



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

June 12, 2020

The purpose of this newsletter 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 five 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.

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 many community partners to respond to [Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) in Waterloo Region.

COVID-19 Dashboard: Public Health continues to refine the COVID-19 dashboard on the Region's website: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary. This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated Monday to Friday at 10:30 a.m.

Stage 2 Re-openings:

Waterloo Region will be moving to Stage 2 of the provincial re-opening as of June 12 at midnight. This is certainly exciting news as many local businesses and services will be able to open their doors to clients although with additional precautions in place. Public Health staff have developed a number of resources to support local businesses in their re-opening plans. Residents can expect to see restricted numbers of patrons inside the business at one time; requirements to sanitize hands upon entry, Plexiglas shields protecting reception areas or cashier lines and you may also experience some services not being available until additional protection measures can be put in place.





To see the sector specific resources for work places visit, <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/coronavirus-resources-for-workplaces.aspx>

As we take advantage of Stage 2 re-openings, it is critically important that we continue our diligence in following public health measures:

- Practice physical distancing
- Continue to wash your hands often
- And even if you have mild symptoms, get tested and stay at home
- Wear a non-medical mask or face covering when you are in close proximity to others, especially when you are indoors or on public transit.

We continue to see lots of stories about why wearing a non-medical mask is important (although it does not replace physical distancing). We have learned that folks who do not have symptoms or who do not recognize very mild symptoms may have the COVID-19 virus. Wearing a non-medical mask protects others you may come in contact with. The more people wear masks, the more we protect each other. While some of us cannot wear masks, most of us can. Ideally, the vast majority of us will wear a mask when we are in close proximity to others. This is important---COVID-19 continues to circulate in Waterloo region and you can come in contact with the virus anywhere in our community. As the economy re-opens, we will see more and more people move throughout our communities--the number of infections could re-surge if we are not careful.

Residents of Waterloo region have done a terrific job of following public health guidance and taking an active role in reducing the spread of COVID-19. As we move into Stage 2 and eventually, Stage 3, lets continue to be kind and considerate, and look after our families, our friends, and our neighbours!

Who to contact if you have questions or need additional information:
Please email publichealth@regionofwaterloo.ca.

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.

Emergency child care

- 318 children are in emergency child care, with 226 in licensed home child care and 92 in licensed child care centres.
- As announced by the Province, emergency child care will end on June 26. The Region and the program will support families transitioning into other care.

Food services

- The number of people accessing food assistance is about the same as last year but how often they access this assistance has increased due to the pandemic. There has been a 40% increase in the amount of food distributed year-over-year.
- Last week's food services numbers include:
 - 829 meals provided to tenants in supportive housing.
 - 5,055 meals provided to emergency shelters.
 - 3,834 community meals provided.
 - 1,593 food hampers distributed at 15 locations across Waterloo Region.
 - 113 food hamper deliveries to people who are unable to leave their homes due to sickness, mobility issues or self-isolation.



Housing and homelessness

- Medical staff on the Sanguen Bus have now completed 2,987 COVID assessments and 342 medical visits for people experiencing homelessness.

Animal care services

- An additional 27 animals received emergency pet food last week, bringing the total to 393 since the pandemic began.
- Another 9 animals were provided temporary emergency care due to COVID-19 in the past week, bringing the total to 40.

Pandemic volunteer program

- 83 people have applied to become volunteers since registration for the pandemic volunteer program opened.
- 40 volunteers have been pre-screened and are ready to start. Matching will take time as agencies transition their programs and volunteer roles from response to recovery services.

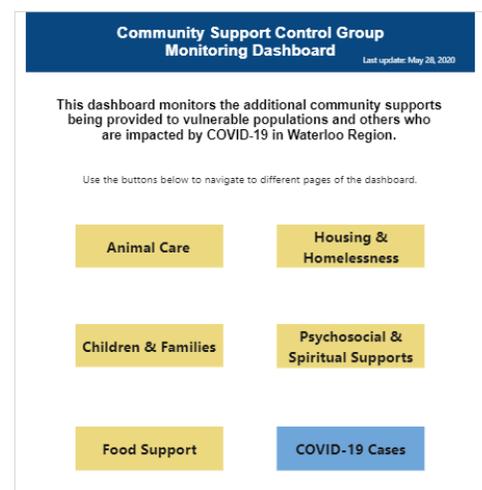
Psychosocial and spiritual group

- The working group has identified a gap in access to low-cost internet and devices for vulnerable populations and is looking for options to help close this gap.
- Recognizing that people continue to struggle with the impacts of the pandemic, a [comprehensive list of mental health and counselling supports](#) are available during COVID-19.
- A complete list of COVID-19 multilingual resources has been developed. [COVID-19 Resources Available in Multiple Languages.](#)
- A list of multi language mental health services available in Waterloo Region has been developed. [Multi-Language Psychosocial Supports During COVID-19 in Waterloo Region.](#)

CSCG Monitoring Dashboard

An interactive [dashboard](#) on the Community Support Control Group webpage now has statistics available and will be updated weekly. The dashboard includes data in the following areas:

- Number of pets helped by emergency boarding, the pet food bank and emergency care.
- Enrollment in emergency child care.
- Community meal program and food hamper distribution and delivery.
- COVID-19 mobile assessments and COVID-19 cases among people experiencing homelessness.
- Number of people accessing psychosocial and spiritual supports.





3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

The Region of Waterloo and area Municipalities continue to maintain all critical services and maintain legislative requirements while performing these services.

Active Transportation and Assistance for Businesses (Patios and use of road/parking spots):

The group working on potential options to provide improved active transportation opportunities met twice recently. Discussions at the meeting were focused on taking advantage of the current lower-than-normal traffic volumes and consider the temporary use of existing road space to provide space for active transportation while maintaining physical distancing. A recent check of traffic volumes at nine Regional road locations indicates that traffic volumes are at 67% of pre-COVID values. The additional space provided could help to encourage residents to either start or continue using active transportation during the COVID crisis and beyond. In collaboration with area municipalities, Regional staff have identified several Regional roads where curb lanes can be “re-purposed” to provide dedicated temporary bike lanes. A report is planned for the June 16 Committee of the Whole meeting.

Grand River Transit (GRT): Summer service changes will go into effect on Monday, June 22. Fare collection resumed on all GRT buses, ION light rail and MobilityPLUS on Monday June 1. For operator and customer safety, temporary barriers have been installed on all buses. Contactless fare payment with fare cards is still preferred but cash will continue to be accepted on buses. Customers who do not have an EasyGO fare card can now get one by filling out the new online form at grt.ca/OrderCard. GRT customer service locations; 105 King St. and Ainslie St. terminal have reopened to the public. Hours of service are: 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, and 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday. Customer service at 250 Strasburg Road remains closed to the public. GRT continues to strongly encourage customers to wear a mask or face covering while riding transit to protect those around them even if they do not have symptoms.

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. Gate 1 Waterloo is also open for business drop-off on Saturdays, during normal operating hours of 8:00 a.m. to 1 p.m. Recycling, green bin, yard waste and garbage collection continues as normal. Currently the every-second-week garbage bag/can limit continues to be temporarily increased from four to six bags. Bi-weekly bulky/large item collection was reinstated as of May 25. The Region is making temporary arrangements to provide green bins and blue boxes available for new homeowners at the household hazardous waste drop off locations in Cambridge and Waterloo. Staff are also reviewing when free compost pickup by residents can resume. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn garbage or yard waste.

Water/Wastewater: Water demands are continuing to trend upward as demands increase this time of year for outdoor water use. The Conservation By-law with once per week lawn watering is now in effect



as of May 31 to September 30. The private well water testing program is ongoing and related information is on the [Region's website](#). As business and buildings are starting to re-opening, building owners and operators are responsible for the water quality in their building. 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 web site as a fact sheet is available on important step for re-opening your buildings water supply. **Read this important fact sheet** (<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Documents/water/covid19/Region-of-Waterloo-Water-Services-building-re-occupancy-fact-sheet.pdf>).

Capital/Construction projects: Projects are well underway throughout the Waterloo region. Currently, construction is underway on about 40 major Region of Waterloo construction projects on roads, bridges, transit, water, wastewater and waste management facilities. More construction work is scheduled to start in the coming months, with a total of about 50 major construction projects planned for this year. That is about the same number as previous years. Planning and design work is also ongoing for future capital projects. This includes public engagement and consultation using a combination of online tools, mail outs, emails and telephone. More information is available on the Region's website and at engagewr.ca.

We ask that you continue to visit the Region of Waterloo's [website](#) for any road closure information to assist you with planning your essential travels.

4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

The Chief Administrative Officers of all municipalities have been meeting frequently to discuss pertinent issues and to coordinate operational decisions on the local municipal response to COVID-19. The current focus of the team is on coordinated recovery planning work to ensure an eventual safe and effective return to normal operations based on public health guidance and the Ontario Government's Plan to Reopen the Province. Recent activities have included:

- Planning for the phasing and timing of the reopening of facilities permitted in stage 2 of phase 2 of the Plan to Reopen the Province, which was enacted on June 8.
- Coordinating municipal applications under the Emergency Community Support Fund.
- Aligning communications around the cancellation of large cultural programming and events in July and August.
- Working together to develop an expedited process for additional outdoor restaurant patios this summer.
- Planning for the anticipated reopening of municipal administrative facilities to the public on Monday, June 15.

5. Communications Control Group (CCG)

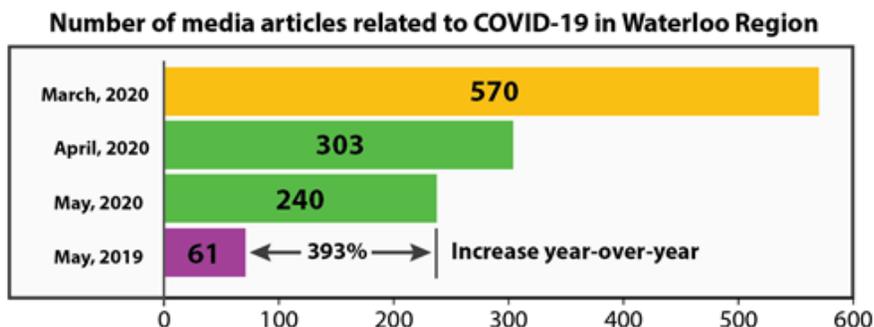
The Communications Control Group (CCG) meets to share relevant information about COVID-19 communications. The group is comprised of communication leaders from public sector organizations across Waterloo Region (hospitals, municipalities, school boards, post-secondary, police, BESTWR, etc.) Activities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

- Public sector organizations are working on public and employee communication and return to work plans. Municipalities are beginning to reopen administrative buildings and some programs and services.
- Region's "Here For You" campaign will be launched in July. It will highlight how the Region of Waterloo will continue to provide residents with the municipal programs and services they depend on as we work through the pandemic recovery.
- WR Solidarity March for Black Lives Matter – navigating COVID-19 issues related to large gatherings and balancing this with citizens' right to protest.
 - Joint municipal statement of solidarity sent out from heads of Councils on June 2.
- Ask Me Anything initiative – will be launched via Public Health. Potential to expand to other partners. PH will solicit questions from the public and assign "experts" to answer the questions via video.
- 'Stay Safe - Lead the Way' campaign was launched for citizens 70+ living in urban and rural areas who are at risk of isolation, loneliness and frailty, not currently linked to services during COVID-19.

Communications analytics – highlights for COVID-19 period March, April, May 2020

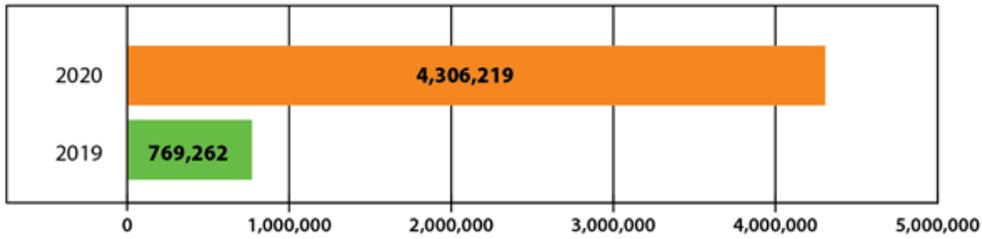
Traditional media

Number of media briefings as of June 10: **37**

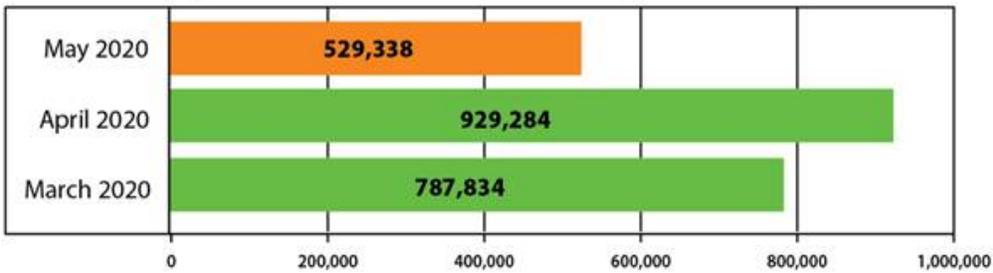


Website

Total page views year-over-year for March, April and May - www.regionofwaterloo.ca

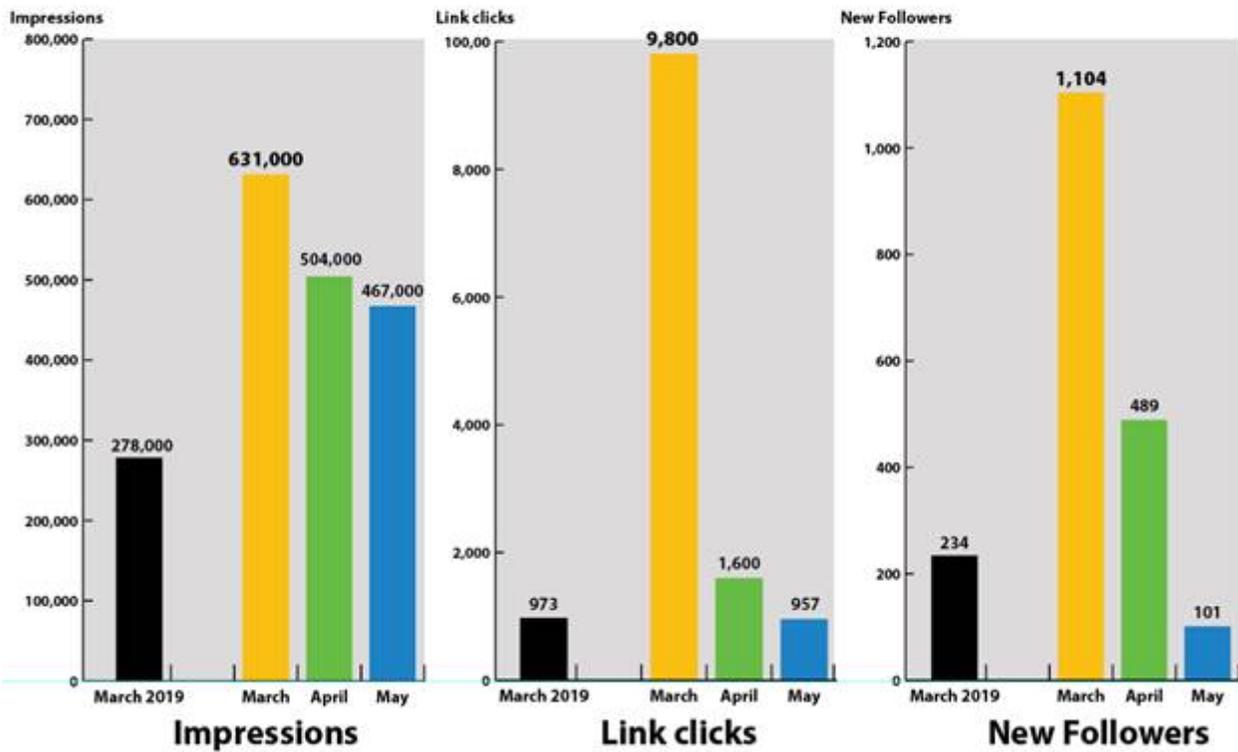


Total page views for COVID-19 section - www.regionofwaterloo.ca



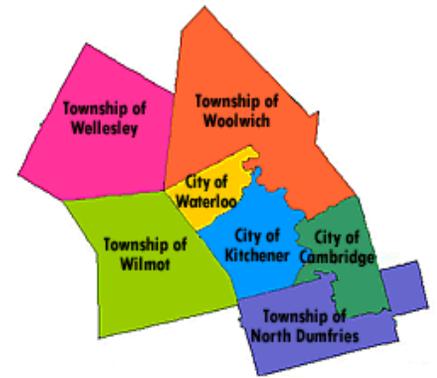
Social media

Corporate Twitter 2019 - 2020 year-over-year comparison



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/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/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>

Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19

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

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