for more private and public spaces in the cities and urban growth areas.
- To secure local food systems we need to protect existing farmland and farm practices.
- And we plan to look at a 15-minute city approach to create complete neighbourhoods. Pedestrian friendly, transit-oriented, mixed use and mixed housing types.

Another research paper was written on how municipalities can build relationships with Indigenous nations and has been shared with our Indigenous Relations Working Group.

Some of the research is already being used at the Region and I want to thank the university for their expertise and partnership helping us ensure we continue planning for vibrant communities,

Remembrance Day



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This year continues to be a year like no other, and Remembrance Day will be no exception.

This year has brought special challenges in marking Remembrance Day, particularly the cancellation of ceremonies and/or moving them online.

This has inspired our local Waterloo Warbirds to honour those who've served by flying over all nine cenotaphs in Waterloo Region and Guelph, plus three major cemeteries (Mount View in Cambridge, Mount Hope in Kitchener-Waterloo and Woodlawn in Guelph) all of which have significant war memorials and buried service members.

The five historic planes and four jets will take flight between 10:30 and 11:15 a.m. on Remembrance Day.

This year, please put health and safety first while observing Remembrance Day. We can all pay tribute by:

- wearing a poppy and financially supporting the Royal Canadian Legion;
- wearing one of the Remembrance Day mask's being sold by the Royal Canadian Legion;
- observing a moment of silence at 11 a.m. on November 11 from home or wherever you are; and
- join the online ceremony from Ottawa's National War Memorial where the Region of Waterloo will proudly have one of the many wreaths placed in honour of local veterans and service members.