COVID-19 Update

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Overall trends

- Although in the last couple of days, our daily number of new cases reported has come down a little, we are still firmly overall in the Red category and there is broad spread of COVID-19 in our community.
- There are currently 349 active cases of COVID-19 in the Region, surpassing our highest reported caseload from the spring.
- We have met the updated thresholds for each of the indicators outlined under the Red-Control category of the Provincial framework.
  - Our current weekly incidence rate is 60 cases per 100,000.
  - Our current per cent positivity taking into account interim data is 3.3 percent.
  - Our reproductive rate has fluctuated between 1.1-1.5 over the past week.
  - We have experienced some larger scale outbreaks, particularly in workplace and business settings.
  - In the past week, our ability to contact cases within 24 hrs has dropped to as low as 50 per cent (three-day moving average), but this is temporary as we continue to reallocate and reinforce our staffing.
    - Our team has indicated we should be back up to 90 per cent in the next day or two.
    - Following Chair Redman’s request to the Province, they have indicated they will be providing us with additional staff for case and contact management starting next week.
    - We currently have over 90 staff and students allocated to case, contact and outbreak management (which includes the 25 school nurses).
    - The Province will be providing approximately 10 more staff, which will bring our complement to a little over 100.
    - We’ve also introduced efficiencies, such as having the schools send out information to the families of children in cohorts who have been dismissed, so families will receive in a timely manner the
same information our nurses would have provided them over the phone, and our nurses will follow-up with them later.

- **Hospital and ICU capacity**
  - Hospitalizations due to COVID-19 are increasing
  - Our hospitals will be at risk of being overwhelmed if this growth in COVID-19 hospitalizations continues.

- The decision to move a region is made by the Provincial Cabinet and is done so in consultation with local municipal leaders and myself, as Medical Officer of Health.

- Given the recent acceleration in growth, which has led to multiple outbreaks, broad community spread, and a weekly incidence rate behind only Peel, Toronto and York (the three areas of the Province with the highest incidence rates), I have advocated to the Province that Waterloo Region be placed in the Red-Control category.

### Outbreaks and transmission

- COVID-19 spreads easily when you have close, unprotected contact
- This means that it is spreading in settings where face coverings are not worn and/or physical distance is not practiced.
- This is happening in **social gatherings**, between friends and family, and it's also happening in **workplace settings** and **sports and recreation settings** when measures are not practiced diligently.
- **At Public Health we begin monitoring and investigating settings as soon as a single case is identified. We do not wait for transmission to occur before we begin to monitor for potential outbreaks.**
  - As an example, we not only have 13 active workplace, facility and business outbreaks, we have an additional 56 of these settings currently which are being investigated and monitored by Public Health to prevent a single case from spreading, or to contain spread that has already occurred, as much as possible.
- **From the period of September 1 to November 11:**
  - We have managed 4,595 high-risk contacts
  - 179 workplaces have been followed up and monitored.
  - There have been 73 instances of schools, daycares, before and after school programs, and post-secondary institutions being followed up and monitored
  - There have been 186 instances of follow-up and monitoring of long-term care and retirement and congregate care settings.

- All of this work is done to prevent and minimize both the number and the spread of outbreaks.
- With all the settings that are open, this is why case and contact has become much more labour and resource-intensive in the second wave.
- Each time you are in close contact, without physical distancing or wearing a face covering, is an opportunity for COVID-19 to spread.
“Red-Control”

- We recommend that businesses make plans for each level of the framework.
- If Waterloo Region is moved into the Red-Control category some of the significant changes would include:
  - Limits for indoor public events would decrease to 10 people (previously 50) and outdoor public events would decrease to 25 people (previously 100)
  - These limits – 10 people indoors, 25 outdoors – would also apply to restaurants, sports and recreational facilities, event spaces, retail, and other settings.
  - Cinemas, excluding drive-ins, would be closed and performing arts facilities would be closed to spectators.
- All measures for each previous level would still be required in the Red-Control category, such as required screening of patrons

Closing remarks

- At this time when the circulation of COVID-19 has never been higher in Waterloo Region, I continue to recommend for the time being that all residents stay home and only leave for essential purposes such as:
  - Going to work
  - Going to school
  - Groceries or take-out
  - Medical appointments
  - Exercising, preferably outdoors
- Please avoid any social gatherings with friends, coworkers, and extended family.
  - This includes birthday parties, sleepovers, playdates, coffee dates, game nights and dinner parties. Please avoid any of that.
  - Limit your social interactions to only your household members, which can include one or two essential caregivers or supports for someone who is living alone.
- We have seen how fast this virus can spread. We need everyone’s help to dramatically reduce our social interactions for now.
- Doing so will significantly reduce our risk of having to move beyond Red and can shorten the time we will otherwise need to stay in Red.
- I know it is tiring. We all want to get back to normal.
- So we need to do this. To not only avoid longer and more severe restrictions. But to be able to start lifting restrictions, sooner rather than later.
- We did this earlier this fall, we can do it again.
- Let’s protect one other and our loved ones.
- Please support one another during these difficult times. We are stronger together.
- Thank you.