



Region of Waterloo  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

## COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health  
Public Health and Emergency Services  
December 4, 2020

### Highlights

- COVID-19 is broadly spreading in our community right now
- Our situation remains serious. We need to all pull together to maximize our chances of not having to enact further restrictions.
- To manage increased numbers and complexity in case, contact and outbreak management right now, to ensure we can prioritize higher risk situations for follow-up investigation, in situations of lower risk, we will be asking cases to notify their own close contacts.
- In workplaces, ensuring good physical distancing and the use of masks, as well as good ventilation, will minimize the risk of transmission.

### Overall trends

- Waterloo Region's rates of COVID-19 are the 4<sup>th</sup> highest in the Province right now.
- Residents should consider that COVID-19 is broadly spreading in our community.
- Our indicators are concerning.
  - Our incidence rate has climbed to its highest level to date: 90 cases / per 100,000 per week.
  - Our current per cent positivity taking into account interim data is 4.1 per cent.
  - Our reproductive rate has fluctuated between 1.1-1.4 in the last few days.
  - We continue to see new outbreaks on a daily basis, often in workplace settings.
  - Hospitalizations continue to increase and local hospitals have begun to temporarily reduce some elective surgeries to better manage ICU capacity.

## **Surge strategy has been implemented**

- Due to the number and complexity of cases, contacts and outbreaks which have increased rapidly,
- Last week, I asked residents who become aware that they have tested positive before we are able to reach them, to start notifying their close contacts while awaiting a call from Public Health.
- Now, in order to ensure we can prioritize higher risk situations for follow-up investigation, in situations of lower risk, we will be asking cases to notify their own close contacts and workplaces. Public Health will also be sending information to those workplaces, to enable them to carry out contact tracing in their settings, to help stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Public Health will continue to directly investigate or follow-up contacts for higher risk situations such as outbreaks, and for settings such as long-term care, retirement and congregate care, health care, home care, emergency services, and schools and daycares.
- We appreciate the ongoing support of Council and their recent advocacy to the Province for resources to support our continued efforts to manage this surge.

## **Workplace measures**

- On Wednesday, I mentioned that we are seeing more workplace outbreaks and that spread in such settings is most often occurring from employee to employee.
- We know that the public health measures of employee screening, physical distancing, face coverings, and staying home if you have any symptoms are effective.
- In addition, in indoor settings, it is important to ensure good ventilation and maintenance of HVAC systems.
  - Ventilation with fresh, outdoor air is encouraged.
  - Avoid recirculation of air as far as practically possible.
  - Ensure clean filters, control humidity, and optimize air change rates.
- Facilities should consult their HVAC contractor or maintenance staff regarding optimizing ventilation in these ways in their facility as well as ensuring routine inspection and maintenance.

## **Closing remarks**

- Many in our community are enduring significant hardships as a result of the current restrictions we are under.
- We need to all pull together to maximize our chances of slowing the spread without the need for further restrictions.
- We need to act now.
- I am asking all residents to:
  - Limit social interactions to only those people in your immediate household

- Stay home and only leave for essential purposes such as for groceries/take-out, work, school or medical appointments
- Continue to practice the public health measures of physical distancing, wearing a face covering, proper hand washing and avoiding enclosed, crowded spaces that are not well ventilated.
- If you have symptoms, stay home, self-isolate from others and seek testing.
- We need to do everything we can to help each other.
- And I encourage you to continue to support local businesses and local charities.
- Thank you.