



# Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

**December 11, 2020**

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep local stakeholders informed about the coordinated community response to the evolving COVID-19 situation. The Region, area municipalities and local community partners are meeting regularly to make sure our pandemic response efforts are coordinated and aligned. This work is being done through a Community Pandemic Control Group which coordinates the efforts and actions of five other sector control groups which are described further in this document.

## **Community Pandemic Control Group (CPCG)**

The Community Pandemic Control Group has been meeting regularly to share information, facilitate sharing of resources, and guide the community-wide pandemic response in five areas: health, community support, critical infrastructure, the municipalities and communications. The following sections provide an update on these five areas that are working together to ensure an effective and efficient response to the COVID-19 pandemic in our community.

### **1. Health Sector Control Group (HSCG)**

This group of representatives from hospital/acute care, primary care, long-term care & retirement homes, Home and Community Care, Homeless/Shelter groups, Public Health and Paramedic Services meets every two weeks to discuss emerging issues and trends as part of their collective work in COVID response. The following is an update on the discussions that took place at these meetings.

#### **COVID-19 Dashboard**

Public Health continues to update the COVID-19 dashboard on the Region's website:  
[www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary)

#### **Public Health Update**

As the holiday season approaches, it is going to be a difficult time for many, as we need to remain physically distanced in order to keep each other safe. The Province recently released some advice for [celebrating safely](#) this holiday season. It is recommended that your in-person celebrations be only with your immediate household members. If you or someone you love lives alone, you/ they may join (only) one other household to celebrate. Celebrate virtually with everyone else. Avoid attending or hosting large gatherings like holiday dinners with friends and co-workers this year.



While traditions will look very different this year, it is still possible to celebrate. By celebrating apart, we are helping to protect each other as well as the most vulnerable in the community. We are all ***in this together*** and by taking this pause, we will have more to celebrate with our loved ones in years to come.



### **Lagging indicators**

In the past week, we have seen an increase in deaths in our community where COVID-19 was a contributing factor. We are also seeing an increase in hospitalizations as well as in outbreaks in long-term care facilities.

Outbreaks, hospitalizations, and sadly, deaths, are lagging indicators, which means we start to see increases in these areas a few weeks after we have a rapid acceleration of cases. These indicators are a reflection of COVID-19 across our community and they highlight the importance of protecting our vulnerable community members.

We all have a role to play to protect each other. By practicing public health measures - avoiding social gatherings with those outside your immediate household, limiting non-essential trips, physical distancing, wearing a face covering, proper hand hygiene - we are working to protect those most at risk of severe illness and outcomes in our community.

### **COVID at a Glance**

As we head into the holiday season, a little refresher about COVID-19:

#### **Most common exposures to the virus, where public health measures are not practiced consistently:**

- Close contact
- Workplaces
- Social gatherings

#### **Waterloo Region is in the Red zone. Here are the best ways to protect yourself and others:**

- Avoid social gatherings with those outside our immediate household
- Limit non-essential trips
- Avoid close contact with anyone outside of your household
- Practice [physical distancing](#)
- Wear a [face-covering](#)
- Stay home when you are feeling sick
- Wash your hands often
- Avoid enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces and crowded spaces



## What to do if you have symptoms?

- [Self-isolate at home](#)
- [Book a test](#)
- Seek medical attention if you become seriously ill

For more information: [www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19)

## Region of Waterloo forms COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force

As part of its pandemic response and recovery efforts, the Region of Waterloo has formed a COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force.

Waterloo Region Police Service (WRPS) Deputy Chief Shirley Hilton will lead the task force, which will draw on staff expertise from several agencies. The task force will ensure an efficient, equitable plan is in place for delivery of the immunization program.

“We continue to see COVID-19 circulate throughout our community and the creation of this task force is a major milestone in the fight against the virus,” said Regional Chair Karen Redman. “We are fortunate to be able to call upon Deputy Chief Hilton to guide the critical work of this task force. All members of this task force are dedicated to the health and well being of our entire community.”

“I am privileged to be chosen to lead the Vaccine Distribution Task Force and to continue supporting the Region of Waterloo’s fight against COVID-19,” said WRPS Deputy Chief Shirley Hilton. “The health and safety of this community is our top priority and I am confident that the individuals on the Regional task force share a collective expertise to develop a clear and transparent process to ensure vaccines are delivered in a safe and equitable manner. The task force will take their guidance from the Provincial task force in the planning and delivery of the immunization program, ensuring high risk populations are prioritized and will communicate those plans with the community as soon as possible.

### Members of the Task Force include:

- Karen Redman, Regional Chair
- Bruce Lauckner, Region of Waterloo CAO
- Deputy Chief Shirley Hilton, WRPS
- Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Region of Waterloo Medical Officer of Health
- Dr. Sharon Bal, Primary Care Physician Lead
- Inspector Jennifer Davis, WRPS
- Nicolaas Jonkman, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Advisor, WRPS
- Richard Hepditch, Waterloo Fire Chief
- Karen Quigley-Hobbs, Director Infectious Disease, Sexual Health and Harm Reduction, Public Health
- Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders, Commissioner Community Services, Region of Waterloo
- Stephen VanValkenburg, Chief, Paramedic Services
- Ron Gagnon, President and CEO Grand River Hospital
- Karyn Lumsden, Vice President, Home and Community Care, Waterloo Wellington LHIN
- Vickie Murray, Director of Pharmacy of GRH and St Mary’s

## 2. Community Support Control Group (CSCG)

The Region, the area municipalities and many community partners have taken action to support the health and safety of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19. The Community Support Control Group is addressing the following service areas: Food Services; Housing and Homelessness Services; Children's Services; Psychosocial and Spiritual Support Services; Animal Care Services. Below is the update from the Community Support Control Group. For more information on each of the service areas, please visit the Community Support Control Group webpage.



[www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19).

### Food Services

Last week food services numbers include:

- 1,745 hampers were distributed throughout Waterloo Region, serving 5,259 individuals.
- 38 households accessed food assistance for the first time.
- Over 106,000 pounds of food were delivered to community programs and agency partners.

Under the Control level and with the likely transition to the Restricted level of the COVID-19 response in Waterloo Region, The Food Bank has completed an assessment of current procedures and best practices under the existing emergency management plans and added additional considerations and changes to community delivery to comply with the provincial and public health regulations.

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, Ray of Hope, and Family and Children's Services partnered to continue to provide hamper deliveries to the community. Community members can call (519) 743-5576 ext. 340 to be screened for a delivery. More than 2,568 deliveries have been made by agency partners since the beginning of the pandemic. Households are eligible for delivery if household members are:

- Too ill to leave residence
- Self-isolation or mandated quarantine with no alternative ways to access programs
- Symptomatic with medical instructions to stay home
- Individuals who rely on a primary caregiver for food and the caregiver is no longer available
- Recent release from hospital and/or compromised immune systems,
- Mobility issues with underlying health conditions,
- Mental health issues preventing access to other programs
- Families that have young children and transportation barriers.

We are working with community programs and agency partners to ensure continued service delivery throughout the Community Food Assistance Network. Visit:

<https://www.thefoodbank.ca/network/map/> for an up-to-date list of available emergency food resources or share the [following resource poster](#) to locate a food assistance program.

Feed Ontario's annual Hunger Report was published last week and focused on the impact of COVID-19



on food bank use in Ontario. The report details that food bank usage is on the rise and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Click [here to read the local perspective](#) and access the 2020 Hunger Report.

### **Housing Services and Homelessness**

- The Sanguen bus continues to provide mobile health supports to community members experiencing homelessness.
- 8,658 mobile COVID assessments and 1,230 mobile medical assessments have been performed by the Sanguen Health Team.

### **Child and Family**

[Family Compass](#) (FamilyCompassWR.ca) offers a one-stop website to guide families and youth to local services and resources that meet their needs – including COVID-19 specific services. Visitors to Family Compass can help parents and youth search for services, get connected to a local organization that best meets their needs, or connect with parenting resources via [Parenting Now](#) (parentingnow.ca).

Please share Family Compass with those you work with. If your organization is providing services or resources to families in our community, ensure it is included on Family Compass (contact [Monika Bodemer](#) if you have questions about including your services or resources on the site).

### **Keeping Families Safe**

Each of us is dealing with this COVID-19 stress at home, in our community and at work. When emotional or financial stress becomes too much, it can lead to family violence. We know another silent wave of impact from COVID-19 is family violence. Right now, 1 in 3 Canadians is very concerned about family stress and 1 in 10 women is very concerned about family violence. Here in Waterloo Region Domestic Violence charges are up 28% over last year. Just as we are working together to prevent the spread of the virus, we need to work together to prevent the rise of family violence.

Visit the [Keeping Families Safe page](#) on the Crime Prevention Council's website to learn how you and others in the community can take action to help keep families in Waterloo Region safe.

### **Psychosocial & Spiritual**

Psychosocial and spiritual [resources and support services](#) have been adjusted to respond to the emerging needs from the pandemic. If you are in crisis or unsure of what addictions or mental health service you may need HERE 24/7 can help. Call 1-844-437-3247 (HERE247) or visit <https://here247.ca/>

There is also an online repository called Here4Help that includes useful tools and techniques to manage the stresses of dealing with COVID-19. [www.here4help.ca](http://www.here4help.ca)

[The Friendly Voice](#) program provides general wellbeing check-ins to support social connection and to reduce loneliness and isolation in the community. To register for the Friendly Voice program, please call 519-743-6333 and ask reception how to get started!

## Finding Hope Movement

Finding and sharing our stories of hope, overcoming adversity and supporting one another during these past eight months can inspire us, reminding us that there is good in the world and that we are all connected, shining a light on the best of us.

Snap a picture, write about it, create a video, and then share it with us, with your organization, your community, your family. Find out more at <http://bit.ly/finding-hopeWWR> Follow WWR on social media. Post your own stories using #findinghopewwr



As part of the Finding Hope movement Wellbeing Waterloo Region is hosting two virtual Improv events to provide connection and a little fun over the holidays. Improv is a great way to connect with others and share creativity, laughter, and hope. You will not need to perform or prepare for this event, it is just for fun and connection.

The events will be held on:

- Tuesday, December 22, 2020 from 1:00 – 2:30 pm
- Wednesday, December 30 , 2020 from 3:00 – 4:30 pm

Registration is required. <https://surveys.regionofwaterloo.ca/?e=216149&h=96F61C17066ECC7&l=en>

## **Animal Care Services**

Animal Care services continue to provide a wide range services including pet food and emergency care during the pandemic.

## **Volunteer Services**

The Pandemic Volunteer Program has 166 volunteers fully screened and vetted in the pool. Out of that number, 87 volunteers are actively volunteering with 1 of the 10 agencies signed up for the program. With those 10 agencies, there is a total of 23 positions. There are 46 additional volunteers that have begun the screening process and should be accepted soon.

This past week we had the pleasure of celebrating International Volunteer Day on December 5. The Volunteer Action Centre put together a little video highlighting four incredible volunteers that are part of the Pandemic Volunteer Program. [See video here.](#)



### 3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

The Region of Waterloo, area Municipalities, electricity utilities, and telecommunications suppliers continue to maintain all critical services and maintain legislative requirements while performing these services. These services are critical and foundational to everyone's lives and businesses. Throughout the COVID Pandemic these services have been maintained and enhanced to ensure seamless and uninterrupted service. The majority of the public would have experience little or no change. The CICG has functioned in a coordinating role and has helped the suppliers of these critical services to share information, coordinate activities and help each other to maintain services. All of the services below are implementing methods to provide active COVID screening prior to work to meet the legislative requirements.

#### **Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA)**

GRCA has continued to provide its flood and other mandated service and has maintained its recreational areas during a summer that saw significantly increased demand. They have had to adapt both staffing and provision of service to safe guard both. They are now preparing for winter.

#### **Waste Management**

The waste transfer stations in Cambridge and Waterloo remain operational during normal operating hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday. However, our waste management offices remain closed to the public until further notice due to COVID-19 measures. Recycling, green bin and garbage collection continues as normal, however, yard waste collection has now ceased for the winter months and will resume again in late March/early April. The every second-week garbage bag/can limit increase from four to six bags ended October 2. The Region is providing green bins and blue boxes for new homeowners at the household hazardous waste drop off locations in Cambridge and Waterloo. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn garbage or yard waste.

#### **Grand River Transit (GRT)**

GRT would like to remind all riders that wearing a face covering is mandatory on GRT. That includes:

- GRT buses
- ION trains
- MobilityPLUS vehicles
- BusPLUS
- Kiwanis Transit
- Inside bus shelters
- On station platforms
- Inside GRT customer service locations

The By-Law is effective until May 31, 2021, unless extended by Regional Council.

GRT customer service locations; 105 King St. and Ainslie St. terminal are open to the public.



### **Customer Service Hours**

Building Hours (105 King St. E & Ainslie Terminal)

8:00 am – 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday

9:30 am – 5:00 pm, Weekends/Holidays

Building Hours (Ainslie Terminal)

5:15 am – 12:45 am, Monday-Friday

6:00 am – 12:45 am, Saturday

7:30 am – 1:00 am, Sunday/Holidays

Customer service at 250 Strasburg Road remains closed to the public.

Details at [www.grt.ca](http://www.grt.ca)

### **Water/Wastewater**

Water and wastewater services have been provided by the Region and local municipalities throughout the COVID pandemic without interruption and have maintained compliance with all legislation and regulation. All services are prepared for continued operation during Wave 2.

With business operations returning to buildings it is important that if you are a building owner and operator, you are responsible for the water quality in your building and should understand what could happen when water is left stagnant. The longer the building has low water use, the higher the risk for water quality issues. During COVID-19, reduced or no water use in buildings may present health risks. In most cases, flushing buildings with safe drinking water that has normal chlorine levels is sufficient for cleaning the water system. More information can be found on the [Region's website](#). A fact sheet is also available on important steps for re-opening your buildings water supply.

### **Transportation**

Transportation services (Region and local municipalities) have continuously provided services during the COVID pandemic and preparations continue to ensure service through Wave 2 and as the transition to winter and snowy/icy weather happens. Region and local municipalities are also discussing back up plans should anyone municipality be unable to deliver service due to COVID impacting staff. These plans are not significantly different than what could happen in a more normal year and include coordinating any declaration of a significant snow event, sharing of staff and resources or even maintaining roads in other municipalities.

### **Electricity**

Local utilities have maintained electricity service through the COVID pandemic. They have implemented programs to minimize risks to their staff and ensure no interruptions in service. Preparations for Wave 2 are ongoing.

### **Internet and Telephone/Cell Phone Suppliers**

All of the companies involved in the supply of Internet and other communications services have maintained and increased service to address increases in Internet requirements caused by working from home and other COVID related business adaptations. They have implemented changes to protect staff and enhance service levels. Preparations for Wave 2 are ongoing.

## 4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

The Chief Administrative Officers of all municipalities continue to meet frequently to discuss pertinent issues and to coordinate operational decisions on the local municipal response to COVID-19. The following are some of the issues most recently considered by the Municipal Control Group:

- Continue to proactively plan on operationalizing and coordinating municipal services in the event our region moves from the Red Zone to a Lockdown, and
- Working to coordinate service levels for Q1 (January – March) of 2021.

## Municipal Services

All municipalities in Waterloo region are continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. The Region and all area municipalities have made significant changes to services and programming. Closures, cancellations, news releases, important contacts, and frequently asked questions are found on the following municipal websites:

### Region of Waterloo Response to COVID-19

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-information-centre.aspx>

### City of Cambridge's Response to COVID-19

<https://www.cambridge.ca/en/your-city/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>

### City of Kitchener's Response to COVID-19

<https://www.kitchener.ca/en/city-services/storm-and-emergency-updates.aspx#>

### City of Waterloo's Response to COVID-19

<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/living/covid-19-response.aspx#>

### Township of North Dumfries' Response to COVID-19

<https://www.northdumfries.ca/en/index.aspx>

### Township of Wellesley's Response to COVID-19

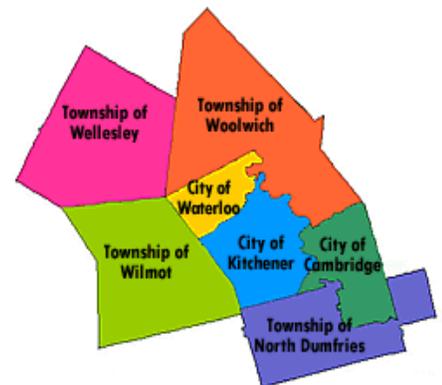
<https://www.wellesley.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx#>

### Township of Wilmot's Response to COVID-19

<https://www.wilmot.ca/en/township-office/coronavirus.aspx>

### Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19

<https://www.woolwich.ca/en/township-services/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>





## 5. Communications Control Group (CCG)

The Communications Control Group (CCG) meets to share relevant information about COVID-19 communications. The group is comprised of communication leaders from public sector organizations across Waterloo Region (hospitals, municipalities, school boards, post-secondary, police, BESTWR, etc.). There is no update this week.

Public Health and Corporate Communication teams continue to share important COVID-19 information with media, residents and staff through our website, social media accounts and regular media briefings.

**All complaints about compliance to COVID-19 orders should be directed to the [Region of Waterloo Call Center](#) – 24 hours /7 days per week at 519-575-4400**