



# **SPEAKING NOTES**

## **COVID-19 Community Update - Karen Redman**

**November 27, 2020**

### **COVID-19 Community Update**

Good morning and welcome to this week's COVID-19 Community Update in Waterloo Region. This morning our panel includes Dr. Wang, Medical Officer of Health and Dr. Sharon Bal, Primary Care Physician Lead, Cambridge North Dumfries Ontario Health Team.

We also welcome Sandy Stevens, our Director of Health Protection & Investigation should there be any follow up questions on this week's enforcement activities.

I'd like to start by boldly saying this:

I'd like us all to start seeing this pandemic as more than just numbers.

I know it's easy to focus on the daily numbers. A rise in cases today, a drop in cases tomorrow.

It makes for easy conversation, it makes for easy headlines.

But the reality is, the true story of this pandemic is not told through numbers alone.

I'm confident that history will show the story of this pandemic lies in how our community responded, how our community was impacted, and most importantly how we worked together to move through these difficult times.

At the Region of Waterloo, we're committed to looking beyond the numbers.

We're committed to addressing the full story, addressing the full impacts. Of the mental health struggles, the small businesses who need our support, levels of governments who are working together to find solutions like never before, and the inequities

In many ways, COVID-19 has made us sit up and take notice.



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And that's why we've been working on a plan for beyond COVID-19.

That's why, more than ever, at the Region of Waterloo, we're committed to building a community that is stronger, healthier and more inclusive.

This week, through our budget process, the Region of Waterloo launched an exciting and ambitious plan for Beyond COVID-19.

We know that more than 600,000 people from across our community have been impacted by COVID-19.

Through intentional planning, we're trying to address this.

Each and every one of our 600,000 community members will tell a different story about how COVID has impacted them, their families, their livelihoods.

Whether or not you're captured by the COVID numbers, think about how you've been impacted by COVID-19.

Maybe you're a single mother who's struggling to find child care, maybe you're a restaurant employee who's work hours have been cut back, a front line health worker having to wear full PPE all day long, or maybe you're in isolation because a loved one has come in contact with a COVID-19 case.

Either way, your story, your reality, won't be contained in today's numbers.

Another reality of this pandemic is some have been impacted more than others.

It's been a difficult, unpredictable year but not everything has changed. We're still a caring region.

We're still a community that takes pride in making decisions for the future, ensuring we're prepared for whatever lies ahead.



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In addition to providing critical services like clean water, transit and public health, in the proposed 2021 budget we're focusing further on:

- supporting our most vulnerable;
- addressing inequities in our community;
- and ongoing management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council has directed staff to:

- Aim for a zero tax increase. Because we know this will have the most impact on families and businesses.
- And to look at beyond service improvements that only provide savings, we need to provide opportunity for reinvestment and additional services.

We look forward to hearing feedback on our plan. More details can be found, and opinions shared through a survey by visiting our online engagement site at [engagewr.ca](http://engagewr.ca). There will also be a public meeting on December 16 where we look forward to hearing from the community.

## **Anti-lockdown rally**

There a potential for anti-lockdown, anti-mask, or "Freedom" rallies happening this weekend in our region and across the GTA. I'd like to provide some important information about these events and any future rallies of this kind.

First, we understand people who attend these events are often from outside the region, who have gone from city to city, not wearing a mask and one would assume there would be a risk of additional COVID-19 spread within that crowd. This has an impact on our province's hospital system, our ICU spaces, our testing centres, and our labs.



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The province has asked residents in Regions that have been put into one level of the framework to not travel to Region's in lower levels.

Second, think of our businesses trying to stay open. Local establishments have shared serious concerns and are planning to temporarily close to avoid harassment. It's unfair to put their business at jeopardy right before Christmas, and a time when they are already struggling.

The majority of local residents have adhered to public health guidelines and provincial restrictions, in the name of the greater good. These events can diminish some of those efforts, not to mention the ongoing hard work of our frontline healthcare and public health workers, who have to work even more when cases and outbreaks increase.

This is not who we are as a community.

## **Enforcement**

This has been a busy week for enforcement teams across the Region. There were 4 enforcement actions taken this past week including:

1. A ticket issued by City of Kitchener By-Law on November 20, at Vita Lounge in Kitchener, for failing to obey the continued Order, under the Reopening Ontario Act, for not complying with volume and distancing requirements. The ticket was a total payable amount of \$880.
2. The first 2 charges issued by Regional By-Law under the Regional Face Covering By-Law. Tickets were issued to 2 individuals in the lobby of an apartment building. (\$200 per ticket)



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3. A ticket issued by City of Waterloo By-Law to the occupant of a private residence on November 24 for failing to obey the continued Order, under the Reopening Ontario Act, for exceeding gathering limits. The ticket was a total payable amount of \$880.

Last week the provincial multi-ministry team of almost 30 provincial offences officers were dispatched across our region to carry out a focus on education and enforcement of high-risk businesses where we are seeing spread and people letting their guards down.

As of yesterday the team completed 346 inspections and found 73% overall level of compliance of the Reopening of Ontario Act.

The most common contraventions observed were related to the zone change requirements with our Region jumping from yellow to Red in 2 weeks.

They issued 4 tickets. 1 ticket to a sport and recreational business and 3 COVID-related Orders to Comply, issued by Ministry of Labor inspectors under the Occupational Health & Safety Act to employers for observations in the employee areas.

Week 2 of the campaign is scheduled to go into this weekend.

*For reference, here is the breakdown, if required*

Business Type	Number of Sites Visited	Contravention(s) Noted	
		Number of Sites	Percent of Total Site Visits
Banquet/Event	15	3	20%
Sport/Fitness	94	27	29%
Personal Care	219	59	27%
Restaurant	7	2	29%
Retail	11	2	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>27%</b>



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## **Safe Voluntary Isolation Centre**

This week Regional Council unanimously passed a motion to establish an Interim Safe Voluntary Isolation Centre effective November 30.

Today we submit our application to the federal government for funding under the Safe voluntary Isolation Centre Program and we anticipate hearing back within the next few weeks.

When presenting with symptoms, self-isolation is one of the most effective ways to help stop the spread of COVID-19. However, for some in our community, crowded housing conditions and restrictive costs can make it unsafe or impossible to self-isolate, increasing the risk of community transmission.

Recent data from Region of Waterloo Public Health has revealed that lower-income neighbourhoods, those identifying as visible minority and those with larger household size have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

Individuals from these neighbourhoods may have more difficulty properly isolating themselves.

This initiative in line with other measures the Region of Waterloo has taken to address inequities of COVID-19 pandemic. One of our strategic imperatives is that we are a healthy, safe and inclusive community. This is one way that we can enhance equity to positively impact community wellbeing during the pandemic.

*Pass to Dr. Wang for her update*