

Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

April 10, 2020

The purpose of these newsletters is to keep local stakeholders informed about the coordinated 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 Regional Pandemic Control Group which coordinates the efforts and actions of 5 other sector control groups which are described further in this document.

Regional Pandemic Control Group (RPCG)

The Regional 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.



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

1. Health Sector Control Group (HSCG)

The Region of Waterloo Public Health continues to work closely with local hospitals, health care partners, the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and national partners to monitor, report and follow-up on cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Waterloo region.

COVID-19 Dashboard: Public Health has created a dashboard on the Region's website that "illustrates" in visual form the aggregate data related to COVID-19 in Waterloo Region <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/positive-cases-in-waterloo-region.aspx>. The Dashboard is intended to better illustrate the trends in our community with respect to the COVID-19; it provides a picture of the "epi-curve" for our community. The dashboard is updated daily at 10:30 am.

Community Assessment Clinics: Two community assessment clinics have been established by Grand River Hospital, St. Mary's General Hospital and Cambridge Memorial Hospital. The purpose of the assessment centers is to provide in-person clinical assessment for individuals who are moderately ill who otherwise are unable to be assessed by their primary care provider. To visit one of these sites



you must have a referral from a health care provider for an appointment and walk-ins are not accepted.

Acute Care: Hospitals in the region are collaborating together on the response to the COVID-19. [St. Mary's General Hospital](#), [Grand River Hospital](#) and [Cambridge Memorial Hospital](#) continue to work to increase availability of beds, especially ICU beds based on the projections of cases. They are looking at alternate sites should the hospitals reach capacity including hotels, gymnasiums etc.

Rural Community Needs: Discussions to understand rural needs in the pandemic are taking place and to potentially have rural representation at the Health Sector table.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE): A regional approach to PPE management and distribution, from the Provincial allocation, is being developed. It is anticipated that a virtual warehouse will be operational in the next couple of weeks.

Health Human Resources: Work is happening across the Region to address health human resources in a variety of sectors.

Work with the Business Sector: There are connections being made with the Business Sector representatives to develop lines of communication between local businesses and public health, and to enable public health to create resources to provide businesses with relevant public health messaging for managing COVID-19 risks in the workplace.

Enforcement and Monitoring: Public Health Inspectors, Regional and Municipal bylaw officers, Regional Security and Waterloo Region Police Service are actively monitoring and responding to complaints regarding provincial and regional directions during the COVID-19 response. The goal is to obtain compliance through education. Enforcement will be taken if there is a record of education/warning or blatant non-response and ongoing non-compliance observed.

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

Translated resources: Key COVID-19 information resources and have been published in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Farsi, French, Somali and Spanish. We are also working on adding Tigrinya which will cover the top languages that are requested in Waterloo Region. Resources are currently available and posted at:

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>

It is important to note that all the Region of Waterloo's webpages have a translate feature for multiple languages found at the top of each webpage.

Translate ⊕



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. This group's mandate is to:

- Identify populations that may require additional supports during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Identify the community supports that will be provided to those populations; and
- Determine which organizations will coordinate and provide those supports.

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 this week's update from the Community Support Control Group. For more information, visit: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19.

Food hamper and meals

- Over 2,600 hampers have been distributed at 17 locations throughout Waterloo Region in the past two weeks. A food hamper is a 3-4 days' supply of food.
- Hamper delivery is also available for those in the community who are unable to leave their homes due to sickness, mobility issues or those who are self-isolating.
- Over 14,515 meals were provided by community meal programs and shelter and residential programs in the past week. Meals are available to those that need them seven days a week.

Emergency child care

- 173 families have applied for emergency child care in Waterloo Region to date
- Children continue to be placed in the program this week
- The Region of Waterloo is working to expand the program to meet demand

Spiritual and mental health services

- A list of spiritual and mental health services for people affected by COVID-19 has been distributed to service providers and will be posted online next week. These services can be accessed by phone and/or online.

Support for people experiencing homelessness

- Shelters continue to enhance social distancing practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Since the start of the pandemic, capacity at shelters has increased to accommodate the need.
- Work continues with the community, including the private sector, to secure space that can be accessed by people who do not have housing and do not have a place to go during the day.

Animal care services

- Some pet owners affected by COVID-19 will need help to provide for their animals, as they may have to be admitted to hospital or are unable to leave their home to purchase food for their pet. Emergency boarding is available by referral and an emergency pet food bank is scheduled to open April 16th.

3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

All critical services continue to be provided by all Municipalities and the Hydro Commissions and all regulatory requirements are being met. This includes water and waste water treatment plants, lab services, transit, waste management and signal maintenance, as well as local Municipal services like playground inspections. Essential work that has been deferred (critical maintenance and public safety activities) is being reviewed, and with appropriate health and safety provisions in place, will be restarted in the coming weeks.

Grand River Transit (GRT): Grand River Transit (GRT) service continues to operate for essential travel, including buses, ION light rail and MobilityPLUS. All GRT service is currently free and will be so until May 31, 2020. Customers are being asked to only use transit for essential trips, and to board and exit through the rear doors of the bus. Only customers with mobility devices are permitted to board and exit through the front doors. Customers who continue to use public transit for essential travel, are reminded to maintain a physical distance of two metres from other passengers and GRT operators.

Weekday bus service will be reduced on some routes starting April 20 due to reduced staffing levels and low ridership. [View schedule changes.](#)

GRT's customer service locations are now closed. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you at this time.

Waste Management: Regular recycling and green bin collection continues as normal. As of March 30th, the every-second-week garbage bag/can limit has been temporarily increased from four to six bags. Garbage and recycling amounts have increased by 50% above normal. As a result of this increase bulky/large item collection has been postponed/cancelled. Citizens are reminded that all garbage must be placed in bags in order for it to be collected.

Curbside yard waste collection is scheduled to begin on April 13. Yard waste in the Cities of Cambridge and Waterloo will be collected the week of April 13, and from the City of Kitchener and the Townships the week of April 20, on regular waste collection day according to the yard waste calendar schedule. Resident are asked to consider whether they have the ability or capacity to store yard waste or delay set-out, wherever possible. Should our collection crews' ability to provide service be impacted by illness, yard waste collection will have to be cancelled.

Both Waterloo and Cambridge sites have been closed for residential drop-off. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn your garbage or yard waste.





Water/Wastewater: An update to the Water/Wastewater legislation allows for the provision of a Professional Engineer to support work related to systems. This continues to be discussed and reviewed with Water/Wastewater Management.

Capital projects: All municipalities have reviewed the updated essential services list and potential impacts to related construction projects. All municipalities are planning to continue with as much of their capital programs as possible pending any changes or new direction. There will be some updated public communication released in the upcoming weeks to outline the importance of this and other maintenance activities continuing within your municipality.

4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

The CAOs of all municipalities have been meeting daily to discuss pertinent issues and to coordinate operational decisions on the local municipal response to COVID-19. Key activities have included:

- Finalizing the development of a standardized critical municipal services list.
- Implementing the Provincial order to close outdoor recreational amenities and enhancing communications of these closures.
- Coordinating the implementation of municipal workforce adjustments.
- Clarifying the contact information for citizens to access enforcement for matters pertaining to COVID-19.
- Continuing efforts to provide local economic development support for affected residents and business in conjunction with federal and provincial aid.
- Working with the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR).
- Working with the Catholic and Public School Boards through Smart Waterloo Region to help identify technology solutions/partners for students/families throughout Waterloo region.
- Continuing discussions with leaders in the non-profit sector around how to mobilize and align philanthropists and foundations to address social and economic needs in the community.

5. Communications Control Group (CCG)

The Communications Control Group (CCG) is comprised of communication leaders from public sector organizations across Waterloo Region (hospitals, universities, college, school boards, police and municipalities). Recently, a BESTWR representative was added to the group.

The Communications Control Group continues to have weekly meetings on Wednesdays with all public sector communication partners. Communication activities include:

- Public Health/Region of Waterloo media briefings are conducted via Zoom on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- The City of Kitchener and the Region of Waterloo are working together on messaging and graphics for physical distancing in parks and on trails. Public sector partners will help share this consistent messaging.

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- Public sector partners continue to coordinate and share social media content following Public Health's lead.
 - Members are developing a plan and resources to communicate with harder to reach groups.

You can stay informed on the latest information by:

- Watching media briefings on Monday/Wednesday/Friday on CTV or the Region of Waterloo's YouTube channel.
- Following the Region on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.
- [Subscribing](#) to media releases.
- Reading this weekly [COVID newsletter](#) that provides updates about working groups.

Who to contact if you have questions or need additional information

Please email publichealth@regionofwaterloo.ca. This will ensure your questions are sent to an inbox that will be regularly monitored, and referred to the appropriate staff for follow-up.



Community Partner Updates

The community is coming together to respond and address the impacts of COVID 19. The following are some examples of this coordinated response.

Business and Economic Support Team Waterloo Region (BESTWR)

The Region of Waterloo, all seven area municipalities, Waterloo EDC (Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation) the Greater K-W Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Communitech, and local partners have created the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) to help all types of local businesses cope with challenges caused by COVID-19. This group will be a point of contact for governments to support the evolving economic and business environment, and will disseminate this information to the business community. They will also advocate to ensure needs and concerns are heard and addressed. The group will also work closely with the Regional Pandemic Control Group to ensure a coordinated community response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Immigration and COVID-19

Information and multi-lingual resources for immigrants and the people and organizations supporting them is available on the [Immigration Waterloo Region website](#).

<https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/en/business-opportunities/covid19.aspx>

We're in this Together!

At this challenging time, the [Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region](#), [Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council](#), [Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership](#) and [Wellbeing Waterloo Region](#) are hoping to spread the message that we're in this together. For many of us, the families we serve, and the neighbours we care about, these days can be difficult to get through. And things can feel better when we hear, see and feel a connection with others. We are hoping you - our community partners, community members and leaders will join us in sharing a short video message that is meaningful to you and/or your organization during these times. To see how you can take part visit <https://bit.ly/2JLvRBI>

Children and Youth Services - COVID-19

The Children and Youth Planning Table has developed a running list and calendar of new or different services and programs for children and youth that have been adjusted for the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/covid-19-resources-for-children-youth-and-families/>.

Wellbeing Waterloo Region

Wellbeing Waterloo Region is collecting information on community services and resources that have emerged or been adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Information is also being collected on the most pressing needs. Visit this page to view adapted wellbeing services and to complete a survey on the evolving needs. <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/covid-19-community-services/>

Important Websites

COVID-19 Information Center

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



COVID-19 Public Health Websites

This is a rapidly evolving situation. Public Health will provide additional updates as they are available.

Region of Waterloo Public Health COVID-19 webpage: [regionofwaterloo.ca/2019NovelCoronavirus](https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/2019NovelCoronavirus)

- COVID-19 Dashboard: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/positive-cases-in-waterloo-region.aspx>
- Long-term care homes dashboard - <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/positive-cases-in-waterloo-region.aspx>
- Sector Specific Guidance documents related to COVID-19 (Ministry of Health): http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx
- Ontario Ministry of Health webpage: [covid-19.ontario.ca](https://www.covid-19.ontario.ca)
- Public Health Agency of Canada webpage: [canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)

Emergency Information: Alerts and information

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information>

Emergency Child Care

Check to see if you are on the Ministry of Education's [list of eligible workers](#) and [apply for emergency child care online](#). Please note: The order that families are placed into care will be based on many factors, including urgency of need. For more information, please see our [frequently asked questions](#). You can also call 519-514-1474 or email ECC@regionofwaterloo.ca. To learn more about the health and safety requirements for emergency child care, please see the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Emergency Child Care](#).

Support to Vulnerable Communities - Community Support Control Group

Work to support the health and safety of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19.

(<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-community-supports-for-the-vulnerable.aspx#>)

Food Assistance Network Map

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region has created an [online resource map](#)

(<https://www.thefoodbank.ca/network/map>) which shows where all emergency food hamper programs are operating. Community members can also call 519-743-5576 for assistance.



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 can be found on the following websites:

Region of Waterloo Response to COVID-19

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx>

City of Waterloo's Response to COVID-19

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

Township of North Dumfries' Response to COVID-19 (<https://www.northdumfries.ca/en/index.aspx>)

Township of Wilmot's Response to COVID-19

(<https://www.wilmot.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx>),

Township of Wellesley's Response to COVID-19

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

Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19 (<https://www.woolwich.ca/en/township-services/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>)



How to help during the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-how-to-help.aspx>

Are you looking for a way to help the community during the COVID-19 pandemic? Several organizations have set up funds to support local residents and organizations during this crisis.

The [Community Response Fund](#) will support urgent community needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Money raised is dispersed to local charities to support access to shelter, food and other crisis-related supports. This fund is a partnership between the United Way of Waterloo Region, the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation, Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, the Astley Family Foundation, and the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation.

- Donate to our local hospitals through the [Region Ready website](#), which supports St. Mary's General Hospital, Cambridge Memorial Hospital and Grand River Hospital.
- [COVID health](#) is a fund established by two local area doctors to help healthcare workers and first responders to have the supplies and equipment they need to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus.
- The Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation has established the [COVID-19 Charitable Recovery Fund](#) to provide assistance to organizations as they work to recover and rebuild from the pandemic.
- Donate or volunteer for the [Food Bank of Waterloo Region](#). Your support helps provide food and connection to other vital supports needed by children, seniors, families and individuals living in Waterloo Region.
- The Government of Ontario website, [Ontario Together](#) welcomes help from businesses, researchers and organizations who can supply emergency products and innovative solutions to support our response to COVID-19.