



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

March 05, 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.

Public Health Update

In response to variants of concern, Public Health implemented enhanced case and contact management for all positive COVID-19 cases. The change allows us to ensure all positive cases are managed as though they may be a variant of concern case.

Public Health is using a lower threshold to determine high risk, close contacts and have updated the contact tracing resource to help people who test positive with COVID-19 to determine their high risk, close contacts. View the updated contact tracing resource at [regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19ContactTracing](https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19ContactTracing)

COVID-19 Dashboard

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





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

COVID-19 Vaccination Pre-Registration Launched

On February 24, 2021 The Region of Waterloo launched an online pre-registration system for the COVID-19 vaccine. You can complete the form for yourself or on behalf of another person if you are a caregiver or helping a neighbour. We strongly recommend pre-registration for people in all eligible priority groups.

Pre-registration is open to members identified in the Phase One priority populations listed below:

- Adult recipients of chronic home care
- Adults 80 years of age and older
- Health care workers (all categories)
- Indigenous adults (including individuals and elders regardless of status or Indigenous identity and their immediate household members)
- Long-term care and retirement homes staff
- Long-term care and retirement homes essential caregivers
- Seniors group settings staff and residents
- Seniors group setting essential caregivers

Pre-registration allows us to invite eligible people to book appointments quickly and easily. It will also help in the prioritization process as we move through the vaccine sequencing as identified by the Province.

Health care workers have been identified as a priority group for COVID-19 vaccination in Ontario and in the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) recommendations. All health care workers, wherever they work in Waterloo Region, are now eligible to receive the vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccination is strongly recommended for all health care workers but remains voluntary. An

employer may choose to create policies regarding mandatory staff immunization as a protective measure for residents and patients.

Adults 80 years of age and older, who have pre-registered for the COVID-19 vaccine, will be getting a phone call in the coming days and weeks from the staff of one of our local library systems to book their vaccination appointment.

Staff of Kitchener Public Library, Waterloo Public Library, Idea Exchange (Cambridge), and Region of Waterloo Library (serving the townships) have offered to navigate the online appointment system so everyone in our vulnerable older population – who has indicated a phone call is their preferred way to be contacted – is booked for their immunization.

Region of Waterloo is working closely with primary care providers to open vaccination clinics in the townships to serve our rural populations. These clinics will open in the spring.

COVID-19 Vaccination Pre-Registration page: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/vaccineprereg

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

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic Update

On Thursday, March 4, 2021 the clinic at The Boardwalk opened for adults 80+ who were recently added as a priority population to Phase One of the vaccine rollout. The RONA location in Cambridge will open after a number of modifications are made so the site can operate as a clinic.

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics in Waterloo Region: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/vaccineclinics

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.

Food Services

As we start a new month, let's take a look back at February:

- 8,310 hampers were provided throughout Waterloo Region to households. This represents a 14% increase in the number of hampers provided in 2020 (7,471 hampers).
- 3,920 unique households were served by agencies in Waterloo Region.
- 375 deliveries were provided to households across Waterloo Region. This is a 7% increase in deliveries provided compared to last year.
- 320 calls were answered on the centralized food assistance referral line. This represents a large increase in the number of calls as only 32 requests were received in February of 2020.
- 231 new households were served for the first time in February representing 485 individuals.

Mobile Pantry Launch

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region received a \$92,800 Capital Grant from the [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#) to purchase a vehicle to deliver the new mobile pantry programs to economically vulnerable households in high-needs neighborhoods. The Mobile Pantry is part of Saving Fresh. Feeding Community, is a program dedicated to increasing the quality, quantity and variety of fresh food distributed to people accessing food assistance. [Click here to read the full press release](#).

Housing Services and Homelessness

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
- 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

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

- Monday through Sunday
- 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

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

- Tuesday through Friday
- 12:30 p.m -3:00 p.m.

Child and Family

'One symptom and stay at home' continues to have an impact on families in school and licensed child care. Some organizations serving children/youth/families considering screening for single-symptom. Family and Children's Services will be launching a social media campaign to thank their staff and to thank the families who stepped forward to be on stand-by as caregivers for children who might have been in need due to parental/guardian COVID illness.

Due to the pandemic, the province has extended the "no kids aging out of care" to September 30, 2022. A readiness assessment will be replacing the age cut-off requirement (i.e., age 18). Young people are currently advising the Ministry on the readiness assessment. This assessment will be used as the go-forward tool. School boards are starting to turn their attention to September and are planning for what will



be required to offer the two modes of learning again in the fall.

Both the City of Waterloo and City of Kitchener are planning to launch registration and hiring in March for their summer programming. Both are using 'red' criteria for their planning. Further conversations will occur with group members to advise on the hiring and camp practices that support the inclusion of diverse youth and youth furthest from opportunities.

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

This past year has been difficult, and our community has faced many challenges that we have never seen before. Through connecting with others and celebrating the examples of resiliency from the past year, we can tap into a deep sense of hope that will connect us as a community and help us through this time.

Many organizations and municipalities are offering virtual services to connect our community and even have some fun! Here are some events being offered.

Mindfulness with Dr. Mitchell Abrams

On Wednesday, March 24th at 1:30pm, Join Dr. Mitchell Abrams, radiologist, educator, musician, CEO and founder of NexGen Health, a social enterprise with a mission of creating healthy minds and thriving communities, as he explains an innovative approach to health and wellness and social divide.

Using the power of music, art and narrative, Dr. Abrams educates, heals and inspires communities.



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

Forum to Connect the Community Through Resilience and Hope

Wellbeing Waterloo Region invites you to 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.

To find out more visit the [Wellbeing Waterloo Region website](#).

Spiritual Supports

Two forums 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. The forums are taking place in March and will place a focus on vaccine distribution and gathering insights from faith based leaders about the questions and comments they are hearing from their organization's membership.

Animal Care Services

Adoptions have resumed! 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/>

Volunteer Services

The Pandemic Volunteer Program has 230 volunteers fully screened and vetted in the pool and an additional 74 volunteers currently in the screening process who should be accepted soon. Out of that number, 72 volunteers are working in Food Services and 30 in Housing and Homelessness. That is a total of 102 volunteers actively volunteering with one of the 10 agencies signed up for the program. With those 10 agencies, there are a total of 25 positions. Of our accepted volunteers, more than 40 are signed up for information sessions on becoming a volunteer with the Region's Vaccination Clinics.



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.

There has been a significant increase in the number of people accessing natural areas and water bodies this winter. Banks adjacent to local waterways are very slippery and, when combined with cold, fast-moving water, pose a serious hazard. Parents are encouraged to remind their children of the risks associated with these hazards and keep pets away from all water bodies.

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](#).

Transportation

Transportation services (Region and local municipalities) have continuously provided services during the COVID pandemic and preparations continue to ensure service through Wave 2. 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 happen normally when 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.

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.

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

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

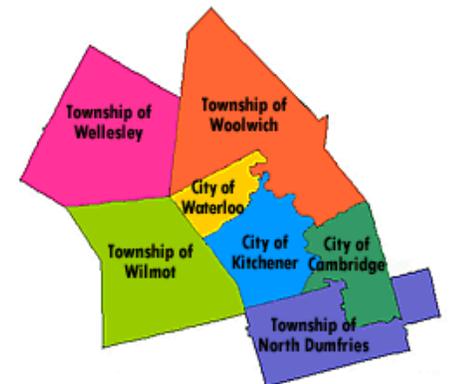
<https://www.wellesley.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx#>

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:

- To mark one year since the pandemic began, a communication is being developed to show how the community came together.
- A social media campaign offering a behind the scenes look at the Grand River Hospital vaccination clinics continues.
- A campaign recognizing the important work being done by emergency shelter and support staff continues with staff profiles being shared on social media.

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