



# Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

**January 22, 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](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary).

#### **Public Health Update**

The Ontario government declared a [state of emergency](#) and issued a [stay-at-home order](#), effective January 14, 2021. The province-wide shutdown is still in effect. During the stay at home order, everyone must stay at home and only go out for essential purposes. The Ontario government cannot determine what is essential for every person. Yet, the province have provided the list below outlining what they consider necessities, which include:

- getting food, beverages or medication
  - going to medical appointments
  - supporting vulnerable community members
  - childcare
  - attending school or work, if you cannot do it remotely
  - accessing government services
  - exercising or walking pets
- 



While there is no limit to the number of times you can leave home, all trips should be for essential activities.

The provincial government has amended legislation for businesses and organizations. This includes new legislation for the enhanced enforcement measures.

If you have questions about what the stay at home order means for your business or job please visit the [Government of Ontario COVID-19: province-wide shutdown page](#) or call: Ontario's Stop the Spread Information Line at 1-888-444-3659.

#### **Drive-in religious services, rites or ceremonies**

The provincial shutdown permits drive-in religious service, rites or ceremonies, provided:

- Vehicles include only members of the same household
- People attending stay in their vehicle, except to use the washroom or as necessary for health and safety
- Vehicles park at least two meters apart
- Drivers are encouraged to turn off their engines to reduce exhaust from idling

In-person indoor and outdoor gathering limits do not apply to drive-in religious services.

#### **COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force Update**

January 22, 2021 marks one month since Waterloo Region launched the first COVID-19 vaccine clinic. The first clinic operated out of Grand River Hospital (GRH) with the first vaccine administered to Elmira Personal Support Worker, Siham Ibrahim.

Since launching the GRH clinic, a mobile clinic began operating in early January focused on reaching residents, staff and essential caregivers in local long-term care and retirement homes. To date the region has administered over 13,000 doses of the vaccine. Some quick stats as of January 21, 2021:

- 4,493 vaccines to long-term care, retirement home health care workers and essential caregivers
- 4,225 vaccines administered to hospital health care workers
- 4,304 vaccines administered to residents of long-term care and retirement homes

It is expected that by end of day January 22, 2021, all residents of long-term care and retirement homes in the region who wanted to be vaccinated will have received their first dose of the vaccine.

#### **Vaccine FAQs now available online**

We continue to expand and update information on the Region's website. In addition to the [COVID-19 vaccine page](#), a [COVID-19 vaccine FAQ](#) is now available. The resources section of the COVID-19 vaccine page now includes "[Translated Resources](#)" available in many languages.

#### **When will vaccine be available to the general public?**

A common question online and in our call centres is, when will the general public will be vaccinated?

Ontario's three-phase COVID-19 vaccination program is now in [Phase 1](#). This phase prioritizes health care workers, essential caregivers, long-term care home and retirement home residents, First Nation communities and urban Indigenous populations, including Métis and Inuit adults. As more supply becomes available, the Province will move to [Phase 2](#) as early as March 2021.

Vaccination clinics across the province are not open to the general public at this time. COVID-19 vaccination for the broader community will not be available in Waterloo Region until summer or fall 2021 when the province launches [Phase 3](#).

Currently, Region of Waterloo Public Health and health care providers cannot schedule vaccine appointments for the general public and COVID-19 vaccine clinics do not maintain wait lists.

[Learn more about Ontario's three-phased vaccine distribution plan.](#)

### **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.

Together we have made a difference in the fight against COVID-19.

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

### Food Services

Last week (January 11 – 17, 2021):

- 2,018 hampers were distributed throughout Waterloo Region, serving, 5,547 individuals.
- 37 households accessed food assistance for the first time.
- 94 deliveries to community programs and agency partners.

Under the current Stay Home and state of emergency measures Food Assistance Network Programs continue to provide vital services to the community. Visit [thefoodbank.ca/vitalservice](http://thefoodbank.ca/vitalservice) for an up-to-date list of the community meal and hamper programs currently available or share the [following resource poster](#) to locate a food assistance program.

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. Households are eligible for delivery if an individual or family member are or have:

- Too ill to leave the residence.
- In self-isolation or mandated quarantine with no alternative to access programs.
- Symptomatic with medical instructions to stay home.
- Reliant on a primary caregiver for food and the caregiver is not available.
- Recently released from hospital and/or have a compromised immune system.
- Mobility issues with underlying health conditions.
- Mental health issues preventing accessing to other programs.
- Families with young children that have transportation barriers.

### Housing Services and Homelessness

This group continues to meet to discuss pertinent issues and coordinate supports on housing and homelessness.



## Children and Family

Emergency child care for school aged children continues to be available through the lock-down period, and the list of [those who are eligible](#) has expanded. More than 178 children are attending Emergency Child Care at seven schools and more than 41 children are receiving care in licensed home child care. Almost all students are learning on-line at the moment and school boards continue to work with families to ensure those who need devices are supported. Students with complex learning needs are being supported in-person in classroom settings. Classroom teachers and principals continue to be the go-to individuals for families who need additional supports (e.g., newcomers) through this time. Family and Children's Services reminds the community, following recent deaths of infants, of the dangers of co-sleeping.

## 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](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, call 519-743-6333.

## 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.

## Animal Care Services

This group continues to monitor and coordinate animal care services.

## Volunteer Services

The Pandemic Volunteer Program has 197 volunteers fully screened and vetted in the pool. Out of that number, 74 volunteers are working in Food Services and 33 in Housing and Homelessness. That is a total of 107 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 61 volunteers currently in the screening process and should be accepted soon. There are a total of 2,569 volunteer hours reported thus far.



### 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](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. 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.

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

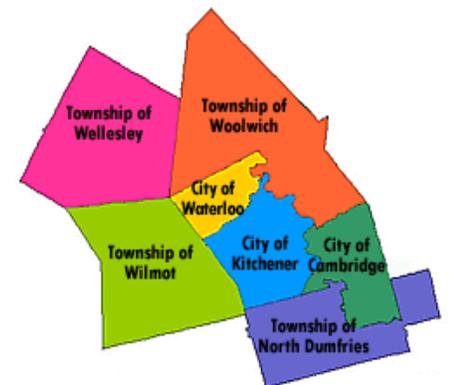
<https://www.wellesley.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx#>

### 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.).

Municipalities released a joint media release last week. It highlights that Waterloo Region cities and townships continue to work together with local police, public health officials and the Region of Waterloo to meet the new provincial public health measures and to communicate stay-at-home orders.

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**

**Stay home.  
Stay safe.  
Save lives.**



**Together we can stop the spread of COVID-19.  
Stay home, stay safe, save lives. #StayHomeON**

**Cheer from home.**  
Celebrate the win with  
those you live with.

