

Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

May 1, 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.



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

COVID-19 Dashboard: Public Health has a dashboard on the Region's website that "illustrates" in visual form the aggregate data related to COVID-19 in Waterloo Region www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary. This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated daily at 10:30 a.m.

Expanded testing: On April 21, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced the expansion of COVID-19 testing for all residents and staff in long-term care homes and retirement homes. The expanded criteria include the testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals. Testing is focusing on homes currently in outbreak and then proceeding to other homes based on a risk-based approach, so it may take some time for all homes to be tested, especially if they are not in outbreak (as homes can have residents and staff that number in the hundreds). In order to facilitate the expansion of the test



criteria, Public Health has collaborated with area hospitals and community assessment centers (who do testing) to ensure access to testing as quickly as possible. The expansion of testing will likely result in an increase in cases and potentially outbreaks of COVID-19 as staff and residents who are asymptomatic may test positive.

Increased support for Long term care and retirement homes: Within Waterloo Wellington, an Incident Management System (IMS) has been established to provide additional support to homes in need. If a home is experiencing a significant outbreak, staffing challenges due to illness, or ongoing concerns related to infection prevention and control, they can contact the IMS group who will work to identify resources to help support the home as much as possible to meet their specific needs. The IMS collaboration includes hospitals, primary care practitioners, community supports including Home and Community Care and Public Health.

Community gardens: The Province identified community gardens as an essential service on April 25, meaning that with guidance from Public Health, the gardens can open for the 2020 growing season. Public Health developed operations guidelines and has worked with the Community Garden Council and local municipalities to develop a process to ensure the gardens operate safely. It is anticipated community gardens will open very shortly.

Translated resources: Key COVID-19 information resources have been published in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Farsi, French, Somali and Spanish. Resources are currently available and posted at: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>

Additional multilingual resources are available at www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/COVID19

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

- COVID-19 Dashboard: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary
- Long-term care homes dashboard - www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary
- 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
- Public Health Agency of Canada webpage: canada.ca/coronavirus

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.

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 hampers and meals

- In the last week, more than 1,844 hampers were distributed at 14 locations throughout Waterloo Region.
- 320 breakfast packs were prepared and delivered to people in need. Each pack consists of a banana, bottle of water and two non-perishable snacks.
- 97 food hamper deliveries were made to the homes of individuals who are unable to leave due to sickness, mobility issues or self-isolation.
- Capacity continues to expand to meet the need for food hamper deliveries for those who are unable to access other programs.
- Over 10,894 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

- The licensed [emergency child care program is expanding](#) to meet the need for service in Waterloo Region. Two child care centres and several home child care providers will open to add about 90 new spaces to the program.
- As of April 29th, forty-three children have been placed in centres and 99 children in home child care as part of the emergency child care program.

Animal services

- Since March 15th, 117 animals have received emergency pet food.
- Six animals have been provided temporary emergency care due to COVID-19.



Psychosocial and Spiritual Support Services during COVID-19

- The psychosocial and spiritual working group has developed a [resource for people who are experiencing grief and sadness](#) during this challenging time. This resource includes a list of organizations and groups that are offering support.

Housing and homelessness

- The temporary shelter at A.R. Kaufman YMCA in Kitchener is now open 24/7 to protect participants from COVID-19 and provide them with shelter during the day.
- Work continues to secure daytime spaces in Kitchener and Cambridge for people who are homeless.

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.

Grand River Transit (GRT): All GRT service continues to be free until May 31, 2020. Customers continue to be reminded to use transit for essential trips only, and to board and exit through the rear doors of the bus.

As a reminder, 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.

On April 22, 2020 Regional Council approved further changes to service levels specifically to routes and times of day when there is low ridership.

Waste Management: Regular recycling, green bin and yard waste collection continues as normal. Currently the every-second-week garbage bag/can limit has been temporarily increased from four to six bags due to increased household levels being put out curbside. Bulky/large item collection continues to be temporarily postponed/cancelled and citizens are reminded that all garbage must be placed in bags in order for it to be collected. Please refer to regular waste collection days outlined on the [waste management collection calendar schedule](#).

Waste transfer stations for residential waste drop-off will reopen in Waterloo and Cambridge starting on Monday, May 4 for regular residential business hours: Monday to Saturday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Residents will be able to drop off garbage, large items, yard waste, organics, recyclables and household hazardous waste (HHW). Regular fees, including the \$5 minimum fee will apply (HHW remains a free drop-off). Cash will not be accepted at this time, only credit and debit cards. Residents will not be able to pick up compost or mulch, and at the Waterloo site the Habitat for Humanity ReStore trailer, Goodwill Donation Centre and bike bunker will remain closed.



Region of Waterloo officials would like to make sure residents are aware that we expect the sites to be extremely busy, particularly on Saturdays. Long line-ups and wait times, typical of this time of year under normal circumstances, will be even longer as staff limit the number of vehicles permitted on site at one time and ensure an appropriate distance between drop-off areas. Residents are reminded to please restrict themselves to essential trips only, and to observe physical distancing.

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 and wastewater flows are trending on normal for this time of year. Water Services staff arranged with a private laboratory to perform the bacteriological testing on water quality for private well owners and will coordinate/manage the reporting of the test results with the well owner. Public Health has updated their [Website](#) to provide details on where to access tests for private wells. Fact sheets are being drafted for water quality related to the reopening of buildings, which will be shared with the area Municipalities.

Capital/Construction projects: Continue to visit the Region of Waterloo's website for [new and ongoing construction projects](#) in your area as well as any road closure information to assist you with planning your essential travels. Region and Municipal construction projects have started and will continue to start up over the next few weeks. All contractors are expected to use physical distancing and/or use appropriate personal protection equipment.

4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

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

- Extending the public closures of municipal administrative and operational facilities until May 31, 2020.
- Coordinating common public messaging around fireworks regulations and safety for the Victoria Day weekend.
- Initiating 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.
- Developing recommendations for a second phase of efforts to provide local economic development support for affected residents and business in conjunction with Federal and Provincial aid.
- Working with Public Health to plan for the safe reopening of community gardens.
- Extending all recreation facility closures and cancelling all spring programming up to and including June 30, 2020.
- Evaluating the implications of the extended Provincial state of emergency declaration on municipal operations.

- Coordinating adjustments to the municipal workforce, including transitioning employees to Declared Emergency Leave status.
- Working with the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR).
- 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) meets weekly 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.)

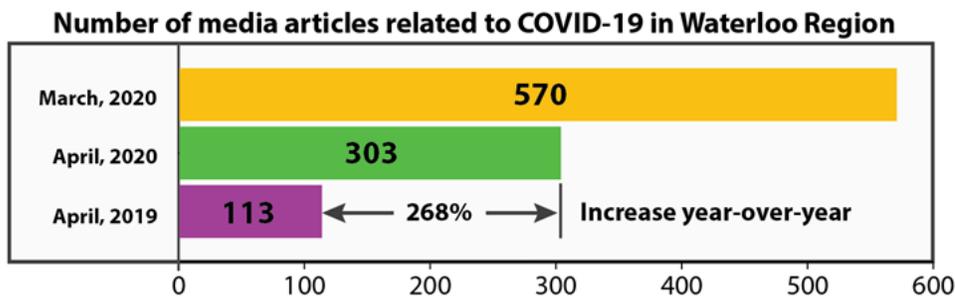
At the April 29 meeting, the CCG discussed:

- Working together on coordinated and consistent messaging related to opening businesses and returning to regular services and operations.
- Municipality-specific COVID-19 data is expected to be released on May 1.
- Coordinating messaging related to: fireworks, travelling to cottages, community gardens, Emergency Preparedness Week and physical distancing over Mother’s Day, etc.

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. Sample media and website analytics below.

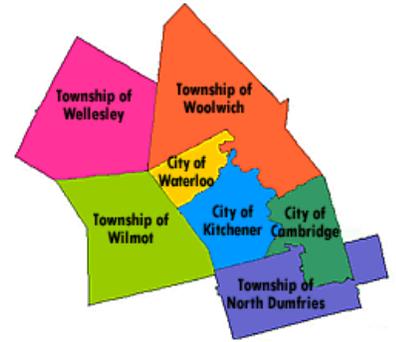
Website traffic (April 2020)

- Total COVID-19 page views: 939,587
- Total page view across website: 1.49 million (April 2019: 272,074)
- Total page views to top COVID-19 page: 650,343 (Data dashboard)
- Average daily page views: 49,247 (April 2019: 9,069)



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

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.

Here4HealthCare: Resource for front line workers

Healthcare professionals, are now being called upon to be on the frontlines, each and every day. Here4HealthCare, is a new service to reach front line healthcare workers and provide them with the support they may need. Services include access to psychiatry, crisis services and counselling/support options. There is also a web page with online resources and tools, as well as a web enabled referral form for health care workers to connect directly. <https://cmhaww.ca/here4healthcare/>

Operation Overpass

The Waterloo Regional Police Service has partnered with the Ontario Provincial Police for a road safety campaign called *Operation Overpass*. During this two-week campaign, police will focus on driving behaviours that put all road users at risk, including high speeds and aggressive driving. During times of COVID-19, there are fewer vehicles on the road as more people are encouraged to stay home. However, some drivers are using this as an opportunity to drive their vehicles

at extreme speeds on our area roadways. The goal of the campaign is to curb recent trends of extreme speeding and high-risk driving behaviour on Waterloo Region roadways. As of April 27, 2020 there have been 531 total charges which include 108 stunt driving and 7 impaired charges. Questions contact: Waterloo Regional Police Service 519-570-9777 (WRPS) ext. 8106 or andre.johnson@wrps.on.ca.



#GivingTuesdayNow

The COVID-19 Community Response Fund is continuing to accept donations to support crisis-related needs of Waterloo Region charitable organizations. There is no better time to give to the Fund than #GivingTuesdayNow. It is a global day of giving and unity that will take place on May 5, 2020 as an emergency response to the unprecedented need caused by this pandemic. Canadians are being asked to join the movement by demonstrating the power of kindness and generosity. You can help ensure vital community services remain uninterrupted by donating at www.uwaywrc.ca/communityresponsefund/.

COVID-19 Seniors Response Fund

United Way Centraide Canada (UWCC) is also pleased to work in partnership with local United Ways and Centraides (UWCs) to support services related to the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable and isolated seniors in all parts of Canada including rural, urban, northern, and remote communities. Funding through Employment & Social Development Canada (ESDC)'s New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) will increase the capacity to meet the urgent needs arising across the country. The NHSP will provide funds through United Ways' Covid-19 Senior's Response Fund that will help improve the well-being of seniors and foster their social inclusion. Applications and eligibility information are available beginning May 4th and can be accessed here: www.uwaywrc.ca/covid-19/seniors-fund/



Help us make history

Help us literally write history! Join us along with our friends the [Region of Waterloo Museums](#) and [Region of Waterloo Archives](#), as we look for the public's help in recording accounts of everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic for future generations. Share your written accounts, artwork, or video recordings by emailing them to helpusmakehistory@regionofwaterloo.ca with the subject line "Writing COVID-19 History".

Calendar of COVID-19 adapted events, activities and services

Many of our partners and other community organizations have adjusted their services in response to COVID-19 and are offering online activities, services and events. To find out about COVID related services visit the following websites:

- Immigrants and refugees - <https://calendar.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/default/Month>
- Children, youth, families and parents - <https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/calendar/>
- Wellbeing Waterloo Region - <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/calendar/>

Immigration and COVID-19 Resources

Information and multi-lingual resources for immigrants and the people and organizations supporting them is available on the Immigration Waterloo Region website at www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/COVID19.

Children/youth and families COVID-19 resources

Information and resources for children and families and the people and organizations supporting them are available on the Children and Youth Planning Table website at: <https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/covid-19-resources-for-children-youth-and-families/>

Grief, Dying, and Death During a Pandemic

A new resource entitled "[Grief, Dying and Death during a Pandemic](#)" is now available on the Wellbeing Waterloo Region website. The purpose of the resource is to offer emotional support and practical ideas for all of us in Waterloo Region as we experience grief, as we accompany someone who is dying, or as we find our way during the days following someone's death. The resource also includes links to a variety of local counseling agencies, healthcare organizations, social service providers, and bereavement resources. "Grief, Dying and Death during a Pandemic" was written in April 2020 at the request of the region-wide COVID-19 pandemic response group coordinating psychosocial and spiritual supports in the Waterloo region. The authors include practitioners in the areas of social work, palliative care, counseling, bereavement, spiritual care, and death education.

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, these days can be difficult to get through. 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>