



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 19, 2021

### Highlights

- We are continuing to see some slight improvements in our local trends.
- To date, a total of four cases have now been confirmed for the B.1.1.7 variant and an additional 23 cases in Waterloo Region have screened positive for a variant. This is not unexpected given provincial modeling and trends.
- Along with our local testing partners, we are being consulted by our local school boards in implementing their plans for asymptomatic screening of school populations. The school boards will provide more information shortly regarding their plans.

### Overall trends

- We are continuing to see some slight improvements in our local trends.
- Our weekly incidence rate is currently between 45-50 cases per week per 100,000 residents.
- We are currently managing 333 active cases and 25 outbreaks.
- Taking into account interim data, our latest per cent positivity continues to decrease and is currently at 2.3 per cent.
- Our latest reproductive rate remains below 1.0 at 0.9.
- These improvements over the last few weeks have been significant and are the result of both the restrictions and our residents' commitment to public health measures.
- The gradual lifting of restrictions and moving to the Red-Control zone of the Provincial framework is neither a normal reopening nor a 'return to normal'
- It is imperative that we stay the course.
- The Province is recommending the same thing for our residents, despite the fact we're back in the color-coded framework. That is, that we only go out for essential reasons and do not gather with anyone outside of our household (unless we live alone and wish to join one other, exclusive household).

## Variants of concern

- We continue to see more cases screen positive for variants of concern. This is expected with the enhanced screening being done by Public Health Ontario.
- To date, a total of four cases have now been confirmed for the B.1.1.7 variant and an additional 23 cases in Waterloo Region who have screened positive and are awaiting confirmation of a specific variant of concern at this time.
  - This brings our total VOC case count – confirmed and ‘screened positive’ (but not confirmed) to 27 cases.
- This is not unexpected given provincial modeling and trends.
- We are working to include VOC data on our dashboard in the coming weeks.

## School updates

- Earlier this week the Ministry of Education directed that school boards across Ontario implement asymptomatic testing of school populations with a target of five per cent of schools per week.
- The Ministry of Education is working with school boards to implement their asymptomatic screening programs. Local public health units have been invited to participate in school selection.
- Locally, our school boards are leading this initiative, with support from our testing partners and ourselves.
- The school boards will provide more information shortly regarding their plans.
- Beyond the asymptomatic testing of school populations, other local testing strategies include:
  - Pop-up testing in priority neighbourhoods which have been promoted to school communities within those areas;
  - Asymptomatic testing at pharmacies which has been expanded to include school staff; and
  - Our local assessment centres
- We also learned yesterday of updates to the school screening criteria:
- The Ministry of Health is now requiring that staff, students and children with any new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19, even those with only one symptom, stay home and not return to school until:
  - They receive a negative COVID-19 test result;
  - They receive an alternative diagnosis from a health care professional; or
  - It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.

## Closing remarks

- I want to acknowledge the hard work of so many in our community to slow the spread of COVID-19.
- There are so many organizations across our community, working together right now – implementing Provincial health and safety measures, building a mass immunization program, caring for each other.

- Our community continues to show the power of many working together.
- As individuals, we each play an important role to slow the spread and to protect each other.
- Keeping up our commitment to public health measures – including reducing our mobility, staying at home as much as possible and limiting our close contacts – are not easy, but they work.
- Public health measures are strengthened when we work together.
- Thank you for your efforts and your continued commitment to slow the spread of COVID-19 and protect one another in our community.