



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

February 19, 2021

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 the sector control groups which are described 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 regularly 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.

Public Health Update

On February 16, 2021, Waterloo Region moved into the Red-Control zone of Ontario's COVID-19 response framework.

While some provincial restrictions have been lifted for Waterloo Region, this does not represent a reopening or a 'return to normal'. Public Health, and the Province, continue to recommend that all residents continue practicing public health measures. Our individual actions make a difference and public health measures are strengthened when more people work together to slow the spread of COVID-19.





Please continue to follow public health measures:

- Avoid social gatherings with those outside your immediate household
- Limit non-essential trips outside your home
- Wear a face covering
- Practice physical distance
- Wash your hands often
- Avoid enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces and crowded place

If you develop any symptoms, stay home, isolate from household members and schedule an appointment for testing. For more information about testing visit regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19testing

Following these public health measures is imperative to slow the spread of COVID-19, especially with new variants.

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force Update

Province releases additional information about those to be vaccinated in Phase One

This week, the Ministry of Health released more detailed information about who will be vaccinated next within [Phase One](#). The broader rollout takes into account the anticipated availability of the vaccines and which individuals are most at risk.

Next priority for first-dose vaccination will include all remaining eligible long-term care and high risk retirement home staff and essential caregivers, health care workers who meet the criteria of “highest priority” and “very high priority”, indigenous adults, staff and residents of other congregate care settings for seniors, and adults 80 years of age and older.

After all reasonable steps have been taken to complete first-dose vaccinations of all staff, essential caregivers and residents of long-term care homes and high-risk retirement homes, first-dose vaccinations will be made available to the remainder of the Phase One populations based on vaccine availability:

- Adults 80 years of age and older
- Staff, residents and caregivers in retirement homes and other congregate care settings for seniors (e.g., assisted living)
- Health care workers in the High Priority level, and in accordance with the Ministry of Health’s guidance on Health Care Worker Prioritization
- All Indigenous adults
- Adult recipients of chronic home care

How will people find out when it is their turn?

The Waterloo Region COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force will use many tools to communicate broadly to the public when a new group is eligible for vaccination. Direction will be provided on when and how appointments can be booked for the general public. Communications tools may include:

- Digital media including website and social media
- Traditional media including radio, television and newspaper
- Regulatory bodies, professional groups and community partners including primary care providers and pharmacists.

Download our infographic to learn more about [where you can go to be vaccinated](#) once appointments are available.

For more information about the Task Force, visit: regionofwaterloo.ca/VaccineTaskForce

COVID-19 Vaccine Communication Toolkit

The Region of Waterloo has created a COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for our community partners. The toolkit includes plain language materials to help provide clear, correct information to the community. As a valued partner, please feel free to share within your own organizations and communities.

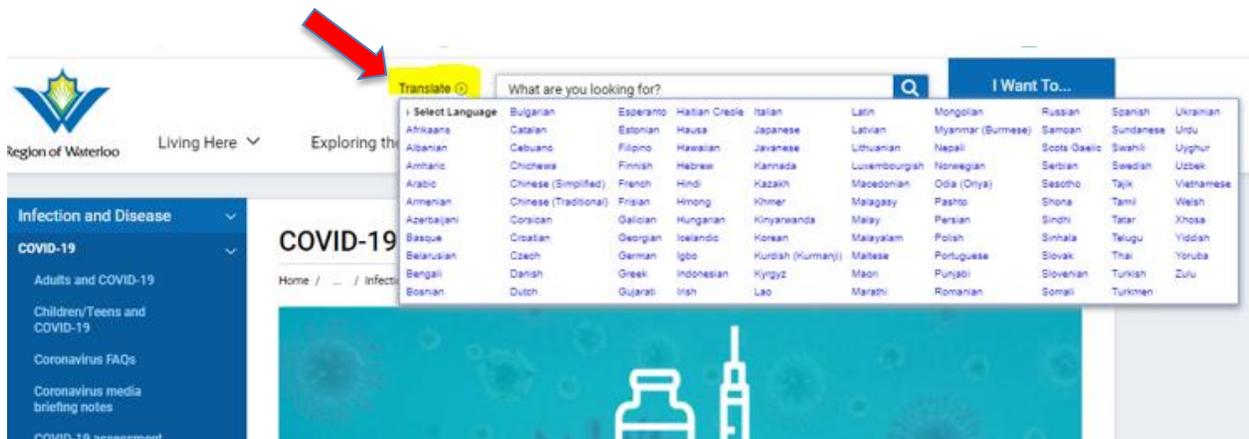
While PDFs are accessible, this toolkit includes a text only version of each PDF. This is a new approach, done to allow the use of the translation feature on our website. Materials will continue to be added to the toolkit as new information becomes available.

For more information about the COVID-19 Vaccine Communications Toolkit, visit: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/vaccin toolkit

Website translation feature

The Region of Waterloo’s website has a built in translation feature that can translate any page into one of over 90 languages. Including – Amharic, Arabic, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, etc.

To use this feature, go to the top of the page you want to translate. Click the plus sign beside the word “Translate” and select one of the many languages available. This translates the website including navigation pane to the language you select.



(Note: This feature does not extend to PDF downloads or other websites we link to for more information.)

Our Call Centre Citizen Service Representatives are here to help

- You can talk to a real person 24/7 in over 200 languages at 519-575-4400
- Deaf and hard of hearing (TTY): 519-575-4608

Quick information updates

The Region of Waterloo's **social media** accounts provide bite sized information updates and useful links to find more information. For the most up to date information, follow us:

Region of Waterloo Corporate

Twitter: [@RegionWaterloo](https://twitter.com/RegionWaterloo)

FaceBook: [@RegionWaterloo](https://www.facebook.com/RegionWaterloo)

Region of Waterloo Public Health

Twitter: [@ROWPublicHealth](https://twitter.com/ROWPublicHealth)

FaceBook: [@rowpublichealth](https://www.facebook.com/rowpublichealth)

In this together

It's been a tough year. One thing is for certain, as a region, we have come together to help support and protect each other.

As we patiently wait for the vaccine, it's important to continue to be kind to yourself and each other. Show your support by displaying one of our signs in your window.



To find out how you can participate visit:

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/in-this-together.aspx>

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.

From Feb 1 – 12, 2021:

- 4,034 hampers were distributed throughout Waterloo Region, serving 8,251 people.
- 100 households accessed food assistance for the first time.
- 202 household deliveries were made by community programs and agency partners.
- Over 155 calls were received on the Community Food Assistance Network centralized call line.

Although the stay-at-home order is no longer in effect in certain areas, people are still strongly advised to follow all public health advice. Community programs and agency partners, as part of the Community Food Assistance Network, continue to provide access to food and other vital services and supports.

Informational Resources:

- The most up-to-date list of available community meal and hamper programs is available at: thefoodbank.ca/vitalservice.
- The [following resource poster](#) can be used to direct people to accurate community resources.

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, Salvation Army, and Family and Children Services have partnered to continue providing hamper deliveries in 2021. Community members can call: 519.743.5576 ext. 340 to be screened for delivery or to identify a food assistance program in their area.

With the recent fire at the Inn of Waterloo, House of Friendship shelter participants have been temporarily relocated to a hotel in Guelph. Region staff are working with the House of Friendship staff to return shelter participants to Waterloo Region as soon as possible. Regional staff continue to work with community partners to find permanent housing for as many shelter participants as possible.

The community is working together to continue to protect people experiencing homelessness from COVID-19 and has increased capacity in temporary accommodations to respond to an increased demand for



emergency shelter beds.

Drop-in programs / services continue to be available in Kitchener Monday through Friday at St. John's Kitchen and Ray of Hope Community Centre, and in Cambridge at 150 Main St. on weekday afternoons (Monday through Friday).

Community Supports available to individuals experiencing homelessness can be found on the Region of Waterloo's COVID-19 Community Supports page: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-community-supports-for-the-vulnerable.aspx#>

In preparation for the cold winter weather, the Region has worked with area municipalities and community partners to make warming centres available for individuals experiencing homelessness. These warming centres are available during extreme weather events, which Community Services defines as days where:

- the temperature is –15 (minus fifteen) degrees Celsius or lower, and/or
- the wind chill factor will be –15 (minus fifteen) degrees Celsius or lower, and/or
- there is freezing rain.

The warming centres are:

Region of Waterloo Buildings: 99 Regina St. St., Waterloo, 150 Frederick St., Kitchener, 150 Main St., Cambridge

- Monday through Friday
- 8:30AM-4:30PM

City of Waterloo Adult Recreation Centre: 185 King St. S, Waterloo

- Monday through Sunday
- 10:00AM-6:00pm

Emmanuel United Church Waterloo: 22 Bridgeport Road W., Waterloo

- Tuesday through Friday
- 12:30PM-3:00pm

Child and Family

- Approximately 250 children received Emergency Child Care through this most recent pandemic lock-down period.
- As schools return to in-person learning, masks are mandatory for all students grade 1 to 12 and recommended for JK/SK.
- Numbers of students transitioning back to in-person learning is on the rise in both English school boards.
- School boards have also received increased public health guidance to help prevent congregating situations before/during/after school.
- School boards are working on mitigation plans regarding the new protocols requiring those with



'single symptom' to not attend, and concerns related to teacher shortages.

- March break has been moved to the week of April 12th and school boards are hopeful the April dates are firm.
- As the vaccinations roll-out in our community, the current available vaccinations in Ontario (Pfizer and Moderna) have not been approved for children under 16, unless they are an otherwise priority population. The Child and Family working group will support communications (using the Region of Waterloo [Toolkit](#) or otherwise) to community about vaccination safety and the process to become vaccinated, and in particular, school boards and ROW Children's Services are investigating sharing out via their channels.

Animal Care Services

Adoptions have resumed! Approximately 40 animals who have been in foster care during the lockdown will transition back to the centre over the next few weeks and be put up for adoption. Emergency Pet Food Bank, Emergency Boarding and End of Life Services continue to be offered at KW Humane Society. Access to our facilities remain by appointment only.

We also have a number of online programs for families, teachers and students and encourage everyone to check us out at <https://kwsphumane.ca/>

Psychosocial & Spiritual Supports

The COVID-19 pandemic may be stressful for some. Fear and anxiety about the disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Public health actions, such as social distancing, can make people feel isolated and lonely and can increase stress and anxiety. However, these actions are necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Coping with stress in a healthy way will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Some people worry about asking for help because there can be stigma around mental health challenges. Some people worry about how others might see them. Asking for help means that you want to make changes and take care of yourself. It takes courage to ask for help.

If you are in crisis, 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 resource called Here4Help that includes useful tools and techniques to manage the stresses of dealing with COVID-19. 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, call 519-743-6333.

Connecting the Community Through Resilience and Hope

Wellbeing Waterloo Region invites you to attend a special virtual event on March 12, 2021 from 1-3 pm to mark the one year anniversary since the pandemic was declared.

This virtual event is designed to engage participants in conversations about their experience during the pandemic and celebrate some of the positive examples of resilience and community connection that were experienced during this past year. The format of the event will include speakers/performances as well as smaller break out discussions.

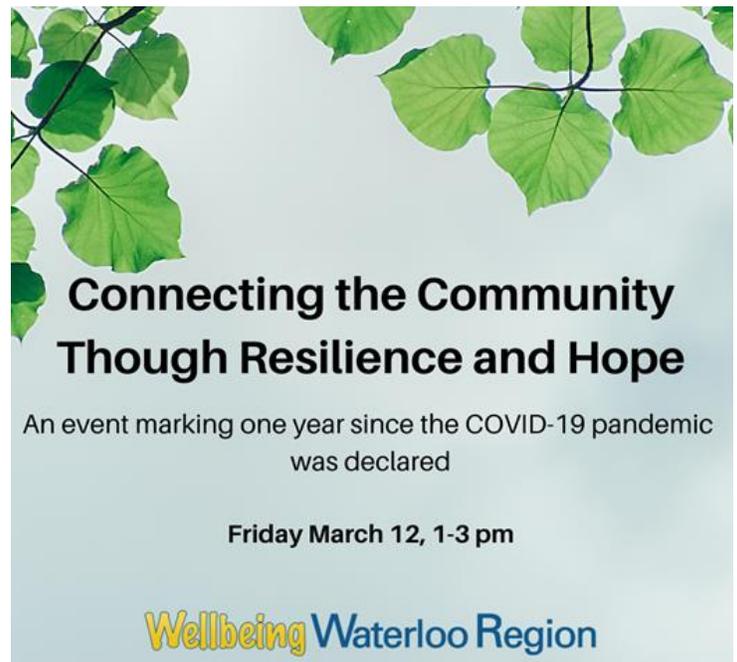
If you would like to attend please [register](#) here for this event.

Spiritual Supports

Discussions are taking place to support communication channels between government and faith based communities to help serve residents during the pandemic today, and years into the future.

Volunteer Services

The Pandemic Volunteer Program has 213 volunteers fully screened and vetted in the pool. Out of that number, 75 volunteers are working in Food Services and 33 in Housing and Homelessness. That is a total of 108 volunteers actively volunteering with one of the 10 agencies signed up for the program. With those 10 agencies, there are a total of 23 positions. Additionally there are 58 volunteers currently in the screening process and should be accepted soon.





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. Winter preparations are underway.

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 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

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. Work for Wave 2 is 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. Work for Wave 2 is 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 coordinating the delivery of critical services within the Red-Control level of the Province's COVID-19 response framework
- Overseeing the phased reopening of municipal recreation facilities in accordance with Provincial direction

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

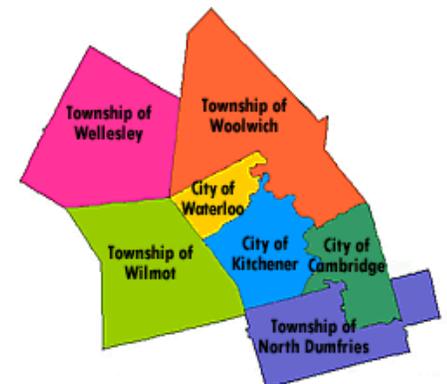
<https://www.wellesley.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx#>

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#>



Please note: Because municipal facilities and administrative buildings are closed (with limited exceptions), all water, property tax and utility bills must now be paid online or by mail. Visit your local municipal website or call their contact centre for more information on how to do this.



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.). This week the group focused on:

- A behind the scenes look at the Grand River Hospital vaccination clinics will be shared on social media and includes profiles of staff working at the clinics.
- A campaign to recognize the important work being done by emergency shelter and support staff is underway. The public and all community partners are encouraged to share a [thank you video](#) to show their support.

Public Health and Corporate Communication teams continue to share important COVID-19 information with media, residents and staff through the [Region of Waterloo 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