

Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

May 22, 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 continues to refine the COVID-19 dashboard on the Region's website: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary. This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated daily at 10:30 a.m.

Testing Update: As of Friday, May 15, 2020, **all residents with symptoms which could be related to COVID-19 are now eligible for testing.** If you are wondering about COVID-19 symptoms, you can complete the self-assessment tool on Public Health's website or go to: <https://covid19checkup.ca/>. This tool is provided courtesy of the eHealth Centre of Excellence for Waterloo Region and Ontario Health West. It asks the same questions as the tool created by the Ministry of Health, but has the capability to virtually connect residents of Waterloo Region with their own primary care provider (if they have signed up to the service) or to another virtual primary care provider (e.g. if they do not have a primary care

provider or are having difficulty accessing their provider during the pandemic), for assessment and referral for COVID-19 testing as required.

Assessment & Testing Centres, Waterloo Region: There are currently four COVID-19 Assessment and Testing Centres in Waterloo Region. Please note: hours of operation are subject to change. Please consult the latest information provided by the Centres at Public Health's Assessment and Testing Centre's webpage at: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/community-assessment-centres.aspx>.

Grand River Hospital COVID-19 Testing Centre

- 835 King Street West, Kitchener
- Hours of operation: 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. 7 days/week
- Self-referrals are accepted by calling 519-749-4300 ext. 6824

St. Mary's General Hospital COVID-19 Testing Centre

- 50 Bathurst Drive, Unit 11, Waterloo
- Hours of operation: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 7 days/week
- Self-referrals are accepted by calling 519-885-9517

Cambridge-North Dumfries Community Assessment Centre

- 700 Coronation Boulevard, Cambridge (Cambridge Memorial Hospital, separate entrance)
- Hours of Operation: 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Monday to Friday and 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday and holidays
- Self-referrals are accepted by calling 519-621-2333 ext. 2689

Please note this location is not accessible for patients with mobility issues.

KW4 Community Assessment Centre

- 50 Westmount Road North, Waterloo
- Hours of Operation: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily 7 days/week

Non-medical masks: As restrictions are continuing to relax and Waterloo Region residents return to regular daily activities, there may be some situations where maintaining physical distancing is difficult or unpredictable e.g. on public transit, at the grocery store or pharmacy. In such situations, the use of non-medical masks (such as cloth masks or face coverings) is recommended, even if you have no symptoms. Medical masks, including surgical, medical procedure face masks and respirators (like N95 masks), must be kept for health care workers and others providing direct care to COVID-19 patients. Non-medical masks are an additional tool to help prevent the spread of the virus, because wearing a mask can help you contain your own droplets. Wearing a non-medical mask is not a replacement for other measures.

Choosing the right mask:

- Made of cloth or fabric
 - Do not use plastic or non-breathable materials
- Secured by elastics or ties
 - Do not use tape
- Fits snugly, with no gaps
- Does not impair your vision

While wearing a non-medical mask remember to:

- Make sure the mask is securely fastened and avoid touching your face (even when wearing the mask)
- Continue to wash your hands often with warm water and soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Wash hands before putting mask on and after taking the mask off
- Continue to practice physical distancing whenever possible

Non-medical masks should not be worn by:

- Children under the age of 2
- Anyone unable to remove the mask without help
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious

For more information on selecting a non-medical mask and instructions on how to put on and take off the mask please visit, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/how-put-remove-clean-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>.

COVID Dashboard for Paramedic Services, Hospitals and Central Ambulance Communications Centre

The overall goal for the COVID Dashboard is to assist dispatcher and Paramedic crews to have real-time situational awareness to ensure patients are transported to a facility able to ensure treatment and possible admission if required without needing to be transported to an alternate facility with capacity. The dashboard, pictured below, went live on Monday May 11, 2020 at the CACC and is a first in Ontario between a Paramedic Service and First Watch.



The Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services continues to partner with First Watch and system partners to ensure patients are receiving excellence in patient care and refining the ways in which we can assist their journey into and through the healthcare system. We further wish to acknowledge the work completed by First Watch on this project as this was created by First Watch at no additional costs to the Region of Waterloo as well as Cambridge CACC staff for implementing on short notice.

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.

Emergency child care

- Since last week, an additional 22 children have been placed in Emergency Child Care, bringing the total to 250 as of May 19; 177 children are in home child care and 73 are in child care centres.

Respite for parents of children with special needs

- As families are physically distancing, there is considerable stress and pressure on families with children and youth who have special needs. A need for a coordinated approach to respite has been identified. A respite task group is now assessing the need for this service in the community.

Food services

- Since the pandemic began, 38,483 people impacted by COVID-19 have been supported by meals and food hampers.
 - 57,329 meals have been served to people who are vulnerable through community programs and agency partners.
 - 12,961 food hampers have provided a 3 to 4 days' supply of food to individuals and families.

Housing and homelessness

- Medical staff with the Sanguen Health Centre have now completed over 2,200 mobile COVID assessments and 243 medical visits for people experiencing homelessness.
- Many people have been assessed more than once, enabling the team to monitor those who are among the most at-risk.

Psychosocial and spiritual supports

- The Friendly Voice Program is now being offered to people who are feeling lonely or isolated. This is a wellbeing check-in with a local volunteer over the phone. Please call 519-743-6333 between 8:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. if you need this service.



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): Grand River Transit will commence fare collection on all services including GRT buses, MobilityPLUS and ION light rail and front of the bus boarding on June 1. Customer Service locations have re opened to the public. Please stay tuned for media releases and information posted on the Grand River Transit webpage for more details.

In the interim, all GRT services continue to be free until May 31, 2020. Customers continue to be reminded to use transit for essential trips, and to board and exit through the rear doors of the bus.

Waste Management: The waste transfer stations continue to remain operational during normal operating hours of 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Saturday. Gate 1 Waterloo will also be open for business drop-off on Saturdays again, during normal operating hours of 8:00 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Regular recycling and green bin 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. A reminder for citizens that all garbage must be placed in bags in order for it to be collected. Bulky/large item collection will commence on 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. In addition, staff will review 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 and waste water demands are trending normal for this time of year. Water Services continues to support Public Health with managing the private well testing kit process. Please see the Public Health website for more information related to this topic. The Fact Sheet and Information Graphic related to water quality concerns when reopening buildings is now posted on the [Region's website](#) and has been shared with the local 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.



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:

- 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.
- Coordinating efforts to reactivate park amenities that were previously closed by Provincial order.
- Overseeing the preparation of criteria to support decision-making around the appropriate point at which to end the declared emergency.
- Coordinating implementation of 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 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.)

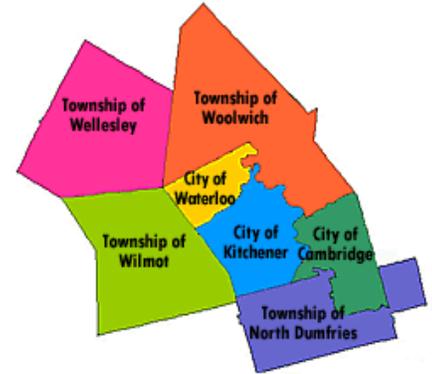
At the May 20 meeting, the CCG discussed:

- Recovery and reopening plans underway for all public sector organizations (reopening of buildings, facilities, services, etc.). Includes public and employee communication.
- Health update including need for continued health measures, protocol for non-medical masks, testing available for general public, etc.
- Municipalities communicating about reopening many outdoor amenities (e.g. skate parks, basketball courts, etc.).
- Organizations (especially municipalities) focusing on online services including online Council/Committee meetings, public engagement and other e-Services.

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. Media briefings will be reduced from 3x/week to 2x/week. CCG meetings will be reduced from every week to every other week.

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



Funding available

[Apply now - funding available for Waterloo Region charities supporting COVID-19 efforts](#) through Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation

Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation and the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation have approximately \$1 Million available to grant to Waterloo Region charities responding to COVID-19, through funding made available by the Government of Canada's Emergency Community Support Fund (ECSF). Applications opened on May 19th and will be reviewed in partnership with United Way Waterloo Region Communities, with grants distributed on a rolling basis until the end of July. The funds are available to support efforts aimed to assist vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Learn more and apply at www.kwcf.ca/covid19-ecsf or www.cndfoundation.org/covid-19-ecsf.

Apply now – United Way Waterloo Region Communities is now accepting applications for the Emergency Community Support Fund

United Way Waterloo Region Communities (United Way WRC) is now accepting applications for the Emergency Community Support Fund to help charities and qualified donees serve and support vulnerable Canadians during the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding has been made available by the Government of Canada and funding streams are being administered by United Way Centraide Canada, Community Foundations of Canada, and the Canadian Red Cross in communities from coast to coast to coast. United Way WRC is proud to support this important investment by the Federal Government.

Starting May 19th, 2020, United Way WRC will be accepting applications for funding.

Who can apply?

United Way WRC will fund organizations that provide direct services to vulnerable populations who are impacted by COVID-19. Your organization is eligible to receive funding if your organization has a charitable number, or is otherwise a qualified donee, and is providing supports and services to meet immediate community needs related to the COVID-19. This funding is intended to support frontline community service organizations providing services to support vulnerable Canadians, including low-income seniors, women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, refugees, Indigenous peoples, members of racialized communities, and more.

Funds may be used for immediate needs and priorities related to the impact of COVID-19. This includes, but is not limited to, services such as:

- Preparing and delivering meals and/or food hampers
- Supporting individuals in accessing income supports and financial coaching
- Providing home care or personal support for seniors, elders, and persons with disabilities
- Mental health & wellness supports, including crisis counselling and peer support
- Personal safety supports, including for those living in or escaping situations of violence
- Access to safe transport for essential appointment and errands, and
- Others

What types of activities could be funded?

- Community outreach and engagement
- Developing and/or delivering new programs, services or delivery models as a result of COVID-19
- Sharing information and knowledge
- Engaging and recruiting volunteers

How to apply

Applications will be accepted in two rounds. Round one will be open May 19, 2020 to June 12, 2020 and Round two will be open June 22, 2020 to July 7, 2020. We anticipate a high volume of requests and are working to ensure that all requests are reviewed as quickly as possible.

[Applications](#) will be accepted until 4:00 p.m. on the final day of each round of applications.

Questions?

Please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and [Application Guide](#). For questions not addressed in these resources, please contact Nancy Bird at nbird@uwaywrc.ca or 519-888-6100 ext. 204 for assistance.

Friendly Voice

Could you use a friendly chat? The Friendly Voice program is a general wellbeing check-in that provides social connection to reduce loneliness and isolation in the community. It was developed in response to COVID-19 impacts on the community.

To register for the Friendly Voice program, please call 519-743-6333 and ask reception how to get started! Reception hours are 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., but Friendly Voice hours may vary. To print or download the poster for distribution purposes [click here](#).

If you are in crisis, please call Here 24/7 1-844-437-3247, or 9-1-1.

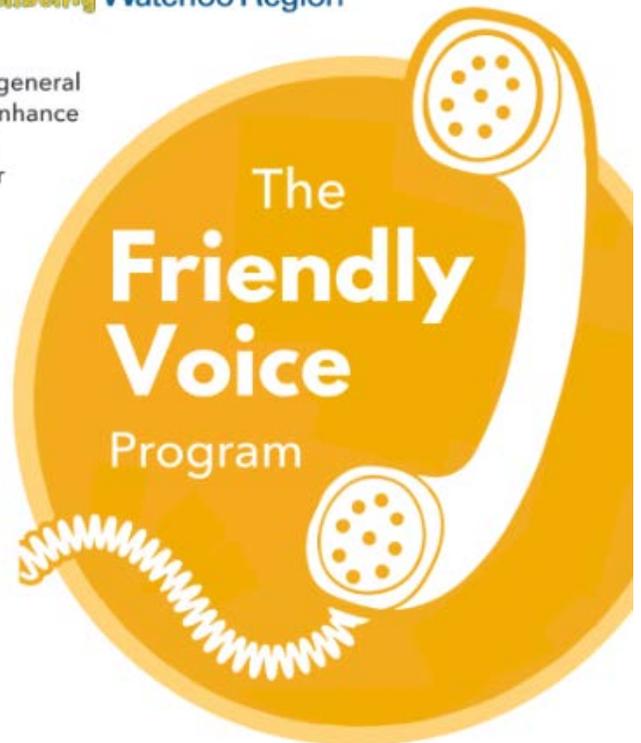


The Friendly Voice is a general wellbeing check-in to enhance social connections and reduce loneliness in our community.

How To Register

To register for the Friendly Voice program, please call 519-743-6333 ask reception how to get started!

Reception is open 8:30 am-6:00 pm, but Friendly Voice session times may vary.



Free over the phone support for anyone in the Waterloo Region who's feeling isolated or lonely.