



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

January 8, 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 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 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

We continue to see a resurgence of cases following the holidays, provincially as well as locally. Without a Provincial Shutdown, case rates and spread would have been even higher.

Case rates are reflective of the interactions people have had two weeks prior. While the Provincial Shutdown measures are critical, we cannot rely on them alone. As a community, we must avoid social gatherings and only go out for essential purposes.

It will be important to measure the impact of the shutdown measures as well as our own actions in the coming weeks. Together we have made a difference in the past by our collective efforts and we need to





continue to work together to reduce the spread in our community.

For more information: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19

Health Sector Table Update

The Table continues to meet every two weeks to provide updates on current issues such as vaccine distribution, COVID impacts in Long Term Care homes and hospitals. Updates are provided by the Waterloo Wellington OH Triad of Lee Fairclough, CEO St. Mary's Hospital, Dr. Sharon Bal, Primary Care Lead and Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Medical Officer of Health.

Safe Voluntary Isolation Spaces Program

Region of Waterloo Public Health has opened a Safe Voluntary Isolation Site at a hotel in Kitchener. The intended participants of the site are people who have been identified as disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 which includes people who identify as a visible minority, as Black, Indigenous, Metis and Inuit, who have a before tax income of less than \$50,000, people living in larger households and whose first language is not English or French.

Referrals can be made by community partners for an individual, who shares a home with one or more individuals, who tests positive for COVID-19, or is awaiting a COVID-19 test result and must:

- Lack the ability to safely isolate at home away from cohabitants for the isolation period; OR,
- Require a place outside of their home to self-isolate, for personal safety considerations, such as being isolated in the household (e.g., risk of domestic violence); OR,
- Be sharing a household with, or self-identify as, an individual who is at higher risk of severe COVID-19 disease.

If you have any questions about the safe isolation site please send an email to safeisolation@regionofwaterloo.ca

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force Update

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 expertise of staff from several agencies.

Since launching in December, the Task Force has met weekly to ensure rollout plans are evolving. To date, there have been over 4000 vaccines administered to health care workers and those working in long-term care.

The task force membership includes many sector partners who will ensure an efficient, equitable plan is in place for the ongoing delivery of the immunization program.

Region of Waterloo COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force Members

- 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
- Connie MacDonald, Region of Waterloo Chief Strategy & Communications Officer
- 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

Vaccine Information

The Region's website now includes [information and updates about the COVID-19 vaccine](#). The page will include vaccine and distribution information as it becomes available and will expand to include resources and links.

Our vaccine supply will not arrive all at once, so distribution will happen in stages. The goal is for everyone who wants a COVID-19 vaccination in Waterloo Region to be able to get one, as soon as enough doses are available from manufacturers. Until then, doses are delivered to priority groups that have been [identified by the province](#).

COVID-19 Vaccine Resources

A COVID-19 Vaccine Safety information fact sheet is found at: regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19VaccineFactSheet.

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.

Food Services

Since implementing the Community Food Assistance Network Pandemic Business Continuity Plan in March 2020:

- 67,400+ food hampers have been distributed throughout Waterloo Region, serving 10,868 people.
- 3,461,588 pounds of fresh, frozen, and non-perishable food has been acquired, coordinated, and distributed throughout the Community Food Assistance Network, a 21% increase compared to the same time period last year.

As we start the year in Lockdown, we remain focused on providing support to the most vulnerable people in our community. Please refer to our [website](#) for an up-to-date list of community meal and hamper programs currently operating.

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.

Call the centralized referral line: 519-743-5576 ext. 340 for more information about available programs and to be screened for delivery.



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

Visit the [community food assistance map](#) for an up-to-date list of available emergency food resources or share the following resource poster to locate a food assistance program.

Housing Services and Homelessness

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.

Child and Family

On Monday, December 21, the Province announced a provincial shut down and as part of this shut down the Premier of Ontario announced Safer at Home Restrictions for the next 28 days and ordered a range of time-limited public health actions to help curb the spread of COVID-19. One such action is starting December 26, 2020, all elementary schools, publicly-funded and private, will be closed for in-person learning. As of January 7th the Premier announced that students enrolled in publicly-funded schools will move to virtual learning up to January 25.

To support the parents of school-aged children who may not be able to support their child's learning/care at home, the Ministry of Education is implementing a targeted emergency child care program for school-aged children, at no cost to eligible parents (front line and health care workers), from January 4-8, 2021. The program is 100% funded by the Province.

In Waterloo Region, emergency child care will be provided in six schools and through two licensed home child care agencies.

School based Emergency child care will be provided as follows:

- Baden Public School, Baden (Creative Beginnings Childcare)
- Elgin St. Public School, Cambridge (YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care)
- Silverheights Public School, Cambridge (Conestoga College Child Care)
- Groh Public School, Kitchener (YMCA of Three Rivers Child Care)
- John Sweeney Catholic School, Kitchener (Owl Child Care)
- St. Luke Catholic School, Waterloo (Owl Child Care)

Home based emergency child care will be provided through Region of Waterloo Licensed Home Child Care and Wee Watch Licensed Home Child Care agencies.

All child care programs are required to follow strict health and safety measures required by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with the Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development, the Ministry of Health and Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Region of Waterloo Public Health supports the interpretation and implementation of the measures across the child care sector, including emergency child care.

Parents can begin the application process for emergency child care by going to [One List Waterloo Region](#).

Information about the program is available by clicking on [Community Supports on the Region's Covid-19 Information](#) page.

Psychosocial & Spiritual Supports

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/>

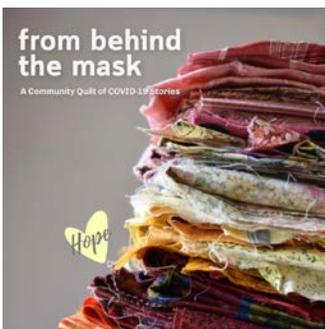
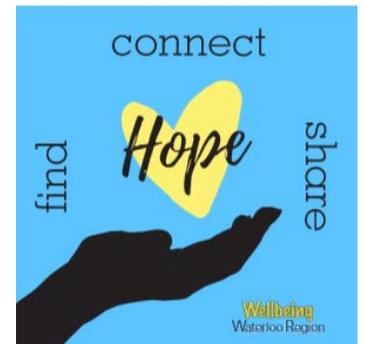
There is also an online repository called Here4Help that includes useful tools and techniques to manage the stresses of dealing with COVID-19. www.here4help.ca

[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 supporting a community quilt project of COVID-19 Stories called "[From behind the Mask](#)". A community quilt is being made based on the form of a mask! This is an opportunity to come together - while apart - and make something that will remain as a memorial, acknowledge inequality, and act as a starting point for healing. Quilt block kits are now available by mail to reduce in-person contact. To receive a free quilt kit (no sewing required), fill out a request form at this link: <https://docs.google.com/.../1FAIpQLSetLxoKj2OgEa.../viewform>

Animal Care Services

Animal Care services continue to provide a wide range of services including pet food and emergency care during the pandemic. Both the Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Societies remain in operation during the lockdown, however the public can access the centres by appointment only.

We have seen an increase in the need to access both the Emergency Pet Food Bank as well as Emergency Boarding since early December. We remain prepared to handle the increase in need. Both centres continue to utilize a strong foster program having minimal animals in the centres.

Kitchener-Waterloo Humane Society has also seen an increase in the need for emergency medical/veterinary services over the holidays and has been able to continue to provide this service.

Both organizations have implemented processes to minimize a risk of an outbreak which would impact human resources to care for the animals.

Volunteer Services

The Pandemic Volunteer Program has 188 volunteers fully screened and vetted in the volunteer pool. Out of that number, 95 volunteers are actively volunteering with the 10 agencies signed up for the program. Within those 10 agencies, there are a total of 23 different positions. Additionally, there are 63 volunteers that have begun the screening process. There are a total of 2,501 volunteer hours reported thus far.

The graphic features a teal header with the text "Support is available" in white. To the right is a speech bubble icon. Below the header, on a light blue background, is the text: "Winter can be a stressful and sometimes lonely season. It's important that we practice self-care and stay connected." This is followed by "Visit cmhaww.ca for strategies, coping tools, and mental health resources." Below that is "If you are in crisis or unsure of what services will be helpful to you, call Here 24/7: 1-844-HERE-247 (437-3247)". At the bottom left is a telephone handset icon, and at the bottom right is the "Wellbeing Waterloo Region" logo.

Support is available

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Wellbeing Waterloo Region



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

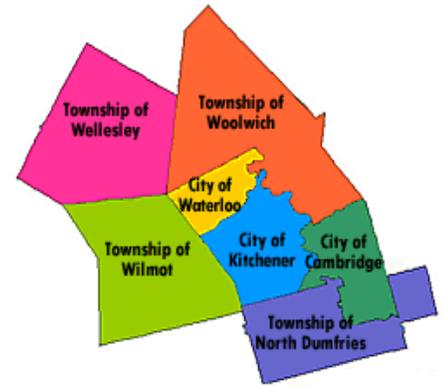
Local utilities have maintained electricity service through the COVID pandemic. They have implemented programs to minimize risks to their staff and ensure no interruptions in service. Work for Wave 2 is ongoing.

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 Municipal Control Group continues to meet to coordinate the delivery of critical services during the Provincial Lockdown.



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#>

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.). There is no new 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