



Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

November 13, 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:

- Over the past week we have seen a significant increase in the number of cases and outbreaks in Waterloo Region.
- We have also seen a similar increase in the number of high-risk contacts that require follow-up.
- We see that spread of COVID-19 often starts at social gatherings or events.
- This is leading to multiple clusters of cases and outbreaks in various settings in our community, such as:
 - workplaces and businesses
 - schools and post-secondary institutions
 - congregate care settings like long-term care homes
- This is consistent with what is being seen in other communities across Ontario.
- Over the last week, we have reported almost 300 new positive cases.





Given the continual increase in our case numbers and complexity of outbreaks, over the past week, Waterloo Region has met the indicators in the Orange-Restrict category of the Provincial framework

COVID-19 Dashboard

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

Orange-Restrict category

Based on the indicators we have asked the Province to reassess the appropriate level of measures for our region. As such, we expect that Waterloo Region may be moved to the Orange-Restrict category, pending Provincial Cabinet approval. The goal of moving to Orange is to be preventive in nature, to delay even further restrictions. Some of the new intermediate measures under the Orange-Restrict category would include all measures from previous levels as well as:

- Limiting indoor capacity to 50 people
- Limiting operating hours, closing at 10 p.m. with alcohol sales ending an hour earlier at 9 p.m.
- Requiring screening of patrons (e.g. questionnaire)
- Limiting to a maximum of four people seated together
- Prohibiting personal care services that require removing a face covering

As we have seen over the past two weeks, COVID-19 can accelerate rapidly. We recommend that businesses make plans for each level of the framework, because as we have seen, as cases accelerate we can move quickly into the next level of measures.

For details on the Orange-Restrict measures visit [COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open](#).

Additional Public Health Response

- We are also looking to add recommendations for long-term care and retirement home settings including discontinuing indoor visitors by “general visitors” and limiting all indoor visits with residents to one essential visitor.
- We are also collaborating with a multi-ministry team of Provincial Offences Officers on an education and enforcement campaign for two weeks beginning on November 16.
- We will consider adding more restrictions, if the measures are not enough.

We all have a role to play to slow the spread in Waterloo Region!

We are asking all residents to continue to practice public health measures:

- Wash your hands often
- Limit close (unprotected) contact to only your immediate household members.
- Practice physical distancing and wear a face covering or mask with everyone else.
- Gather virtually instead of in person.
- If gathering in person practice physical distancing and wear a face covering.
- Gather outdoors or in well ventilated indoor spaces and avoid crowded places and enclosed, poorly ventilated spaces.

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- Minimize, where possible, the number of people at a gathering.
 - Stay home if you are sick, even if you only have mild symptoms and seek testing.

We appreciate that these changes are significant. These restrictions are necessary to protect vulnerable settings, for schools and businesses to stay open and to enable medical procedures and surgeries to continue – as much as possible.

We know COVID-19 spreads easily indoors and in close contact. It does not discriminate. No setting is exempt from the potential for COVID-19 to spread.

New COVID test site partnership between Grand River Hospital and the Region of Waterloo

Starting very soon, community members will be able to receive COVID-19 tests at a new, winterized location, thanks to a partnership between Grand River Hospital and the Region of Waterloo. The new site, located at Charles and Ontario streets in Kitchener, will be designed to sustain operations in cold and inclement weather. The new site has been planned to protect staff, residents and equipment from the elements and enable us to continue operating, even during periods of poorer weather.

“The use of the former Charles Street Terminal as a drive-through testing site speaks to the great partnership that we have with Grand River Hospital,” said Karen Redman, Chair of the Region of Waterloo. “It also speaks to finding tangible solutions through community partnerships. We are confident that this solution will help many residents throughout Waterloo Region access COVID-19 testing.”

“We are grateful to Catalyst 137 who have hosted our test site for more than five months, which has accommodated almost 60,000 COVID tests for our community,” says Ron Gagnon, GRH President and CEO. “The continued support of community partners, including the Region of Waterloo demonstrates the collaboration that aligns our community, and our efforts in times of great need. We look forward to opening in our new location to continue to provide this vital step in helping to limit the impact and spread of COVID in our community.”

For full briefing notes from weekly Public Health media briefings visit:
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 the update from the Community Support Control Group. For more information on each of the service areas, please visit the Community Support Control Group webpage.

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19.

Food Services

- Hunger can happen to anyone, anywhere at anytime. Please share the [outreach poster](#) to your network to help raise awareness about how to access food assistance.
- Last week 1,773 hampers were distributed across Waterloo Region serving 5,491 unique individuals. Thirty-six households accessed food assistance for the first time last week.
- In partnership with the City of Kitchener and House of Friendship, a food distribution program will start at Forest Heights Community Centre on November 10, 2020.
- We recently published the COVID-19 Impact Report which highlights how The Food Bank and community has adapted and adjusted due to the pandemic. You can read the full report [here](#) or watch this [CTV News Kitchener clip](#).
- Christmas Hamper registration is from November 2 – 30, 2020. Community members in Kitchener, Waterloo or Cambridge can register at: christmashampers.ca or by calling: 519 742-5860.

Housing Services and Homelessness

Drop-in programs / services continue to be available Monday through Friday at St. John's Kitchen and the Ray of Hope Community Centre, and in Cambridge at 150 Main St. in the afternoons on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The community is working together to continue to protect people experiencing homeless from COVID-19 and to increase capacity in temporary accommodations in Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo.

As of November 9th, there were zero individuals experiencing homelessness accessing isolation / quarantine beds. The Sanguen bus continues to provide mobile health supports to community members experiencing homelessness. There have been over 7,600 mobile COVID assessments, 1,100 mobile medical assessments, and 100 COVID swabs.

Children's Services

[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.

Psychosocial & Spiritual

Psychosocial and spiritual [resources and support services](#) have been adjusted to respond to the emerging needs from the pandemic. If you are in crisis or unsure of what addictions or mental health service you may need HERE 24/7 can help. Call 1-844-437-3247 (HERE247) or visit <https://here247.ca/>

There is also a new online repository called Here4Help that includes useful tools and techniques to manage the stresses of dealing with COVID-19. www.here4help.ca

[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 Movement

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



Animal Care Services

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

Volunteer Services

As part of the COVID-19 response, Waterloo Region, area municipalities, and 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 we are connecting with 221 volunteers who have expressed an interest in volunteering. Of these, 48 volunteers are matched and active in one or more responding organization(s); 26 are in the matching process; 5 have withdrawn from the volunteer program completely; 95 have been put on hold at their request due to changed circumstances (back working, back to school, caring for family etc.). 11 organizations actively involved in the program and 1 organization is in the process of signing on.

Waterloo Region's pandemic volunteer program is currently looking for drivers and kitchen help to ensure food deliveries can continue for people who are isolated due to COVID-19. Following Public Health guidelines, volunteer drivers and kitchen helpers must be 65 or younger and able to lift 30 pounds. Drivers must also have their own vehicle. Shifts are three to four hours each. The program is a partnership between the Region, area municipalities, and the Volunteer Action Centre. It launched during the first wave of the pandemic. Anyone interested in volunteering can apply at www.volunteerwr.ca.



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.

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. Details at www.grt.ca

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.

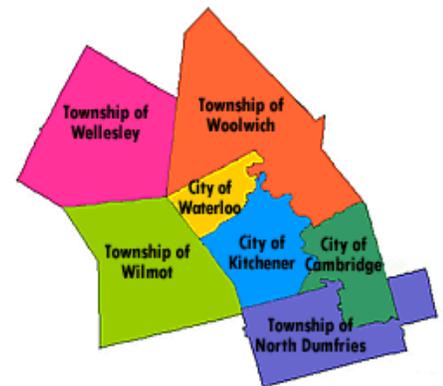
4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

The Chief Administrative Officers of all municipalities 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:

- Continue to work with the Recreation & Programming Subgroup regarding the operating and programming of indoor recreation facilities in relations to the new Colour Codes from the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Response Framework: Keeping Ontario Safe and Open.
- Monitoring the provincial budget announcements and related impacts on our community.

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:

- Group collaboration on kindness campaign to address COVID-19 fatigue and isolation heading into winter. "Be Kind" lawn signs and window posters, with translations in the most common languages, will be distributed throughout the community.
- With the number of cases in Waterloo Region beginning to rapidly accelerate and spread often starting at social gatherings or events, Public Health is communicating messaging that reminds residents to limit close, unprotected, contact to only their household members and practice physical distancing and wear a face covering with anyone outside their household.

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