COVID-19 Update
Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Acting Medical Officer of Health
April 17, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Overall Trends

- I am said to report that we have had 4 more deaths in our community since my last update on Wednesday.
  - All were residents in long-term care facilities and over the age of 70
- Sadly, we can see the number of deaths increase even if outbreaks are coming under control.
  - This because deaths occur later... usually days subsequent to when people become ill... which is often several days after transmission of the virus has occurred.
- It doesn’t lessen the impact though. Each person who has passed way was someone’s loved one.
- I wish to express my sincere condolences to the families, friends and caregivers of those who have passed.
- We are still at 14 long-term care or retirement homes in outbreak.
  - We have a few homes which may be coming out of outbreak very shortly (e.g. today), and if they do, it will be indicated on our dashboard starting tomorrow morning.
- Overall, we have 399 positive cases in Waterloo Region.
- Of the 399 total cases, we now have 138 resolved cases.

Expanded testing

- The Province has continued to increase testing capacity and has subsequently provided updated guidance on testing.
- The prioritized groups for testing have been expanded.
- They include the previously prioritized groups and those living in more vulnerable, congregate settings including:
  - Hospital inpatients;
Residents of long-term care and retirement homes;
- Health care workers, caregivers, care providers, paramedics, police and firefighters;
- Indigenous communities;
- Other congregate living centres, including homeless shelters, and group homes;
- In addition, the following groups are now included:
  - Symptomatic persons living in the same household as a health care worker, including those employed in long-term care or retirement homes or a first responder
  - Specific vulnerable populations, including patients undergoing chemotherapy or hemodialysis and requiring transplants, as well as pregnant persons, newborns and cross-border workers; and
  - Essential workers
    - That is, those employed in an essential workplace, as defined by the Province

Where to get tested:
- Health care workers, including those in long-term care and retirement homes, and first responders can call Public Health to be scheduled at one of the hospital assessment clinics in the region.
- For those in the other groups:
  - Our two community assessment centres can now provide assessment and testing for these groups.
  - The community assessment centres will continue to operate through referral from primary care and by appointment
  - People are asked to contact their primary care practitioner or a walk-in clinic for a phone or virtual visit.
  - Their practitioner can then refer them to one of the assessment centres for a booked appointment.
- If you don’t have a health card, please contact Region of Waterloo Public Health at 519-575-4400

Closing remarks
- I sincerely wish to thank our many health care and community partners for the incredible work they are doing each and every day.
- It is an immense effort, and I am truly grateful for their dedication, collaboration, and the outstanding service they provide to the citizens of our community.
- The work of Public Health has always been to build healthy and supportive communities in partnership.
- Our work is not done in isolation and our community partnerships are invaluable.
Lastly, I would like to take a moment to sincerely thank the teams at Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services, and the Region.
Just like many of you, these teams are making personal sacrifices and working tirelessly to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.
Thank you to our health care and community partners, to our staff, and to everyone in our community, for all for your efforts.