



Region of Waterloo

PUBLIC HEALTH AND

Her EMERGENCY SERVICES

COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health
Public Health and Emergency Services
March 19, 2021

Highlights

- Indicators remain high but relatively stable.
- Large cluster of confirmed cases identified
- We all must continue to limit our mobility, limit our close contacts, and avoid social gatherings to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

Overall trends

- Our incidence rate of COVID-19 in Waterloo Region is relatively stable at this time.
- The incidence rate is holding at approximately 45 cases per 100,000 per week.
- We are currently managing 313 active cases and 14 active outbreaks.
- Taking into account interim data, our latest per cent positivity is currently at 2.1 per cent.
- Our latest reproductive rate is currently at 0.8, which is under 1.
- However, week-over-week improvements have slowed since mid-February.
- Over the last month more than 1,200 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Waterloo Region.
- While I am grateful that our cases remain stable at this time, I am concerned with what I am seeing in other communities across Ontario where case rates have gone up again, and the impact variants can have on transmission rates.

Cluster

- Earlier this week, our case and contact management team identified a cluster of confirmed cases related to multiple social gatherings that were held at three private residences between Thursday, March 4 and Sunday, March 7.
- This is an example of how easily it can spread. COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community and residents are asked to avoid all social gatherings.
- At this time, there are 23 confirmed cases and one probable case connected to this cluster and 20 close contacts.

- We have also learned that one of the initial cases has now screened positive for a variant of concern. The specific variant has not been identified yet.
 - It is expected that the other cases will also screen positive for a variant.
- With COVID-19 you can be infectious before you develop symptoms and before you know you have it.
- It spreads easily between loved ones and friends, those with whom we may feel comfortable with and around whom we can let our guard down.

Variants of concern

- To date, a total of 245 variant cases have been identified in Waterloo Region.
- Of that total, 17 cases have been confirmed for the B.1.1.7 variant.
- And the remaining 228 cases have screened positive for, and are awaiting confirmation of, a specific variant of concern.
- In Ontario, more than 11,000 variant cases have been detected, with 1,200 confirmed for one of the variants of concerns.
- We know that public health measures are effective against variants of concern – we have seen many situations in which a variant did not spread – but they must be practiced. If they are not practiced, they will spread more easily.
- We are in a risky period at this time. The variants will spread easily if we let them.
- This is why I continue to advise all residents to avoid all social gatherings, limit close contacts and stay home as much as possible.

Closing remarks

- Communities in Ontario are seeing case rates rise.
- Our actions today inform what comes next for Waterloo Region.
- A bright future lays ahead of us, but we must not lose sight of what we need to do to get there.
- Our situation is precarious and we are not immune to a rapid acceleration of cases.
- We all must continue to limit our mobility, limit our close contacts, and avoid social gatherings to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.
- Following public health measures is critical in our ability to delay or control the severity of third wave for Waterloo Region.
- Thank you.