

Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

May 8, 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 recently updated the COVID-19 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.

Testing: Public Health, local hospitals and community primary care practitioners continue to work together to complete testing of all Long Term Care homes by May 15, 2020. In addition, the Province also announced testing for all child care workers, currently working at Centres and in private home day cares, providing care for essential workers and first responders. The expansion of testing may result in an increase in cases and potentially outbreaks of COVID-19.



Community Paramedics are completing orientation this week and will be supporting testing similar to the mobile testing team from primary care.

Increased support for outbreak and investigations: Public Health continues to provide outbreak investigation and support for Long Term Care and Retirement homes. We have also expanded our team to include a dedicated group of Public Health Nurses working to identify and support outbreaks in group homes and other congregate settings. This expansion is another important component to caring for our more vulnerable residents in Waterloo Region.

Community gardens: Working in partnership with local municipalities, Public Health supported the official launch of Community Gardens on May 4, 2020. Garden Coordinators were provided with guidelines and signage to ensure a safe gardening seasoning for all community gardeners.

Translated resources: Key COVID-19 information resources have been published in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Farsi, French, Somali, Spanish and Tigrinya. 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
- COVID-19 dashboard for long-term care homes <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/positive-cases-in-waterloo-region.aspx>
- 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.

Housing and homelessness

- [A daytime drop-in centre opened this week in Kitchener](#) for people who are unsheltered (not already connected to an emergency shelter).
- A daytime drop-in space for people who are unsheltered in Cambridge is also planned and work is underway to secure a location.
- More than 1,300 COVID-19 assessments have been completed for people experiencing homelessness through a mobile bus staffed by a medical team.

Emergency child care

- As of May 6, 207 children have been placed in licensed emergency child care:
 - 146 have been placed in home child care.
 - 61 have been placed in child care centres.

Emergency foster care

- Five families have been approved to provide short-term emergency foster care to children who become separated from their parents due to COVID-19. As of May 6, no child has required this care.

Food services

- Last week, 1,627 food hampers have been distributed at 14 locations throughout Waterloo Region. A food hamper is a three to four days' supply of food.
- 92,918 pounds of food were distributed.
- 3,660 non-perishable and perishable emergency food hampers were packed at The Food Bank of



Waterloo Region.

- There were 108 deliveries to community programs and agency partners in Waterloo Region.
- Last week 97 deliveries were made to the homes of people who are unable to leave their homes due to sickness, mobility issues or self-isolation.

Animal care

- Since March 15, 197 animals have received emergency pet food.
- 10 animals have been provided temporary emergency care due to COVID-19.

Psychosocial and spiritual support

- Many programs are expanding services to provide reassurance calls to older adults during the pandemic.
- Carizon is preparing to launch a friendly voice telephone service to people who are isolated or feeling alone during the pandemic.
- The Counselling Collaborative and emergency shelters are working together to bring counselling services into emergency shelters in Kitchener. This service is already offered in Cambridge shelters.

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, and to board and exit through the rear doors of the bus.

Please continue to reference GRT schedules to ensure you are up to date on service reductions. Customers will begin to see driver barriers installed on some buses. These are prototypes being trialed as Grand River Transit begins to plan for front of bus boarding and fare collection processes in June. Current rear door entry and physical distancing measures will remain in place until the end of May.

Waste Management: The waste transfer stations at Cambridge and Waterloo reopened for residential customers as of Monday, May 4, and will be 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 am to 1 pm. The necessary physical barriers, signage and other operational /administrative controls have been put in place to assist in promoting physical distancing and mitigate risk for both staff and the general public. Site usage has been high with upwards of 1,200 vehicles in Waterloo and 1,000 in Cambridge on opening day Monday. The Waste Management website and the Service First Call Centre has been updated accordingly and includes reference to FAQ's which should assist residents with answers to commonly asked waste related questions. Messaging continues to emphasize that we are open for essential trips only, and that neither of our sites are supplying compost or mulch at this time.



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. Bulky/large item collection continues to be temporarily postponed /cancelled and a reminder for citizens that all garbage must be placed in bags in order for it to be collected.

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 trending normal and wastewater flows are trending slightly below 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.

Naturescaping seminars are being offered through Zoom during Covid-19. Seminars are by horticulture experts to help the community produce gardens that are beautiful, sustainable and easy to care for. Thank you Waterloo Region, we had 275 residents attend the Naturescaping webinar this week. To find out about the next session visit the Region's [website](#).

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. Residents may have noticed the increase in Region and Municipal construction projects over this past week. 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:

- Evaluating the implications of the extended Provincial state of emergency declaration on municipal operations.
- 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.
- Overseeing the preparation of criteria to support decision-making around the appropriate point at which to end the declared emergency.
- Working with municipal staff to finalize inter-municipal/agency agreements around volunteer management.
- Working with Public Health to plan for the safe reopening of community gardens.
- Coordinating common public messaging around fireworks regulations and safety for the Victoria Day weekend.

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- 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 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.)

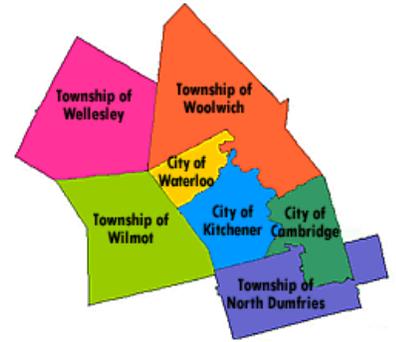
At the May 6 meeting, the CCG discussed:

- Working together on coordinated and consistent messaging related to opening businesses and returning to regular services and operations.
 - We are currently waiting for provincial direction and developing plans for communicating ‘re-opening’ messages with the broader public.
- Psychosocial and spiritual supports working group has requested help communicating with older adults who are at risk of isolation and loneliness during COVID-19.
- BESTWR continues to develop a local business and economic support strategy, focused on recovery. Will be working closely with the Region on re-opening messages.
- Most public sector organizations working on internal messaging related to back to work.

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.

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/>

Daytime drop-in for people who are unsheltered opens

The first of two drop-in centres for the community's most vulnerable population opened this week as part of the region's pandemic response. Adults who are at least 18 years old and who are unsheltered (not connected to an emergency shelter) can visit St. John's Kitchen in Kitchener. It will be open from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Monday to Friday. The daytime space is a partnership among many organizations, including The Working Centre, Ray of Hope, Region of Waterloo, and other partners within the Community Support Control Group. In addition to Kitchener, a second drop-in is being planned for Cambridge and work is underway to secure a location.

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/>

211 Ontario' COVID-19 Pandemic Response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and new community needs, 211 Ontario will be creating an inventory of essential services that are being safely offered and/or put in place as a result of the current crisis to support 211 navigation. The list will focus on the inclusion of basic needs, priorities and COVID-19 related community supports. If you or your agency are providing a new or adapted service, or if you need to update/add information on your organization please provide 211 Ontario with updates on the services: <https://211ontario.ca/contact-211-with-service-updates/>

Public fireworks during Victoria Day

Area municipalities across the Region, are reminding residents to keep safety top of mind this Victoria Day. To meet physical distancing guidelines, public firework displays will not be permitted, and public events have been cancelled across the region for the May long weekend (May 16-18). Fireworks cannot be set off in municipal parks, sports fields, laneways, or on school board property. Additionally, residents are encouraged to exercise caution with private backyard firework displays. This is due to provincially-imposed limitations on gatherings of more than 5 people not part of the same household as well as the possibility of tying up emergency resources. Residents are asked to keep celebrations small and only to those within their household and consider the possibility of celebrating the holiday in different ways this year. Please note that municipal by-law officers will be enforcing current public health restrictions.

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>