

Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

April 24, 2020

The purpose of this 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.




<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/lining-here/covid-19-information-centre.aspx>

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 has a dashboard on the Region's website that "illustrates" in visual form the aggregate data related to COVID-19 in Waterloo Region www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary. This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated daily at 10:30 am.

Support to Long Term Care and Retirement Homes: Over the last few weeks, we have seen an increase in outbreaks in both long term care and retirement homes. An outbreak in these settings is declared when either one staff OR one resident tests positive for COVID-19. Outbreaks have created additional stressors for homes such as having sufficient staff to meet the care needs of all residents. Within Waterloo Wellington, our Ontario Health triad leaders (Lee Fairclough, Dr. Sharon Bal and Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang) have worked with partners from the hospital, primary care, and home and



community care sectors as well as owner/operators of the homes and their regulatory bodies to identify and implement a variety of solutions to assist homes in need. The level of partnership and collaboration across all sectors has been key to ensuring the well-being of residents in these facilities.

The Province directed Public Health, the Ministry of Long Term Care, the Retirement Home Regulatory Authority and the Local Health Integration Networks to conduct a risk assessment for long term care and retirement homes. Areas assessed include staffing, personal protective equipment, and infection prevention and control practices (including active screening of residents and staff, COVID-19 testing and case management, appropriate use of PPE, and preparedness to manage a COVID-19 outbreak).

Expanded testing: On April 21, 2020, the Ministry of Health announced the expansion of COVID-19 testing for all residents and staff in long term care homes and retirement homes. The expanded criteria includes the testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals. It is expected that the expanded testing will begin with homes currently in outbreak and then proceed to other homes based on a risk-based approach. In order to facilitate the expansion of the test criteria, Public Health has collaborated with area hospitals and community assessment centers (who do testing) to ensure access to testing as quickly as possible. The expansion of testing will likely result in an increase in cases and potentially outbreaks of COVID-19 as staff and residents who are asymptomatic may test positive.

Translated resources: Key COVID-19 information resources have been published in Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Farsi, French, Somali and Spanish. We are also working on adding Tigrinya which will cover the top languages that are requested in Waterloo Region.

Resources are currently available and posted at: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/health-and-wellness/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>

Additional multilingual resources are available at www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/COVID19

COVID-19 Public Health Websites

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: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary
- Long-term care homes dashboard - www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary
- 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

It is important to note that all the Region of Waterloo's webpages have a translate feature for multiple languages found at the top of each webpage.

Translate 

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. Below is this week's update from the Community Support Control Group. For more information, visit: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/communitysupportsCOVID19.

Focusing volunteer efforts on highest need: The Region is working with area municipalities and the Volunteer Action Centre to develop a pandemic volunteer program that ensures:


- All volunteer efforts are directed to agencies with the most need right now.
- All agencies, registered volunteers, and the people they serve as part of the COVID-19 response are protected during this state of emergency.
- Until the program launches, people interested in volunteering can [sign up for the Volunteer Action Centre e-newsletter](#) to receive updates.

Support for farmers: Support is being arranged for farmers who may become too ill to care for livestock due to COVID-19 and who do not have family or friends who can provide assistance. Skilled volunteers will be provided as needed through a livestock commodity group. Owners of hobby farms would be supported by volunteers from the Mennonite Disaster Service Canada.

Housing and homelessness: The control group is in the process of securing two daytime spaces (one in Kitchener and one in Cambridge) for people who do not have adequate housing. The A.R. Kaufman YMCA in Kitchener continues to be open as a temporary shelter and has day time drop in hours. Plans to open the temporary shelter 24/7 are underway.

Food hampers and meals

- In the last week, 1,606 food hampers have been distributed at 14 locations throughout Waterloo Region. A food hamper is a three to four-day supply of food.
- Hamper delivery is available for people who are unable to leave their homes due to sickness, mobility issues or self-isolation.
 - Last week, 56 deliveries were made to individuals' homes.

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- Households unable to access other programs can now access hamper delivery.
 - Last week, 1,950 pre-packaged perishable and non-perishable hampers were distributed to community programs and agency partners.
 - 11,278 meals were provided by community meal programs and shelter and residential programs last week. Meals are available to those that need them seven days a week.

Emergency child care: The [emergency child care program](#) continues to receive applications. Capacity continues to expand to meet the demand, with new spaces about to open up in areas of the region where there is the most need.

3. Critical Infrastructure Control Group (CICG)

The Region of Waterloo and area Municipalities continue to maintain all critical services and maintain legislative requirements while performing these services.

Grand River Transit (GRT): All GRT service continues to be free until May 31, 2020. Customers continue to be reminded to use transit for essential trips, and to board and exit through the rear doors of the bus.


As a reminder, 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.

On April 20, 2020 GRT reduced overall service by approximately 25%. Staff are closely monitoring this and have occasionally had to add additional buses to address crowding issues. On April 22, 2020 Regional Council approved further changes to service levels specifically to routes and times of day when there is low ridership. GRT is working to implement these changes as soon as possible.

Waste Management: Curbside yard waste collection began this week in the City of Kitchener and the Townships. Please refer to regular waste collection days outlined on the [waste management collection calendar schedule](#).

Regular recycling and green bin collection continues as normal. Currently the every-second-week garbage bag/can limit has been temporarily increased from four to six bags due to increased household levels being put out curbside. Bulky/large item collection continues to be temporarily postponed/cancelled and a reminder for citizens that all garbage must be placed in bags in order for it to be collected.

An ongoing reminder that both the Waterloo and Cambridge small vehicle transfer stations remain temporarily closed for residential drop-off. Plans to reopen these facilities are in development. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn garbage or yard waste.



Water/Wastewater: The first Naturescaping seminar was held on April 22nd, with 190 participants on zoom and 60-65 on YouTube. The program was also live streamed on the Region's web site.

Water Services staff arranged with a private laboratory to perform the bacteriological testing on water quality for private well owners and will coordinate/manage the reporting of the test results with the well owner. Public Health has updated their [Website](#) to provide details on where to access tests for private wells.

Capital/Construction projects: Continue to visit the Region of Waterloo's website for [new and ongoing construction projects](#) in your area as well as any road closure information to assist you with planning your essential travels. Region and municipal construction projects will be starting over the next few weeks. All contractors are expected to use physical distancing and/or use appropriate personal protection equipment.

4. Municipal Control Group (MCG)

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

- Initiating recovery planning work to ensure an eventual safe and effective return to normal operations based on public health guidance.
- Ensuring coordination of enforcement activities in conjunction with by-law enforcement, Regional Police and other agencies (e.g., GRCA).
- Extending all recreation facility closures and cancelling all spring programming up to and including June 30, 2020.
- Enhancing communications to support physical distancing requirements.
- Evaluating the implications of the extended Provincial state of emergency declaration on municipal operations.
- Coordinating adjustments to the municipal workforce, including transitioning employees to Declared Emergency Leave status.
- Continuing efforts to provide local economic development support for affected residents and business in conjunction with federal and provincial aid.
- Working with the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR).
- Continuing discussions 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.

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



5. Communications Control Group (CCG)

The Communications Control Group (CCG) meets weekly to share relevant information about COVID-19 communications. The control group places an emphasis on collaboration and message consistency. The group is comprised of communication leaders from public sector organizations across Waterloo Region (hospitals, universities, college, school boards, police, BESTWR and municipalities).

This week the following was discussed at the CCG:

- High levels of media interest continue across various sectors.
- Many areas have started construction and other essential projects – consistent messaging is being shared with media partners.
- Physical distancing concerns continue in many areas. There is confusion around what's okay and what's not (e.g. walking through school yards, congregating in parking lots, etc.). Partners will work to clarify messaging.

Public Health and Corporate Communication teams continue to share important COVID-19 information with media, residents and staff. Ongoing communication activities include:

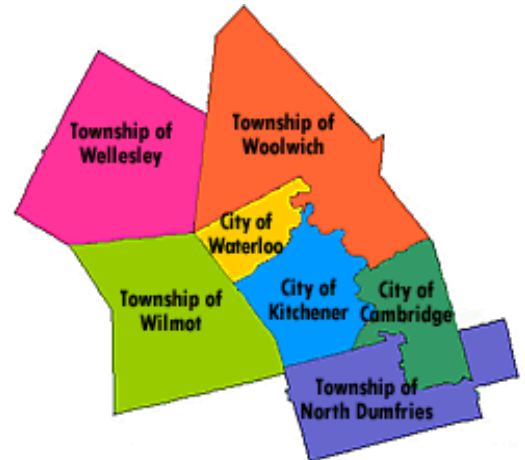
- Media briefings conducted via Zoom continue on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.
- COVID-19 content on the Region's website continues to grow.
- Sharing COVID-19 messages through our Public Health and Region of Waterloo social media channels.
- Communications continues to track analytics related to media, website and social media.

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.

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/living-here/2019-novel-coronavirus.aspx#>

Township of Woolwich Response to COVID-19

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



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.

Here4HealthCare: Resource for front line workers

Healthcare professionals, are now being called upon to be on the frontlines, each and every day. Here4HealthCare, is a new service to reach front line healthcare workers and provide them with the support they may need. Services include access to psychiatry, crisis services and counselling/support options. There is also a web page with online resources and tools, as well as a web enabled referral form for health care workers to connect directly. <https://cmhaww.ca/here4healthcare/>

Operation Overpass

The Waterloo Regional Police Service has partnered with the Ontario Provincial Police for a road safety campaign called *Operation Overpass*. During this two-week campaign, police will focus on driving behaviours that put all road users at risk, including high speeds and aggressive driving. During times of COVID-19, there are fewer vehicles on the road as more people are encouraged to stay home. However, some drivers are using this as an opportunity to drive their vehicles at extreme speeds on our area roadways. The goal of the campaign is to curb recent trends of extreme speeding and high-risk driving behaviour on Waterloo Region roadways.

Since March 17, 2020, 66 vehicles have been impounded due to excessive speeding. (As of March 23, 2020). In one day, Waterloo Regional Police along with the Ontario Provincial Police Highway Safety Division- Cambridge, charged 12 motorists with Stunt Driving. (March 22, 2020). Questions contact: Waterloo Regional Police Service 519-570-9777 (WRPS) ext. 8106 or andre.johnson@wrps.on.ca.

Community Response Fund

The [Community Response Fund](#) will support urgent community needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, over \$800,000 has been distributed to 43 charities across Waterloo Region. The fund supports frontline social services through essential programming, mental health and wellness supports, shelter, as well as health and safety for charitable frontline workers. This fund is a partnership between United Way Waterloo Region Communities, Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation, the Astley Family Foundation, Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region, The Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, The Fairmount Foundation, and Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation.

211 Ontario' COVID-19 Pandemic Response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and new community needs, 211 Ontario will be creating an inventory of essential services that are being safely offered and/or put in place as a result of the current crisis to support 211 navigation. The list will focus on the inclusion of basic needs, priorities and COVID-19 related community supports. If you or your agency are providing a new or adapted service, or if you need to update/add information on your organization please provide 211 Ontario with updates on the services at: <https://211ontario.ca/contact-211-with-service-updates/>



Help us make history

Help us literally write history! Join us along with our friends the [Region of Waterloo Museums](#) and [Region of Waterloo Archives](#), as we look for the public's help in recording accounts of everyday life during the COVID-19 pandemic for future generations. We are looking for the experiences of Waterloo Region residents from a variety of age groups during the length of the pandemic. Share your written accounts, artwork, or video recordings by emailing them to helpusmakehistory@regionofwaterloo.ca with the subject line "Writing COVID-19 History".

Calendar of COVID-19 adapted events, activities and services

Many of our partners and other community organizations have adjusted their services in response to COVID-19 and are offering online activities, services and events. To find out about COVID related services visit the following websites:

- Immigrants and refugees - <https://calendar.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/default/Month>
- Children, youth, families and parents - <https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/calendar/>
- Wellbeing Waterloo Region - <http://www.wellbeingwaterloo.ca/blog/calendar/>

Immigration and COVID-19 Resources

Information and multi-lingual resources for immigrants and the people and organizations supporting them is available on the Immigration Waterloo Region website at www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/COVID19.

Children/youth and families COVID-19 Resources

Information and resources for children and families and the people and organizations supporting them are available on the Children and Youth Planning Table website at: <https://childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca/covid-19-resources-for-children-youth-and-families/>

We're in this Together!

At this challenging time, the [Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region](#), [Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council](#), [Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership](#) and [Wellbeing Waterloo Region](#) are hoping to spread the message that we're in this together. For many of us, these days can be difficult to get through. And things can feel better when we hear, see and feel a connection with others. We are hoping you - our community partners, community members and leaders will join us in sharing a short video message that is meaningful to you and/or your organization during these times. To date, 14 videos have been created and shared, and collectively viewed over 14,000 times! To see how you can take part visit <https://bit.ly/2JLvRBI>



How to help during the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-how-to-help.aspx>

Are you looking for a way to help the community during the COVID-19 pandemic? Several organizations have set up funds to support local residents and organizations during this crisis.

The [Community Response Fund](#) will support urgent community needs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Money raised is dispersed to local charities to support access to shelter, food and other crisis-related supports. This fund is a partnership between the United Way Waterloo Region Communities, the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation, Social Venture Partners Waterloo Region, Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation, the Astley Family Foundation, and the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation.

- Donate to our local hospitals through the [Region Ready website](#), which supports St. Mary's General Hospital, Cambridge Memorial Hospital and Grand River Hospital.
- [COVID health](#) is a fund established by two local area doctors to help healthcare workers and first responders to have the supplies and equipment they need to protect themselves from the COVID-19 virus.
- The Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation has established the [COVID-19 Charitable Recovery Fund](#) to provide assistance to organizations as they work to recover and rebuild from the pandemic.
- Donate or volunteer for the [Food Bank of Waterloo Region](#). Your support helps provide food and connection to other vital supports needed by children, seniors, families and individuals living in Waterloo Region.
- The Government of Ontario website, [Ontario Together](#) welcomes help from businesses, researchers and organizations who can supply emergency products and innovative solutions to support our response to COVID-19.