



COVID-19 Update

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Acting Medical Officer of Health

May 8, 2020 at 11:30 a.m.

Overall Trends

- Sadly, we continue to see COVID-19 deaths in our community. To date, 101 people have died in our community.
- This is what we can expect to see some time after infections have occurred, and we are seeing here is what we are seeing across the Province.
- I wish to express my deepest condolences to all the families, friends, and caregivers who have lost loved ones to COVID-19.
- There are currently 11 long-term care or retirement homes in outbreak.
- 14 outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes have been declared over
- 436 people have now recovered from COVID-19 in our community.
- Our data is still illustrating that people continue to contract the virus.
- While we need to plan ahead for the gradual and progressive lifting of measures, we need to stay the course for now.

Testing

- I want to take a moment to say a little more about testing in Waterloo Region.
- We provide updates on numbers tested, based on number of tests done by our health care partners who do the testing.
- Our partners are working hard to do the testing for our community.
- They put themselves on the front lines and, since swab availability has increased, they have progressively tested more and more people in our community.
- The efforts of our testing partners over the past few weeks have focused on vulnerable settings including long-term care facilities, retirement homes, and congregate settings.

- In these settings we are testing above what is required precisely because of how easily the virus can spread and the outbreaks that we've seen there.
- We are currently in planning discussions with our clinical partners who oversee testing to open up testing to the general public who have symptoms, as soon as feasible.
- We all want to see more testing available for more people, and we are working hard to make that happen.

Conestoga Meats

- I wanted to provide an update on our public health investigation of cases at Conestoga Meats.
- Along with the Ministry of Labour, we worked with the plant, including doing an onsite inspection last week, to ensure that they would be ready to re-open this past on Monday, after their voluntary one-week closure to enhance their employee protection measures within the plant.
- This was to ensure all recommended measures to prevent the spread of infection would be implemented.
- Conestoga Meats has worked diligently to implement all recommended measures and more.
- In order to address current and future risk.
- That said, we also investigated what happened in the past, to identify what may have happened.
- As a result of the initial cluster of cases previously reported, Public Health has been aggressively following up on cases and their close contacts, and referring people for testing
- As a result, extensive testing was done, and continues to be done.
- As of yesterday afternoon, we informed Conestoga that a total of 44 people who worked at the plant have tested positive for COVID-19. Of the positive cases, 12 have resolved to date.
- As of May 1, only 11 cases had tested positive. The majority of positive results have come back this week.
- It is likely that there was transmission that occurred in the plant before it temporarily closed.
- We know these are work environments where the virus can spread easily.
- That said, it is also likely that not all transmission occurred in the plant.
- Outside of the plant there is a considerable amount of social interaction between employees. Many live together and/or carpool together, which can increase the risk in environments outside of Conestoga Meats.
- At this time, the cases we are now seeing are believed to be from the period prior to the closure and full implementation of PPE and other protective measures.
- That said, we will continue to monitor testing results as they come in closely and assess the effectiveness of the measures put in place.

- This is not a food borne virus, and the pork products coming from Conestoga Meats are safe. The CFIA has a constant presence at the plant to oversee food safety.

Closing Remarks

- In closing I wanted to reiterate the importance of all of us continuing to follow public health measures such as physical distancing, limiting the number of trips you make outside, frequent hand washing, and not gathering in groups.
- These measures are what *prevents* transmission and infection in the first place.
- Also, receiving a negative test result does not mean you no longer need to follow these measures, in case you may become infected in the future.
- That's why I ask all residents to act as though you can get COVID-19 anywhere in our community.
- We have made significant gains, and if we continue to work together, we will hold on to those gains.
- Moving forward, in a thoughtful and measured way, is our best course of action.
- Thank you.