COVID-19 Update – Board of Health

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Public Health and Emergency Services
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Current status of COVID-19

- We are headed in the wrong direction.
- We continue to see increases in our average number of new cases per day.
  - Each new case is only the tip of the iceberg. They subsequently lead to many more contacts and settings that need follow-up and investigation, and lead to more outbreaks.
- It has been a little more than a week since the Region was moved into the Red-Control level of Ontario’s Framework. Since then our indicators have continued to worsen.
  - Our current incidence rate is 85 cases per 100,000 per week.
  - Our current per cent positivity taking into account interim data is 4.0 per cent. Which is only slightly below the Province’s 7-day average of 4.2
  - Above 3 per cent, that’s the threshold that is often viewed as the point at which case and contact management alone is not going to be able to bring numbers back down.
  - Our reproductive rate has fluctuated between 1.2-1.4 in the last few days.
  - We continue to log more outbreaks, often in workplace and business settings. I will speak more about that later.
  - In the second wave to date, our LTC and RH outbreaks have remained small and stable, and there has been an incredible amount of work behind the scenes to try and keep it that way, but such outbreaks have significantly increased in other areas of the Province, with case numbers growing rapidly and deaths rising. This remains a major risk in any community with elevated rates of spread such as in Waterloo Region.
- The number of cases and outbreaks in our schools, while increasing, is increasing in line with the overall case growth in our community. Due to the conservative measures taken in schools, outbreaks have been well controlled and spread in outbreaks has been limited to date. Again, however, the more spread increases in our community, the more schools will be impacted.
• Similar to other health units in the Red and Lockdown zones, we have been challenged to reach positive cases within 24 hours. While our ability to reach cases within 24 hours has recently improved to around 80 per cent, our capacity is very stretched and fragile.
• Hospital and ICU capacity
  o Hospital capacity is also continuing to be strained by the increasing number of hospitalizations and ICU admissions.

Workplace, Facility, Business outbreaks by type
• I mentioned that the number of outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes and schools were fairly low and in general well controlled.
• Where we are seeing the most outbreaks and what is driving a lot of our spread, are workplace and business setting outbreaks.
• You can see that the most common settings are:
  o Manufacturing / Industrial
  o Restaurants & Bars, or Food & Drink Establishments
  o Trades & related services
  o Sports and fitness settings
  o General office settings; and
  o Construction settings
• What we most often see in workplace and business settings – across all sectors – is employee to employee spread in the workplace.
  o There's also employee to employee spread outside the workplace, if they socialize together for example, but we don't count that as a workplace outbreak.
  o Workplace outbreaks are declared when, upon investigation, transmission is thought to have most likely occurred in the workplace.
• The second most common occurrence is when clients spread it amongst each other. An area where we often see that is in sports settings, where there is insufficient or inconsistent physical distancing and no masking while engaged in physical activity.

Closing remarks
• The situation in Waterloo Region is serious.
• Regarding the question of whether Waterloo Region would be moved by the Province into the Lockdown Zone this Friday:
  o There are no set criteria for the Lockdown Zone. What’s in the framework is that areas of the Province may be placed in Lockdown if their situation continues to get worse after entering the Red Zone.
  o There is ongoing consultation between the Province and ourselves on what is best for Waterloo Region, to order to help slow down the spread and reverse the trends.
- We are also continuing discussions with the Province regarding additional supports for case and contact management and enforcement.
- On the one hand, our indicators have worsened.
- On the other hand, it takes more than just a week to see the impact of restrictions.
- There, we need to monitor the situation in Waterloo Region very closely.
  - We as a community need to act now.
  - Many of us have already taken these actions.
  - We need many more of us to take these actions.
- Business restrictions and lockdowns are very, very hard.
  - Please, let's all do our part.
  - It is crucial that, as a community, we dramatically reduce our non-essential social interactions.
  - Please do not have non-essential social interactions with people outside of your immediate household.
  - No birthday parties with those outside of our household, no sleepovers, no playdates, no coffee dates, no game nights, no dinner parties.
  - Please only go out for essential purposes.
  - When you shop, please support our local businesses.