



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
February 12, 2021

Highlights

- Our trends are currently stable; our rates are no longer continuing to decrease.
- We have identified a probable case of a variant of concern in a student at W.T. Townshend Public School. We have dismissed the cohort and no further cohorts need to be dismissed at this time. Parents of children in this cohort are being informed. We will continue to monitor the situation closely.
- A total of 13 cases have screened positive for a variant of concern (VOC), with still one confirmed case of the B.1.1.7 (or UK) variant.
 - As of February 10, provincially, there were over 230 confirmed cases of variants of concern (these are not the numbers of those who have screened positive; only the subset which have been confirmed).
- This was not unexpected. We expect many more people will screen positive and many more cases will later be confirmed, due to the very significant increase in screening for variants of concern that the provincial laboratory system is now undertaking.

Overall trends

- Our trends are currently stable; our rates no longer continuing to decrease.
- Our weekly incidence rate is currently at approximately 58 cases per week per 100,000.
- We are currently managing 396 active cases and 32 outbreaks.
- Taking into account interim data, our latest per cent positivity continues to decrease and is currently at 2.5 per cent.
- Our latest reproductive rate is at 0.9.
- The burden on our health care system remains high.

Variants of concern

- We have identified a probable case of a variant of concern in a student at W.T. Townshend Public School.
 - In this case, the student is a confirmed COVID-19 positive case that is a close contact of a case that has screened positive for a VOC so we are treating the case as a probable VOC case.
- We have dismissed the cohort and no further cohorts need to be dismissed at this time.
- We have initiated case and contact management for this cohort.
- Parents of children in this cohort are being contacted today with this information.
- An outbreak has not been declared at this time but ~~W~~we will continue to monitor the situation closely.
- We've also learned of 10 more cases in Waterloo Region who have screened positive for a variant, but who have not been confirmed to have a specific variant yet. Bringing the total number of cases who have screened positive, but have not been confirmed with a specific variant, to 13.
- Locally, we remain at one case of a confirmed B.1.1.7 (or UK) variant. As of February 10, provincially, there were over 230 cases of confirmed variants of concern across Ontario. (These are not the numbers of those who have screened positive; only the subset which have been confirmed.)
- Seven of the total 14 cases have a link to international travel and five of the cases have no known epi-link.
 - No known epi-link means that a link to close contact with a case or travel has not yet been identified.
- This was not unexpected. We expect many more people to screen positive and many more cases will be confirmed, due to the very significant increase in screening for variants of concern that the provincial laboratory system is now undertaking.
 - This increase in screening is welcome because it is providing us a much accurate picture of the current prevalence of variants in our region.
- The Province's Science Advisory Table and modelling experts indicated in their most recent projections (on February 10, 2021) that variants of concern likely make up between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of cases in Ontario now. They also indicated that our current public health measures appear to be effective against all variants.
- To control growth of the variants, we must continue to keep up with our public health measures to slow rates of spread, and continue to drive towards lower rates of COVID-19

Closing remarks

- We expect to learn later today which tier or zone of the Framework Ontario will place Waterloo Region in, effective Tuesday, February 16 when the stay-at-home order is lifted.
- Waterloo Region's case rates are currently above the 40 cases per 100,000 per week threshold for the Red Zone, so I would not be surprised if we are placed in the Red Zone. We recommend all businesses and organizations have plans prepared for each zone of the Framework.
- For all residents, I want to be clear that this does not represent a reopening or a return to normal.
- We must be extremely cautious as we emerge from the stay-at-home order.
- We know what happens when people increase their mobility and their social interactions. We also now have variants of concern, in addition to the regular variant.
- While our current public health measures are effective against all variants, provincial modeling is projecting that, to control growth of the variants, we must continue to keep up with our public health measures and continue to drive towards lower rates of COVID-19.
- It is therefore imperative that all residents continue to stay home unless it's necessary to go out, avoid close contact with others outside of their households, work from home if possible, and minimize their mobility to the extent possible.
- We have made significant gains but maintaining those gains relies on our continued commitment to strictly adhering to those measures. They are our best defense against COVID-19, including the variants of concern.
- Thank you.