



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

October 02, 2020

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep local stakeholders informed about the coordinated community 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 Community Pandemic Control Group which coordinates the efforts and actions of five other sector control groups which are described further in this document.

Community Pandemic Control Group (CPCG)

The Community 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 update the COVID-19 dashboard on the Region's website: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary. This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated seven days a week at 10:30 a.m.

Health Sector Control Group—This group of representatives from hospital/acute care, primary care, long-term care & retirement homes, Home and Community Care, Homeless/Shelter groups, Public Health and Paramedic Services meets every two weeks to discuss emerging issues and trends as part of their collective work in COVID response. Chaired by the Waterloo Wellington Triad for Ontario Health West, the group held its most recent meeting September 30. Discussions included changes to provincial testing guidance (see below) and the Regional Assessment Centre strategy planning. The group meets again on October 14.





Public Health

Change to testing data:

We have switched the data source for our testing which resulted in a large, one-time jump in test counts on our dashboard. We are now collecting the testing data from a provincial database called OLIS (Ontario Laboratory Information System), which captures both the testing from our local testing centres as well as test counts from enhanced surveillance at long-term care and retirement homes. This data source gives a more complete and accurate picture of testing across our region.

Testing update:

Last week the Province announced changes to testing in response to the increased demand for testing. Now it is advised that people only seek testing if:

- You are showing COVID-19 symptoms;
- You have been exposed to a confirmed case of the virus, as informed by Public Health or if you have received a notification through the COVID Alert app;

Testing is still available for the following groups and individuals:

- Those individuals requiring a test to return to school or day care;
- Those who are a resident or work in a setting that has a COVID-19 outbreak, as identified and informed by Public Health;
- Those who are required to seek testing as directed by the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Long-Term Care (including for individuals wishing to visit someone in a long-term care facility);
- Those required to be tested before international travel.

If you do not have symptoms and do not meet any of those categories, do not seek testing at this time.

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/community-assessment-centres.aspx>

Thanksgiving:

With cases on the rise across Ontario, large family gatherings will increase the spread of COVID-19. Because the virus is spread easily in social settings, where people may feel more relaxed about following measures, it's important to remember that we have a collective responsibility to protect each other. You can protect yourself and your loved ones by making plans to celebrate Thanksgiving, safely. Plan virtual or shorter visits, without a meal or if you choose to share a meal together, here are some additional measures to consider:

- If dining inside, keep the windows open (weather permitting) to allow for increased air-flow;
- Clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces often;
- Practice proper hand hygiene often, especially before eating;
- Even if your event is within the provincial indoor and outdoor gathering limits, if there are people from more than one small social bubble attending, ensure people are practicing physical distancing and wearing masks when not eating or drinking.
- **Again, please do not plan larger gatherings. Smaller is safer.**

For more tips on safe gatherings visit: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/social-gatherings.aspx>.

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. 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 Services

Food Services continues to provide a wide range of food needs. Please stay tuned for more updates in next week's newsletter.

Housing Services and Homelessness

- 5627 mobile COVID assessments, 78 COVID swabs, and 743 mobile medical assessments have been completed by Sanguen mobile health / assessment team.
- The community is working together to continue to protect people who are homeless from COVID-19 and to increase capacity in temporary accommodations ahead of winter.
- The accommodations are scheduled to open in two to four weeks.
- Three sites in the community have been offered up as short term accommodations for Region-funded service providers, including:
 - YWCA, operating out of St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Kitchener.
 - The Working Centre, operating out of the Waterloo Cooperative Residence's Hammar Building on University Avenue West in Waterloo.
 - The House of Friendship, operating out of the Inn of Waterloo.
- Service providers will work closely with the City of Waterloo, Waterloo Regional Police Service, the Region of Waterloo and other stakeholders to ensure these sites integrate well with the community.
- Plans are also being made in Cambridge to add shelter beds should they be needed over the coming months.

Children Services

Resources for Children, Youth and Families: Amid COVID-19, many community organizations across Waterloo Region have adjusted their services to be social-distancing friendly. In addition, many are offering new or different services and supports, specific to the pandemic response. There are resources and information for children, youth, parents and families at [Family Compass Waterloo Region](#).

Psychosocial & Spiritual Supports

Psychosocial and spiritual [resources and support services](#) have been adjusted to respond to the emerging needs from the pandemic. The following are two examples of services that are being offered.

Conversation Circles are being hosted by Community Justice Initiatives and Wellbeing Waterloo Region in order to identify ways to connect with others during the second wave of COVID-19.

[The Friendly Voice](#) program continues to provide general wellbeing check-ins to provide social connection to reduce loneliness and isolation in the community. To register for the Friendly Voice program, please call 519-743-6333 and ask reception how to get started!

Animal Care Services

Animal Care services continue to provide a wide range services including pet food and emergency care during the pandemic. Please stay tuned for more updates in next week's newsletter.

Volunteer Services

As part of the COVID-19 response, Waterloo Region area municipalities, and the Volunteer Action Centre have launched a pandemic volunteer program that places volunteers where they are needed most in the community. The focus of this program is to keep all essential organizations, registered volunteers and the people they serve protected during a declared emergency by offering WSIB coverage.

The team is ramping up their efforts for a quick and efficient process to place volunteers with organizations during this time. Currently there are seven organizations actively involved in the program, City of Waterloo Senior Services, Community Support Connections, The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, oneRoof, Humane Society, Volunteer Action Centre, and YW Kitchener Waterloo. There are 84 volunteers fully screened and vetted through the program that are either ready to be placed, or have already been placed in a role. We have 12 volunteers already actively in volunteer positions.

The first volunteer we placed in this program was with oneRoof which has turned into a great fit for both sides. The volunteer manager at oneRoof was happy to report that *"Volunteer Lee is a great fit and we really enjoy his presence."* The positive feedback from organizations has been very encouraging. We are currently working with additional four agencies and we continue to recruit and match volunteers.

CARIZON
family + community services

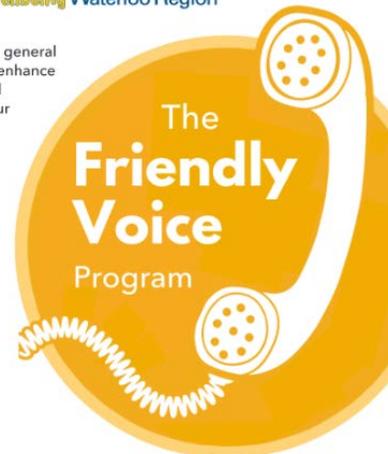
Wellbeing Waterloo Region

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.



3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

The Region of Waterloo, area Municipalities, electricity utilities, and telecommunications suppliers continue to maintain all critical services and maintain legislative requirements while performing these services. These services are critical and foundational to everyone's lives and businesses. Throughout the COVID pandemic these services have continued and even been enhanced in a seamless and uninterrupted manner. The majority of the public would have experience little or no change.

The CICG has functioned in a coordinating role and has helped the suppliers of these critical services to share information, coordinate activities and help each other to maintain services.

Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA)

GRCA has continued to provide its flood and other mandated service and has maintained its recreational areas during a summer that saw significantly increased demand. They have had to adapt both staffing and provision of service to safe guard both. They are now starting to prepare for winter.

Active Transportation

Temporary bike lanes installed by the Region of Waterloo have led to an increase in ridership. The number of cyclists was up 41 percent in July and a report is being presented to Regional Council on October 6, 2020. The pilot will end October 31 2020 and staff will provide future updates to Council.

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. However, our waste management offices remain closed to the public until further notice, due to COVID-19 measures. Recycling, green bin, yard waste and garbage collection continues as normal. The every second-week garbage bag/can limit increase from four to six bags will end October 2. The Region is providing green bins and blue boxes for new homeowners at the household hazardous waste drop off locations in Cambridge and Waterloo. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn garbage or yard waste.

Grand River Transit (GRT)

GRT would like to remind all riders that wearing a face covering is mandatory on GRT. That includes:

- GRT buses
- ION trains
- MobilityPLUS vehicles
- BusPLUS
- Kiwanis Transit
- Inside bus shelters
- On station platforms
- Inside GRT customer service locations



The By-Law is effective until May 31, 2021, unless extended by Regional Council.

GRT customer service locations; 105 King St. and Ainslie St. terminal are open to the public, and since September 21, 2020 hours have been extended.

Hours of service for 105 King Street are:

8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday to Friday, and
9:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., weekends and holidays.

Ainslie Street hours of service are:

5:15 a.m. – 12:45 a.m., Monday to Friday,
6:00 a.m. – 12:45 a.m., Saturday and 7:30 a.m. – 1:00 a.m. Sunday/holidays.

Customer service at 250 Strasburg Road remains closed to the public.

Details at www.grt.ca.

Water/Wastewater

Water and wastewater services have been provided by the Region and local municipalities throughout the COVID pandemic without interruption and have maintained compliance with all legislation and regulation. All services are prepared for continued operation during Wave 2.

With business operations returning to buildings it is important that if you are a building owner and operator, you are responsible for the water quality in your building and should understand what could happen when water is left stagnant. The longer the building has low water use, the higher the risk for water quality issues. During COVID-19, reduced or no water use in buildings may present health risks. 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 website](#). A fact sheet is also available on important steps for re-opening your buildings water supply.

Transportation

Transportation services (Region and local municipalities) have continuously provided services during the COVID pandemic and preparations continue to ensure service through Wave 2 and as the transition to winter and snowy/icy weather happens.

Electricity

Local utilities have maintained electricity service through the COVID pandemic. They have implemented programs to minimize risks to their staff and ensure no interruptions in service. Continued preparations for Wave 2 are ongoing.

Internet and Telephone/Cell Phone Suppliers

All of the companies involved in the supply of internet and other communications services have maintained and increased service to address increases in internet requirements caused by working from home and other COVID related business adaptations. They have implemented changes to protect staff and enhance service levels and continue to prepare for Wave 2.

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:

- Action items arising from a debrief of the wave 1 response; and
- Advanced planning for the second wave of the pandemic to ensure continuity of municipal operations.

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/township-office/coronavirus.aspx>

Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19

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



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 include:

- Public Health is communicating about ways to have a safe Thanksgiving and about the importance of doubling down on public health practices during the second wave of COVID-19.
- Discussion about the importance of a consistent approach to Halloween and having communications prepared for if or when the Province provides guidance.
- Kitchener corporate communications is developing a Wave 2 communications strategy that will focus on COVID-19 messaging for residents, staff and Council.
- The City of Cambridge is communicating with residents about the upcoming by-election and safe, curbside voting.
- Communications are going out about Waterloo Regional Police Service and municipal enforcement services working together to ensure compliance with new social gathering rules.
- Local universities continue to communicate with students about new gathering limits, and communication is happening across multiple regions in COVID-19-related cases where students are not on campus.
- Local school boards are communicating with concerned parents to reassure them that Public Health will contact them if their child is deemed at risk in school.

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.

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