COVID-19 Update

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Commissioner Public Health and Emergency Services
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Overall trends

- At this time, our growth has not accelerated at the same pace as some other areas in Ontario.
- Similar to other mid-size regions in Ontario however, we remain in a precarious state in Waterloo Region.
- As of this morning’s dashboard update, there are 127 active cases.
  - This number fluctuates with the pace of growth of new cases.
- A total of 152,897 tests have been performed in Waterloo Region.
- There are currently nine active outbreaks:
  - We have declared a new outbreak at Wilfred Laurier University in residence (Conrad Hall) as well as off-campus.
    - More information about this outbreak below.
  - One in a congregate care setting
  - Three in long term care homes
  - Two in licensed child care settings
  - Two in a school setting

Some minor improvements to daily dashboard:

- We have made some changes to our public dashboard under the ‘Characteristics’ tab: we converted our existing bar charts for ever hospitalized, health care workers and gender to epi-curves which show the changes of these characteristics over the course of the pandemic.
  - The same information about percentages can still be seen when you hover over the graphs.
- Most cases among healthcare workers occurred during earlier stages in the pandemic.
Overall there have been more cases who are females than males, however in recent months, the proportion of cases by gender has been relatively balanced.

Wilfrid Laurier University Outbreak

- Public Health has declared an outbreak at the University both in residence and off campus.
- We have a total of 7 cases to date which are linked.
  - 4 of whom (3 confirmed + 1 probable) reside at the Conrad Hall Residence and 3 (confirmed cases) who reside off campus.
  - They are considered linked because all 7 likely acquired their infection participating in one of multiple ‘study groups’ held off campus.
- All cases are being followed by Public Health and high risk contacts are being advised that they need to self-isolate and get tested.
- Due to 4 cases and other high risk contacts identified on two floors of the Conrad Hall Residence, these 2 floors have been declared in outbreak and students living on these floors are being asked to self-isolate and will be tested.
  - We are not publicly identifying the 2 floors due to a risk of identification of the individual cases, but all students who are impacted are being informed by the University. Public Health will also be following up with them individually.
- Public Health is recommending that everyone only have close contact with those they live with, for example, in their dorm or room, and physically distance and wear a face covering with everyone else.
- The safest thing to do when studying together is to study together virtually.
- If you choose to gather in person:
  - Maintain strict physical distancing and the wearing of face covering;
  - Keep the gathering as small as possible;
  - Use outdoor spaces as much as possible.

Advice for Halloween: Stick to low-risk activities

- Given that Ontario and areas including Waterloo Region have entered its second wave of COVID-19 infections, Region of Waterloo Public Health supports the recommendation of Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health that people:
  - Limit close (unprotected) contact to those within our immediate household.
- For events such as Halloween, it is recommended that residents stick to low-risk activities.
- Ideas for celebrating Halloween safely with members of your immediate household include:
  - Pumpkin decorating;
  - Virtual costume party;
  - Halloween movie night;
Sharing spooky stories;
Outdoor trick-or-treat scavenger hunt in the back-yard.

- The general principles are as follows:
  - Limit close contact to people living in your own household.
  - Virtual gatherings are the safest way to visit with people outside your household.
- If you choose to hold or participate in an in-person gathering with people outside your household, you need to take the following precautions:
  - Stay home if you have symptoms, even if they are mild or you recently had a negative COVID-19 test.
  - Physically distance and wear a face covering with anyone outside of your immediate household
  - Regardless of the legal limits of 10 people indoors and 25 people outdoors, you should:
    - Keep your gathering as small as possible;
    - Use outdoor spaces whenever possible.
  - Gathering outdoors is safer than indoors;
  - The fewer the people, the lower the risk.
- If you choose to go out trick or treating:
  - Only go out with members of your immediate household;
  - Physically distance and wear a face covering with anyone outside of your immediate household.
  - Both trick-or-treaters and people handing out candy should wear a face covering. Not a costume mask.
    - A costume mask is not a substitute for a face covering and should not be worn over a face covering as it may make it difficult to breathe.
  - Do not leave treats in a bucket or bowl for children to grab.
    - Use tongs, or other similar tools, to hand out treats
  - Do not congregate or linger at doorsteps. Line up two metres apart if waiting.

Closing remarks
- The recommended measures of physical distancing, wearing a mask, washing your hands and limiting close interactions outside of your immediate household are going to be important going forward.
- We know that COVID-19 spreads easily when we have close, unprotected contact with others.
- This means it spreads easily between loved ones or friends.
• I appreciate that many of you have remained committed to following the recommended public health practices.
• Thank you, especially, to everyone who followed guidelines over Thanksgiving weekend.
• Together, we can reduce the spread of COVID, and keep our school and businesses open, and medical procedures and surgeries going.
• Thank you.