



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

November 27, 2020

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

Community Pandemic Control Group (CPCG)

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

1. Health Sector Control Group (HSCG)

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

Public Health Update from Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang:

Overall trends

- The spread of COVID-19 in our community continues to increase.
- Residents should consider that COVID-19 is broadly spreading in our community right now.
- Our indicators continue to place us with the Red-Control level of Ontario's Framework.
 - Our current weekly incidence rate is 70 cases per 100,000.
 - Our current per-cent positivity taking into account interim data is 3.3 per cent.
 - Our reproductive rate has fluctuated between 0.9 - 1.2 over the past week.

COVID-19 Dashboard

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



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- We continue to experience a larger number of outbreaks, often in workplace and business settings with spread occurring between employees.
 - Hospital and ICU capacity
 - Hospitalizations continue to increase.
 - This represents a significant risk for local hospitals and their ability to keep all procedures going as planned.

Case and Contact Update & Response

- Similar to other health units in the Red and Lockdown zones who have experienced surges due to the acceleration of cases, contacts and growing number and complexity of case and outbreak investigations, we have been challenged to reach positive cases within 24 hours over the past week.
- The percentage of cases we reach within 24 hrs has oscillated and averaged around 50% in the last week.
- We continue to implement strategies to address the surge including redeployment of staff and working to bring on automated processes where possible.
- The additional staff from the Province started orientation and training with us yesterday, and will be able to reinforce our case and contact management starting next week.
- Within Public Health, we have redeployed Public Health nurses from our call response team to improve our capacity to contact positive cases and identify high-risk contacts.
- This has impacted our process for public inquiries that require skilled staff. We will continue to follow-up with inquiries by email and phone. Residents with general or clinical questions about COVID-19 are encouraged to contact their health care provider or TeleHealth Ontario.
- Since Public Health may not be able to reach you within 24 hrs, and you may also see your results online before Public Health receives them, we are also advising all residents:
 - Check for your results online.
 - If you're positive, continue self-isolating.
 - If you are living with others, your household members should also immediately self isolate and seek testing.
 - If you have been in close contact with others - that is within 6ft and without a face covering for 15 min or more - within 48 hours of your symptom onset up until the time you self isolated, tell these other close contacts to self-isolate and get tested.
- Please take these actions while awaiting a call from Public Health.
- And even before you get a test result, follow the instructions provided to you by the testing centre.

Holiday gatherings

Earlier this week, the Province issued advice for celebrating the holidays.

- Protect yourself and loved ones this holiday season by celebrating, in-person, with only your immediate household members or if you live alone, you may join one other household.
- Do not hold or attend large family dinners and big holiday dinners with family, friends and coworkers.



I appreciate that this is challenging. Many of us are feeling frustrated and tired of having to stay apart from others. If given the opportunity, COVID-19 will spread like wildfire, and we know that it spreads easily indoors and in close contact interactions. This is what we continue to see with our current cases. Transmission is happening in social environments and when people are in close contact with others without distancing and masking. While our traditions may look a little different this year, we can still celebrate. By celebrating apart, you help protect yourself and loved ones.

Your efforts and sacrifices are appreciated!

The new restrictions outlined under the Red-Control level of the Provincial Framework are significant for many in our community. The situation in Waterloo Region remains serious and the level of spread in our community continues to reach new highs. In addition to these restrictions which are necessary, it is also necessary for all of us in Waterloo Region to dramatically reduce our social interactions to help bring the spread of COVID-19 under control. If we do nothing, if as a community we do not aggressively reduce our social interactions, we will spiral into a Lockdown.

These measures are difficult, but they are absolutely necessary. The longer we wait, the harder it will be and the longer it will take to wrestle our case numbers down. Your efforts and sacrifices are appreciated.

Thank you for doing all that you can to help our community, right now.

For full briefing notes from weekly Public Health media briefings visit:
regionofwaterloo.ca/mediabriefings

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

- Last week food services numbers include:
 - 1,991 hampers were distributed throughout Waterloo Region, serving 5,769 individuals.
 - 28 households accessed food assistance for the first time.
 - Over 88,606 pounds of food were delivered to community programs and agency partners.
- With the shift to more stringent measures under the Control level of the COVID-19 response in Waterloo Region, The Food Bank has completed an assessment of current procedures and best practices under the existing emergency management plans and added additional considerations and changes to community service delivery to comply with provincial and public health regulations.
- Last week The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, Ray of Hope, and Family and Children's Services partnered to continue to provide hamper deliveries to the community. Community members can call (519) 743-5576 ext. 340 to be screened for a delivery. More than 2,481 deliveries have been made by agency partners since the beginning of the pandemic. Households are eligible for delivery if households members are:
 - Too ill to leave residence,
 - Self-isolation or mandated quarantine with no alternative ways to access programs,
 - Symptomatic with medical instructions to stay home,
 - Individuals who rely on a primary caregiver for food and the caregiver is no longer available,
 - Recent release from hospital and/or compromised immune systems,
 - Mobility issues with underlying health conditions,
 - Mental health issues preventing access to other programs,
 - Families that have young children and transportation barriers.

- We are working with community programs and agency partners to ensure continued service delivery throughout the Community Food Assistance Network. Visit: <https://www.thefoodbank.ca/network/map/> for an up-to-date list of available emergency food resources or share the [following resource poster](#) to locate a food assistance program.
- Christmas Hamper registration continues until November 30, 2020. Community members in Kitchener, Waterloo or Cambridge can register at: christmashampers.ca or by calling: 519-742-5860.

Housing Services and Homelessness

No new updates

Children's Services

Family Compass – Guiding you to services for children and youth

[Family Compass](http://FamilyCompassWR.ca) (FamilyCompassWR.ca) offers a one-stop website to guide families and youth to local services and resources that meet their needs – including COVID-19 specific services. Visitors to Family Compass have three pathways to choose from when visiting the site:

1. Search for Services – a self-search for local health, social and recreational services for children and youth.
2. I Have a Concern – a tool to help parents, youth and caring adults find the best starting point organization to address developmental concerns in a child or youth.
3. Resources for Parents – resources for parents to learn, find support and connect with other parents.

Three pathways and three possibilities to get you connected to the right services for children, youth and families in Waterloo Region. Visit FamilyCompassWR.ca to search for services, get connected to a local organization, or connect with [Parenting Now](http://parentingnow.ca) (parentingnow.ca).

Family and Children's Services Seeking Foster Homes in Waterloo Region

Family and Children's Services (FACS) of Waterloo Region says it's had to place more than 80 children in foster homes outside the region this year due to a shortage of local foster parents. Approximately 40 additional foster families are needed to meet the current demand in our community. This includes foster homes to provide short-term emergency foster care in the case a parent or guardian is unable to care for their children due to COVID-19, as well as more long-term foster care. [Learn more online](#) and [follow FACS on Twitter](#) to share their recruitment messages.

Psychosocial & Spiritual Working Group

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



Animal Care Services

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

Volunteer Services

The Pandemic Volunteer Program is in full swing with 56 current applications being reviewed in the screening process. 139 volunteers fully screened and put into the pool. Out of fully screened volunteers, 73 have been matched with an agency and volunteer role. We currently have 10 active agencies signed up with three more in process. With those 10 agencies we have a total of 23 positions.

Waterloo Region's pandemic volunteer program is currently looking for drivers and kitchen help to ensure food deliveries can continue for people who are isolated due to COVID-19. Following Public Health guidelines, volunteer drivers and kitchen helpers must be 65 or younger and able to lift 30 pounds. Drivers must also have their own vehicle. Shifts are three to four hours each. The program is a partnership between the Region, area municipalities, and the Volunteer Action Centre. It launched during the first wave of the pandemic. Anyone interested in volunteering can apply at www.volunteerwr.ca.



3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

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

Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA)

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

Waste Management

The waste transfer stations in Cambridge and Waterloo continue to 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, yard waste and garbage collection continues as normal. The every second-week garbage bag/can limit increase from four to six bags ended October 2. The Region is providing green bins and blue boxes for new homeowners at the household hazardous waste drop off locations in Cambridge and Waterloo. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn garbage or yard waste.

Grand River Transit (GRT)

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

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

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



GRT customer service locations; 105 King St. and Ainslie St. terminal are open to the public, and since September 21, 2020 hours have been extended. Details at www.grt.ca

Hours of service for 105 King Street are:

8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and
9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., weekends and holidays.

Ainslie Street hours of service are:

5:15 a.m. – 12:45 a.m., Monday to Friday,
6:00 a.m. – 12:45 a.m., Saturday and 7:30 a.m. – 1:00 a.m. 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.

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. Continued preparations for Wave 2 are ongoing.

Internet and Telephone/Cell Phone Suppliers

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

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:

- The Recreation & Programming Task Force are working on revising Recreation Facility Restrictions in partnership with the various sports and programming groups under the Red (Control) Level of the new provincial response framework.

Municipal Services

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

Region of Waterloo Response to COVID-19

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

City of Cambridge's Response to COVID-19

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

City of Kitchener's Response to COVID-19

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

City of Waterloo's Response to COVID-19

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

Township of North Dumfries' Response to COVID-19

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

Township of Wellesley's Response to COVID-19

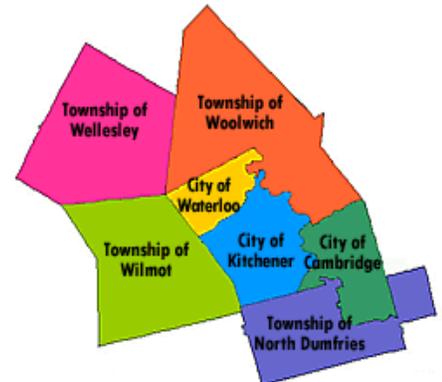
<https://www.wellesley.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx#>

Township of Wilmot's Response to COVID-19

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

Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19

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





5. Communications Control Group (CCG)

The Communications Control Group (CCG) meets to share relevant information about COVID-19 communications. The group is comprised of communication leaders from public sector organizations across Waterloo Region (hospitals, municipalities, school boards, post-secondary, police, BESTWR, etc.). Highlights from this week's activities include:

- Area municipalities issued a joint news release and are communicating to their communities about what a red classification in the provincial framework means for sports and recreation.

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