



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

April 3, 2020

The purpose of these newsletters 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 5 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 national partners to monitor, report and follow-up on cases of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Waterloo region.

COVID-19 Dashboard: Public Health has created a new dashboard on the Region's website that "illustrates" in visual form the aggregate data related to COVID-19 in Waterloo Region https://public.tableau.com/views/WaterlooRegionCOVID-19Summary/COVID-19?:display_count=y&publish=yes&:origin=viz_share_link. The Dashboard is intended to better illustrate the trends in our community with respect to the COVID-19; it provides a picture of the "epi-curve" for our community.

Community Assessment Clinics: Two community assessment clinics have been established by Grand River Hospital, St. Mary's and Cambridge Memorial Hospital that are helping to divert patients from the emergency department that need rapid assessment for symptoms and/or referral for testing. Additional assessment clinics are also being considered. These clinics have been developed and supported by Public Health.





Acute Care: Hospitals in the region are collaborating together on the response to the COVID-19. [St. Mary's General Hospital](#), [Grand River Hospital](#) and [Cambridge Memorial Hospital](#) have implemented coordinated measures. Hospitals continue to work to increase availability of beds, especially ICU beds based on the projections of cases. They are looking at alternate sites should the hospitals reach capacity including hotels, gymnasiums etc.

Efforts to social distance and reduce interactions will be critical to reduce the potential impact of the virus and the ability of the health system to respond and provide care. All hospitals are reducing access for visitors. Visit the hospitals' websites for specific information.

Rural Community Needs: Discussions to understand rural needs in the pandemic are taking place. Discussions will take place to better understand needs and to potentially have rural representation at the Health Sector table.

Other COVID-19 Activities/Responses: Public Health Inspectors are actively monitoring and responding to complaints regarding business closures and other provincial orders (groups over five people, park closures) with the assistance of Regional and Municipal bylaw officers, Regional Security and Waterloo Region Police Service. No charges laid at this time, as we are getting cooperation through education, at this point.

There are connections being made with the Business Sector representatives to develop lines of communication between local businesses and public health, and to enable public health to create resources to provide businesses with relevant public health messaging for managing COVID-19 risks in the workplace.

**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: https://public.tableau.com/views/WaterlooRegionCOVID-19Summary/COVID-19?:display_count=y&publish=yes&:origin=viz_share_link
- 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

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. A Community supports webpage was created to capture the list of developing resources <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-community-supports-for-the-vulnerable.aspx#>.

Food hamper and meal delivery: Information on how to access food during COVID is being coordinated and posted on the Food Bank of Waterloo Region website <https://www.thefoodbank.ca/network/map/>.

Open spaces and public washrooms for the most vulnerable: The Community Support Control Group is working closely with the community, including the private sector, to secure spaces that can be accessed by people who do not have housing and do not have a place to go during the day. The following locations have been identified to date:

Available public washrooms	
<p>Kitchener Charles Street Bus Terminal, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. 15 Charles St. W., Kitchener</p> <p>Kitchener City Hall, 24 hours 200 King St. W., Kitchener</p>	<p>Cambridge Cambridge Churchill Park, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 200 Christopher Drive, Cambridge</p> <p>Cambridge Riverbluffs Park, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 211 George St. N., Cambridge</p> <p>Region of Waterloo building 150 Main Street in Cambridge, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday to Friday)</p>

Spaces available for warming	
<p>Kitchener Charles Street Bus Terminal, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. 15 Charles St. W., Kitchener</p>	<p>Cambridge Region of Waterloo building 150 Main Street in Cambridge, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Monday to Friday)</p>



Emergency shelter: As part of the Community Support Control Group’s pandemic response, additional supports are being put in place for people who are homeless. In addition to the seven emergency shelters currently operating in Waterloo Region, a temporary shelter in Kitchener has been opened to replace the overflow space at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Kitchener.

The shelter is being led by the YWCA Kitchener-Waterloo Emergency Shelter and is located at the A.R. Kaufman YMCA at 333 Carwood Avenue in Kitchener. The facility has been modified to serve as a shelter, providing participants with necessities such as food, shelter and laundry. It will be open from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. daily.

If you know someone in need of emergency shelter, please connect them resources below:

- **Single adults across the region** can call 519-624-9133 between 8:00 a.m. and midnight, seven days a week
- **Youth in Kitchener-Waterloo** can call 519-742-6547 between 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. On weekend, please call the single adult helpline.
- **Youth in Cambridge** can call 519-998-7292 between 8:00 a.m. and midnight, seven days a week
- **Families across the region** can call 519-749-2450 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday

Screening and isolation space for the most vulnerable: People accessing all shelters in the Region are being screened for COVID-19. If they show symptoms, they will be transported to an isolation space that is fully staffed. A street outreach team is also helping to screen people who may not be connected to shelters.

Emergency child care: The Region of Waterloo is coordinating a temporary emergency child care program open 24/7 for parents who provide critical services in our community. The program will offer free licensed child care for health care and other frontline workers who have exhausted all other care options for their children. Fees will be paid by the Ministry. Care will be offered to children from birth to age 12. Check the Ministry of Education’s [list of eligible workers](#) and [apply for emergency child care online](#). Please note: The order that families are placed into care will be based on many factors, including urgency of need.

For more information, please see our [frequently asked questions](#). You can also call 519-514-1474 or email ECC@regionofwaterloo.ca.

Connecting Volunteers to people in need: Planning is currently taking place in anticipation for the need to connect individuals who are vulnerable and isolated to volunteers in our community.

Psycho Social and Spiritual Supports: A working group has been established to identify, coordinate and promote existing psychosocial and spiritual supports to connect people experiencing distress through the trauma associated with the pandemic.



3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

Currently all critical services continue to be provided by all Municipalities and the Hydro Commissions and all regulatory requirements are being met. This includes water and waste water treatment plants, lab services, transit, waste management and signal maintenance. Essential work that has been deferred (critical maintenance and public safety activities) is being reviewed, and with appropriate health and safety provisions in place, will be restarted in the coming weeks.

Grand River Transit (GRT): Grand River Transit (GRT) service continues to operate for essential travel, including buses, ION light rail and MobilityPLUS. As of April 3 GRT service will be free until May 31, 2020. Customers are being asked to only use transit for essential trips, and to board and exit through the rear doors of the bus. 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.

Weekday bus service will be reduced on some routes starting April 20 due to reduced staffing levels and low ridership. [View schedule changes.](#)

GRT's customer service locations will close to the public April 10th.

Waste Management: Regular recycling and green bin collection will continue as normal. As of March 30th, the every-second-week garbage bag/can limit has been temporarily increased from four to six bags. Garbage and recycling amounts have increased by 50% above normal. As a result of the increased volumes yard waste collection and bulky/large item collection has been postponed/cancelled. Options and timing for the start of yard waste and large item collection are being reviewed. More information to follow in late April. Both Waterloo and Cambridge sites have been closed for residential drop-off. Please remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn your garbage or yard waste.

Water/Wastewater: An update to the Water/Wastewater legislation allows for the provision of a Professional Engineer to support work related to systems. This is currently being discussed and reviewed with Water/Wastewater Management.

Capital projects: A call out has been made to all Municipalities to review 2020 Capital Projects to assess what can continue, be deferred and or continuity of awarding projects going forward. All municipalities are planning to continue with as much of their capital programs as possible pending any changes or new direction.



4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

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

- Development of a standardized critical municipal services list.
- Coordination of communications regarding municipal facility closures (administration buildings) which are extended until May 4 2020.
- Implementation of the Provincial order to close outdoor recreational amenities.
- Established work-from-home protocols for employees as well as call-in provisions in order to continue necessary services.
- Work to clarify the division of responsibilities for enforcement between Regional and local by-law enforcement officers as well as Waterloo Regional Police Service is taking place.
- Currently identifying future requirements for personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Initiating efforts to provide local economic development support for affected residents and business in conjunction with federal and provincial aid.
- Establishing communications protocols for the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR).
- Discussions continue 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) is comprised of communication leaders from public sector organizations across Waterloo Region (hospitals, universities, college, school boards, police and municipalities). This group works together to coordinate and streamline the following activities:

- Public Health/Region of Waterloo media briefings are conducted via Zoom on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (more if needed). Public sector spokespeople participate when appropriate.
- Public sector partners are coordinating and sharing social media content following Public Health's lead. The Region is currently adding capacity to provide additional content.
- Members are developing a plan and resources to communicate with harder to reach groups such as non-English speaking residents, the Mennonite community children and older adults.
- Plans are also underway to develop outreach to those who might resist seeking care.
- Municipalities are working together to ensure consistent messaging related to operations and facility closures (e.g. joint media releases).

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.



Other 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.

Business and Economic Support Team Waterloo Region (BESTWR)

The Region of Waterloo, all seven area municipalities, Waterloo EDC (Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation) the Greater K-W Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Communitel, and local partners have created the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) to help all types of local businesses cope with challenges caused by COVID-19.

Collectively, this group will be a point of contact for governments as they make rapid decisions to support the evolving economic and business environment, and will help to promptly disseminate these decisions to the business community. They will also advocate on behalf of Waterloo Region firms to ensure their urgent needs and concerns are heard, clearly articulated and addressed. This group will encourage businesses to continue to reach out to their existing economic development contacts with any inquiries or needs, and common requirements. The group will also work closely with the Regional Pandemic Control Group to ensure a coordinated community response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Philanthropic response to COVID-19

As the impact of COVID-19 across Waterloo Region grows, so does the demand for services provided through the not for profit sector. United Way Waterloo Region Communities, Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation, Social Venture Partners, the Cambridge and North Dumfries Community Foundation, Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and Astley Family Foundation are coordinating and aligning funding with initiatives that have been identified as critical to our community, in order to provide immediate assistance to essential services for our most vulnerable citizens. If you are able to support immediate needs in our community, please consider donating to the [COVID-19 Community Response Fund](#) at United Way WRC. If you are a Waterloo Region charitable organization, you can visit the same site to apply for funding prior to 5 pm on April 9th 2020.



Relevant Websites

COVID-19 Information

- Region of Waterloo Public Health webpage: regionofwaterloo.ca/2019NovelCoronavirus
- Ontario Ministry of Health webpage: ontario.ca/coronavirus
- Sector Specific Guidance documents related to COVID-19 (Ministry of Health): http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx
- Public Health Agency of Canada webpage: canada.ca/coronavirus

Emergency Child Care

- Check to see if you are on the Ministry of Education's [list of eligible workers](#) and [apply for emergency child care online](#). Please note: The order that families are placed into care will be based on many factors, including urgency of need.
- For more information, please see our [frequently asked questions](#). You can also call 519-514-1474 or email ECC@regionofwaterloo.ca.
- To learn more about the health and safety requirements for emergency child care, please see the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Emergency Child Care](#).

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/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx>

City of Waterloo's Response to COVID-19

(<https://www.waterloo.ca/en/living/covid-19-response.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#>).

Township of North Dumfries' Response to COVID-19

(<https://www.northdumfries.ca/en/index.aspx>)

Township of Wilmot's Response to COVID-19

(<https://www.wilmot.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx>),



Township of Wellesley's Response to COVID-19

(<https://www.wellesley.ca/en/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19.aspx>).

Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19 (<https://www.woolwich.ca/en/township-services/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>)

Community Support Control Group

Work to support the health and safety of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19.

(<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-community-supports-for-the-vulnerable.aspx#>)

Food Assistance Network Map

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region has created an online resource map

(<https://www.thefoodbank.ca/network/map>) which shows where all emergency food hamper programs are operating. Community members can also call 519-743-5576 for assistance.

Long Term Care Homes Dashboard

A daily listing of all long-term care (including retirement) homes in Ontario under a COVID-19 outbreak will be available on a new 'dashboard' illustrating COVID-19 trends in our community, among other data. Note: Stricter guidelines are now in place and a single case is now considered an outbreak.

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/positive-cases-in-waterloo-region.aspx>

Emergency Information: Alerts and information about emergencies

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information>

Philanthropic response to COVID-19

If you are a Waterloo Region charitable organization, you can visit [COVID-19 Community Response Fund](#) at United Way WRC.

Children and Youth Services - COVID-19

The Children and Youth Planning Table has developed a running list of new or different services and programs for children and youth that have been adjusted for the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/covid-19-resources-for-children-youth-and-families/>.

Wellbeing Waterloo Region

Wellbeing Waterloo Region is collecting information on community services and resources that have emerged or been adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Information is also being collected on the most pressing needs. Visit this page to view list the adapted services and to complete a survey on the evolving needs. <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/covid-19-community-services/>