



# Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

**November 2, 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)**

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. The following is an update on the discussions that took place at these meetings.

- Current trends in COVID-19 cases:
  - COVID rates are fairly stable in Waterloo region.
  - There has also been a gradual increase in COVID related hospitalizations.
- Cambridge Memorial Hospital announced the opening of their fully accessible COVID Assessment Centre on Holiday Drive.

#### **COVID-19 Dashboard**

Public Health continues to update the COVID-19 dashboard on the Region's website:  
[www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary).

This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated seven days a week at 10:30 a.m.





## Team sports

- We have been monitoring an increase in outbreaks elsewhere in Ontario in team sport settings.
- For all settings, it is advised that the following general principles be followed:
  - Limit close contact to only your immediate household members.
  - Practice physical distancing and wear a mask or face covering with everyone else.
  - Outdoors is safer than indoors. Play outdoors when you can.
  - Stick to smaller groups. Smaller is safer.

More specifically, with regards to team sports, based on the risks seen in the outbreaks that have occurred, we are encouraging all sports associations, including organizations or recreational groups to follow this guidance:

- Minimize social gatherings of participants and spectators both before and after the activity. It is often in pre- and post-play settings where spread among players and families has been reported.
- Avoid carpooling with those outside your household. If you need to carpool, limit the number of occupants in the vehicle, open the windows to create air flow and ensure that everyone in the vehicle is wearing a face covering if they are not from your immediate household.
- Do not share equipment or gear.
- Participate on only one team.
- Play outside when possible.

These measures, in addition to all the other measures organizers are required to implement for a return to play in Stage 3, will help reduce risk of transmission in team sport settings. Public Health has also been actively reaching out to the local sports associations, with assistance from our area municipalities, to ensure they are aware of the risks, that the required measures are in place, and that players, staff and families are reminded of the importance of following public health precautions at all times before, during and after play.

For full briefing notes from weekly Public Health media briefings visit:  
[regionofwaterloo.ca/mediabriefings](https://regionofwaterloo.ca/mediabriefings)

## 2. Community Support Control Group (CSCG)

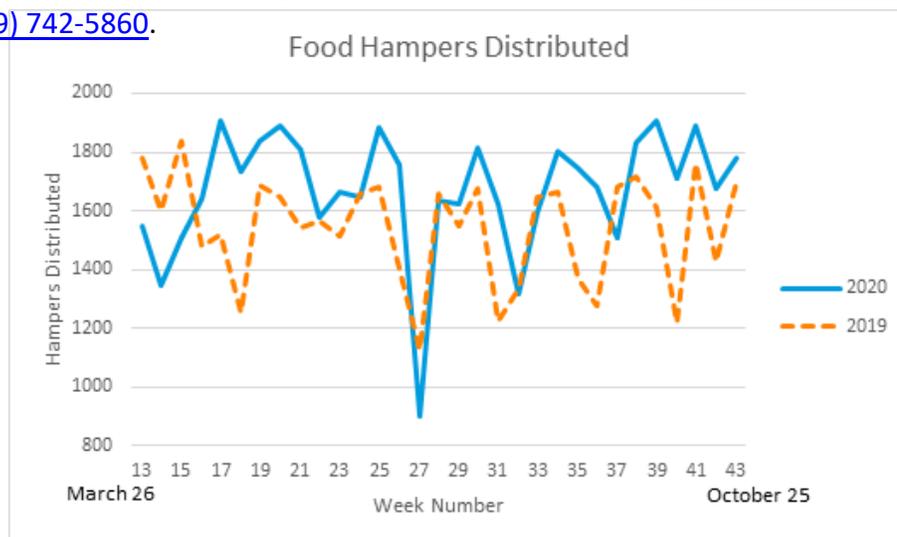
The Region, the area municipalities and many community partners have taken action to support the health and safety of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19. The Community Support Control Group is addressing the following service areas: Food Services; Housing and Homelessness Services; Children's Services; Psychosocial and Spiritual Support Services; Animal Care Services. Below is this week's update from the Community Support Control Group. For more information on each of the service areas, please visit the interactive dashboard on the Community Support Control Group webpage.



[www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19).

### Food Services

- Continue to secure inventory to address shifting supply changes, reduction in community food donations, specific requests to meet program needs and anticipated increased need. Support from Federal Government food surplus program will bring a steady supply of fresh and frozen protein product from November – February.
- Last week, 1,780 hampers were provided in Waterloo Region serving 5,063 individuals. Eighty-five new households accessed services for the first time last week. Over 70 deliveries were provided to the community.
- From March 26, 2020 to October 25, 2020 the centralized referral line operated by The Food Bank of Waterloo Region has received 1,269 calls, a 178% increase from the number of food assistance calls received compared to last year (456 calls). In the last week 56 calls were received a 300% increase from last year (14 calls).
- Christmas Hamper registration is from November 2<sup>nd</sup> – November 30<sup>th</sup>. Community members in Kitchener, Waterloo or Cambridge can register for a hamper at <https://christmashampers.ca/> or by calling [\(519\) 742-5860](tel:5197425860).





## Housing Services and Homelessness

- Drop-in programs / services continue to be available Monday through Friday at St. John's Kitchen, and 150 Main St. in the afternoons on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
- 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. 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 a student residence building on University Avenue West in Waterloo.
  - House of Friendship, operating out of The Tower at the Inn of Waterloo.

## Children's Services

### Family Compass – Guiding you to services for children and youth

Did you know, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Family Compass website was being used by about 1000 people per month? [Family Compass](#) helps guide people in Waterloo Region to services for children, youth and families. Many community organizations have adjusted their services to offer physical-distancing friendly offerings and are also offering new options, specifically to help during this challenging time.

Please share Family Compass with those you work with. If your organization is providing services or resources to families in our community, ensure it is included on the site (contact [Monika Bodemer](#) if you have questions about including your services or resources on the site).

## Psychosocial & Spiritual

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 initiatives that are being offered.

### The Friendly Voice

[The Friendly Voice](#) program provides general wellbeing check-ins to support social connection and 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!

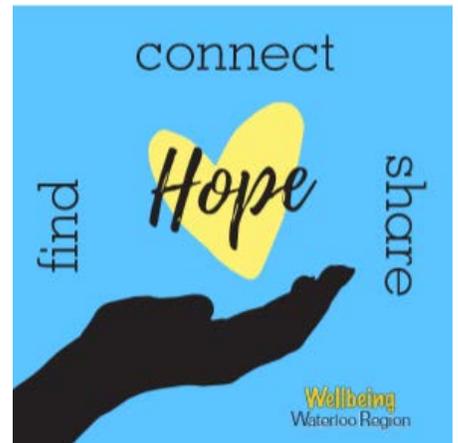
## Finding Hope Campaign

Finding and sharing our stories of hope, overcoming adversity and supporting one another during these past eight months can inspire us, reminding us that there is good in the world and that we are all connected, shining a light on the best of us.

Snap a picture, write about it, create a video, and then share it with us, with your organization, your community, your family. Find out more at <http://bit.ly/finding-hopeWWR> Follow WWR on social media. Post your own stories using #findinghopewwr

To find out more about the Finding Hope movement and how you can get involved, attend one of the weekly information sessions <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/FH-Info-sessions.pdf>.

Together we can spark a movement that encourages us all to 'Find Hope'.



## **HOPE 101 Webinar: How the four-letter word can help us with the things that are coming**

When we think of COVID-19, climate emergency, violence, poverty or political unrest, what does it mean to have hope? On a personal level, when faced with sickness, conflict or overwhelming difficulty, do you have hope? This workshop offers an introduction to hope from various perspectives (e.g. philosophical, spiritual, political, medical) and explores how this four-letter word can help us with the difficult things that are coming. We will learn together from a variety of sources, and we will exercise our “hope muscles”. Matthew Bailey-Dick who has worked as an educator in both academic and non-academic settings, as a pastor in two Mennonite churches and as a hospice volunteer will facilitate this webinar. Visiting Wellbeing Waterloo Region [website](#) for more information.

Date: Monday November 16th, 1:00 – 4:00 pm. [To register, click here.](#)

## **Animal Care Services**

Animal Care services continue to provide a wide range of services including pet food and emergency care during the pandemic.

## **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 state of emergency by offering WSIB coverage.

Currently there are 10 organizations actively involved in the program. There are 104 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 33 volunteers actively in volunteer positions.



### 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 been maintained and enhanced to ensure seamless and uninterrupted service. 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. All of the services below are implementing methods to provide active COVID screening prior to work to meet the legislative requirements.

#### **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 per cent in July and a report was presented to Regional Council on October 6, 2020. The pilot ended in mid-October, 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 ended 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](http://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.

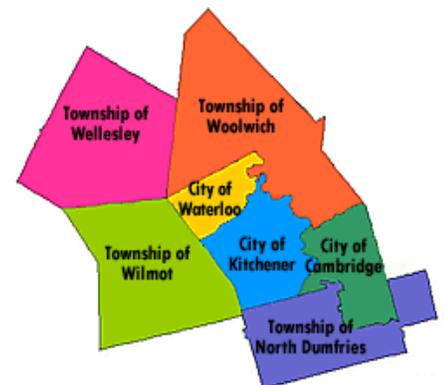
## 4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

The Chief Administrative Officers of all municipalities continue to meet frequently to discuss pertinent issues and to coordinate operational decisions on the local municipal response to COVID-19. The following are some of the issues most recently considered by the Municipal Control Group:

- Review of the work of the Recreation & Programming Subgroup regarding the operating and programming of indoor recreation facilities; all local municipalities are aligned around common operating procedures and common messaging; public communications were issued on October 28 to user groups and the public as part of the “Check Before You Rec” campaign.
- Contingency planning has been completed to identify the protocols to be implemented should the Province apply Modified Stage 2 restrictions to Waterloo Region municipalities.

### 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 are found on the following municipal 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.). Highlights from this week's activities include:

- Communication from Public Health via the Medical Office of Health about the approach to Halloween, advising that celebrations should be low-risk and only involve the immediate household. If people do trick or treat and/or hand out candy, they should take the following precautions:
  - Wear a face covering; a costume mask is not a substitute.
  - Candy should be handed out using tongs or other tools and should not be left in buckets.
  - Do not congregate at doorsteps and line up two metres apart if waiting for candy.
- Media briefings on COVID-19 are now being held on Tuesdays and Fridays.
- Metrics on media and public interest in COVID-19 indicate significant growth between August and September:
  - A 46 per cent increase in website traffic with more than 309,000 visits to the [Waterloo Region COVID-19 Summary webpage](#).
  - A 70 per cent increase in COVID-related news stories with 248 articles.
  - A 155 per cent increase in social media posts related to COVID-19 with 558 posts.

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**

## CTV News Leads **COPING THROUGH COVID**, A New Interview Series Focusing on Mental Health, Beginning November 2



CTV News announced today the launch of **COPING THROUGH COVID**, a new interview series dedicated to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Canadians. Hosted by former CTV NEWS TORONTO anchor [Ken Shaw](#), **COPING THROUGH COVID** segments air weekdays beginning **Monday, Nov. 2 at 6 p.m. ET** on CTV Toronto's **CTV NEWS AT SIX**, and on select CTV local stations (check local listings on [CTV.ca](#)).

"It is paramount that now, more than ever, Canadians are provided the tools they need to cope with the many challenges to our mental health posed by COVID-19," said Shaw. "Amid the pandemic, mental health is one of the most significant issues affecting our society today, and I look forward to returning to CTV News to host this series and help drive this important conversation forward."

Focusing on the many ways the COVID-19 pandemic can affect our mental health, and produced in consultation with [Bell Let's Talk](#), Shaw sits down with leading medical professionals and subject matter experts to discuss a wide range of topics, including how to identify early signs of depression; coping with isolation and anxiety; and tools and resources to assist Canadians moving forward. Full interview segments will be available on [CTVNewsToronto.ca](#) following each broadcast.