

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 regularly 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.

COVID-19 Dashboard

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

Public Health Update

Region of Waterloo Public Health will begin publicly disclosing the names of significant, active workplace or facility outbreaks that meet set criteria effective Wednesday, March 17, 2021. To date workplace or facility outbreaks have been reported by category type, unless there has been a public health reason to disclose the name of a workplace or facility. The new criteria for disclosure helps balance Public Health's ability to keep the public, employers, and employees informed about where significant outbreaks are occurring while maintaining individual privacy and preventing unnecessary harm to businesses.

A significant, active workplace or facility outbreak will be disclosed when all the following criteria are met:

- One of:
 - Fifteen or more cases with at least 15 per cent positivity amongst employees and patrons, and at least 20 employees or patrons in the workplace or facility; or
 - Fifty or more cases
- Sustained transmission in the workplace or facility; and
- No significant privacy concerns

Disclosed significant, active outbreaks will also have the estimated percentage of active cases identified which will be updated weekly. All other workplace outbreaks will continue to be reported by category type, unless there is a public health reason to disclose the name of a workplace or facility.

These outbreaks will be disclosed on the Waterloo Region COVID-19 Summary dashboard regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary

COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Task Force Update

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic Update

Residents of Waterloo Region can attend any of the following vaccination clinics (maps are available at COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics in Waterloo Region):

- The Boardwalk: 435 The Boardwalk, Medical Centre 2, Waterloo
- Cambridge Pinebush: SmartCentres, 66 Pinebush Road, Cambridge
- Health Sciences Campus Kitchener: 10 Victoria Street South, Kitchener

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- Langs Community Health Centre: 1145 Concession Road, Cambridge
 - Wellesley: 3710 Nafziger Drive, Unit A, Wellesley

The vaccination clinic that is currently open at Grand River Hospital will close on March 19 to relocate at the Cambridge Pinebush site. Planning is ongoing for other vaccination locations throughout Waterloo Region.

For community members experiencing homelessness

Starting Friday, March 19, vaccination clinics are being coordinated for community members experiencing homelessness. Individuals experiencing homelessness should connect with one of the following partners to find out what clinic they can visit:

- Emergency Shelter agency or staff
- Street Outreach agency or staff
- Drop-in program or staff
- [Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre](#)
- [Langs Community Health Centre Vaccination Clinic](#)

COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics in Waterloo Region: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/vaccineclinics

New priority group added

Pre-registration for the 70-79 age group opened on Monday, March 15. Anyone who falls into this age group can still pre-register in one of two ways:

1. Online: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/vaccineprereg
[Video: How to fill out vaccine registration form](#)
2. By phone: For those unable to register online, please call the Region's Service First Call Centre at 519-575-4400

When residents pre-register, the fastest way to receive an appointment is through an email or text (mobile phone number).

Download our infographic to learn more about [where you can go to be vaccinated](#) once appointments are available.

New "How To" [Video: "How to use the Google Translate feature"](#)

Community Engagement Working Group – Vaccine Distribution

To help with vaccine distribution a Community Engagement group has been formed to identify the information and culturally relevant supports that are needed from specific groups to increase their trust and confidence in the vaccines. Some of this work has included the creation of videos from diverse health care professionals and leaders in our community who are sharing their stories related to Covid-19 and vaccines. Click here to view one of the [videos](#) from Dr. Asa.

Another example that the Engagement Working group implemented was pop-up clinics for First Nations, Métis and Inuit residents who want to get the vaccine in a culturally appropriate setting. An Elder will be available to support individuals with questions about health, culture and vaccine hesitancy at the pop up clinics. Appointments must be booked in advance. No walk-ins will be accepted.

How to book an appointment: First Nation, Métis and Inuit residents eligible for vaccination can book their appointment through one of the following organizations.

- [Anishnabeg Outreach](#): Phone: 519-208-5333 / Email: info@aocan.org
- [The Healing of the Seven Generations](#): Phone: 519-570-9118
Email: covidnavigator@healingofthesevengenerations.ca or covidadmin@healingofthesevengenerations.ca
- [KW Urban Wigwam Project](#): Phone: 519-743-5868 / Email: kwunwpnavigator@gmail.com

For those who have pre-registered as an:

- “Indigenous adult” and indicated “I am comfortable being vaccinated in any clinic setting” will receive a booking link from the Region of Waterloo to book an appointment at any of the existing clinic sites.
- “Indigenous adult” and indicated “I would prefer vaccination in partnership with an Indigenous organization” will be booked into one of the two First Nations, Métis and Inuit clinics.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit residents of Waterloo Region who want more information about these clinics are welcome to contact [Anishnabeg Outreach](#), [The Healing of the Seven Generations](#), or the [KW Urban Wigwam Project](#) for more information.

Visit our [Resources for First Nations, Métis and Inuit residents](#) page.

In this together

It’s been a tough year. One thing is for certain, as a region, we have come together to help support and protect each other.

As we patiently wait for everyone to get vaccinated, it’s important to continue to be kind to yourself and each other. Show your support by displaying one of our signs in your window. To find out how to participate visit:

<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/in-this-together.aspx>



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

A Year in Review: COVID-19

It has been a year since the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic. The days following that announcement have been full of shifts and changes to ensure the continued delivery of emergency food and other vital services to make sure the most vulnerable in our community received the support they needed.

In this infographic we have provided a quick look at just some of what's been accomplished in the last year in the area of food services for Waterloo Region.

Thank you to everyone who has supported food security this past year!

From March 23, 2020 to March 11, 2021:

3,470,184

total number of meals distributed by the Community Food Assistance Network throughout Waterloo Region



3,911

deliveries to households by the Community Food Assistance Network.



90,880

the number of emergency food hampers distributed.



2,556

new households accessed emergency food assistance.

4,441,836 pounds

of fresh, frozen, and non-perishable food have been acquired, coordinated, and distributed by the Community Food Assistance Network.



OTF Grant Helps The Food Bank Launch Mobile Pantry



On March 4, The Food Bank launched a Mobile Pantry, expanding the availability, access, and safe distribution of fresh food to neighborhood food assistance programs throughout Waterloo Region. The Mobile Pantry was funded by a \$92,800 Capital Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and will be piloted in partnership with the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank.

Click [here to read](#) the official press release.

In case you missed it, the launch received some excellent media coverage:

- [New mobile pantry to help food banks deliver more fresh, frozen food](#)
- [The Food Bank of Waterloo Region introduces Mobile Pantry truck](#)

Housing Services and Homelessness

With the recent fire at the Inn of Waterloo, House of Friendship shelter participants have been temporarily relocated to a hotel in Guelph. Region staff are working with the House of Friendship staff to return shelter participants to Waterloo Region as soon as possible. Regional staff continue to work with community partners to find permanent housing for as many shelter participants as possible.

The community is working together to continue to protect people experiencing homelessness from COVID-19 and has increased capacity in temporary accommodations to respond to an increased demand for emergency shelter beds.

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

Community Supports available to individuals experiencing homelessness can be found on the Region of Waterloo's COVID-19 Community Supports page: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-community-supports-for-the-vulnerable.aspx#>

For the cold winter weather, the Region has worked with area municipalities and community partners to make warming centres available for individuals experiencing homelessness. These warming centres are available during extreme weather events, which Community Services defines as days where:

- The temperature is –15 (minus fifteen) degrees Celsius or lower, and/or
- The wind chill factor will be –15 (minus fifteen) degrees Celsius or lower, and/or
- There is freezing rain.



The warming centres are:

Region of Waterloo Buildings:

99 Regina St. St., Waterloo, 150 Frederick St., Kitchener, 150 Main St., Cambridge

- Monday through Friday
- 8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

City of Waterloo Adult Recreation Centre: 185 King St. S, Waterloo

- Monday through Sunday
- 10:00 A.M. - 6:00 P.M.

Emmanuel United Church Waterloo: 22 Bridgeport Road W., Waterloo

- Tuesday through Friday
- 12:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Starting March 19th, vaccination clinics are being coordinated for community members experiencing homelessness. Individuals experiencing homelessness should connect with one of the following partners to find out what clinic they can visit:

- Emergency Shelter agencies or staff;
- Street Outreach agencies or staff;
- Drop-in program agencies or staff;
- Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre; or
- Langs.

Child and Family

Planning is underway for Third Wave. There are processes in place for emergency child care and emergency foster care if needed.

Vaccinations

- Regarding vaccinations for staff working in schools, April is the anticipated timeline. No word yet on timeline for vaccinations for staff working in summer programming. Research is still underway for use of vaccination with children – no specific vaccination timeline yet for children. For young people 16+ in congregate settings, vaccinations have started. Work underway with Provincial connections re: vaccinations and informed consent for young people.

Schools

- School boards are offering virtual tours for students transitioning next year (e.g., from elementary to high school). Focus within school boards continues in the summer to be on mental health, literacy and numeracy. There is work happening on opportunities within the Working Group to coordinate efforts. All boards plan to offer a virtual school option for September 2021.

Children and Youth Supports and Programming

- There are concerns in particular with 12-14 year olds, as well as 17-18 year old experiencing significant mental health issues.
- Registration for summer programming is active in some cases, and forthcoming from others. The working group is working together and advising on more equitable distribution of camp opportunities.

[Family Compass](#) continues to be the go-to site to direct families and community to for services and supports for young people.

Psychosocial & Spiritual Supports

Spiritual Supports

Two forums are taking place in March to support communication channels between government and faith based communities to help serve residents during the pandemic today, and years into the future. The forums have been planned in conjunction with Interfaith Grand River, Martin Luther University College and Christians Together Waterloo Region. Over 100 faith based leaders had the opportunity to hear from medical experts, Regional Chair Karen Redman and local faith-based leaders.

Mental Health Supports - **Don't be afraid to ask for help!**

The COVID-19 pandemic may be stressful for some. Fear and anxiety about the disease and what could happen can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Some people worry about asking for help because there can be stigma around mental health challenges. Some people worry about how others might see them. Asking for help means that you want to make changes and take care of yourself. It takes courage to ask for help. If you are in crisis, 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/>

[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, call 519-743-6333.

Mindfulness with Dr. Mitchell Abrams

On Wednesday, March 24th at 1:30pm, Join Dr. Mitchell Abrams, radiologist, educator, musician, CEO and founder of NexGen Health, a social enterprise with a mission of creating healthy minds and thriving communities, as he explains an innovative approach to health and wellness and community connection. If you would like to attend [register](#) here for this event.

From Behind the Mask: A Community Quilt of COVID-19 Stories

[From Behind the Mask](#) is a local community art project creating a collective quilt out of our individual COVID-19 stories. This project is taking place across Waterloo Region with participants of all ages taking part. All residents of Waterloo Region are welcome to create their own quilt block to submit to the final project. Once it is finished, the quilt will be exhibited and serve as memorial which acknowledges inequality, and act as a starting point for healing. The deadline to submit a quilt block is April 30, 2021. To request a kit to create a block, visit this link:





<https://frombehindthemask-quilt.com/Kits>. Feel free to share widely!

Animal Care Services

The Kitchener Waterloo Humane Society and the Cambridge Humane Society both continue to be fully operational, providing all services with restricted access to the facilities. With spring in the air, comes “kitten season” and lots of sick and injured wildlife, therefore we are anticipating busy days ahead. The Waterloo Region Emergency Pet Food Bank remains operational at the Kitchener Waterloo Humane Society and has plenty of food to share with individuals, groups and other organizations. To arrange for food please call 226-220-7885.

With the anticipated increase in number of animals coming into the centres, we continue to need foster families to assist us in caring for those who are needing extra love until they are ready to find their fur-ever homes. Foster applications are available at <https://kwsphumane.ca/how-to-help/foster> Please help spread the word.

Many families, throughout the pandemic, have said good-bye to their beloved pets....and in addition to the emotional stress this brings, there may also be financial hardships. The Kitchener Waterloo Humane Society offers cremation services at reduced costs. Information regarding “end of life” and other veterinary services can be found at <https://kwsphumane.ca/services/vet>

With the support of volunteer foster homes we continue to be able to provide Emergency Boarding services to individuals who need a safe temporary home for their pet while they take care of themselves. Whether an individual is recovering from COVID, having to stay in the hospital for other medical treatment or staying in a shelter, we are here to help take care of their pet until they are ready and able to take their pet home with them. For more information on Emergency Boarding go to <https://kwsphumane.ca/emergencyboarding> or give us a call today at 519-745-5615.

Volunteer Services

The Pandemic Volunteer Program has 241 volunteers fully screened and vetted in the pool. Out of that number, 74 volunteers are working in Food Services, 28 in Housing and Homelessness, and 43 in Healthcare. That is a total of 134 volunteers actively volunteering with one of the 10 agencies signed up for the program. With those 10 agencies, there are a total of 26 positions. Additionally, there are 62 volunteers currently in the screening process and should be accepted soon.

When the Region put out a call for volunteers for the Covid-19 Immunization Clinics, the response from the community was amazing. The Pandemic Volunteer Program was able to direct 43 of our already screened volunteers towards the effort. Within a day volunteers from this program were able to assist the Waterloo Clinic as it opened and will continue with this and other clinics. People who are receiving their vaccines have commented on the ease of the process and the fact that there were volunteers at every stage to assist them.



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.

There has been a significant increase in the number of people accessing natural areas and water bodies this winter. Banks adjacent to local waterways are very slippery and, when combined with cold, fast-moving water, pose a serious hazard. Parents are encouraged to remind their children of the risks associated with these hazards and keep pets away from all water bodies.

Waste Management

The waste transfer stations in Cambridge and Waterloo 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 and garbage collection continues as normal, however, yard waste collection has now ceased for the winter months and will resume again in late March/early April. 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.

Customer Service Hours

Building Hours (105 King St. E & Ainslie Terminal)

8:00 am – 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday

9:30 am – 5:00 pm, Weekends/Holidays

Building Hours (Ainslie Terminal)

5:15 am – 12:45 am, Monday-Friday

6:00 am – 12:45 am, Saturday

7:30 am – 1:00 am, 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](#).

Transportation

Transportation services (Region and local municipalities) have continuously provided services during the COVID pandemic and preparations continue to ensure service through Wave 2. Region and local municipalities are also discussing back up plans should anyone municipality be unable to deliver service due to COVID impacting staff. These plans are not significantly different than what happen normally when coordinating any declaration of a significant snow event, sharing of staff and resources or even maintaining roads in other municipalities.

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.

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.

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 coordinating the delivery of critical services within the Red-Control level of the Province's COVID-19 response framework
- Working with the municipal recreation group on what programs will be available over the spring and summer 2021

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.). This week the group focused on:

- Efforts are underway to build trust in vaccine safety in priority communities by understanding causes of vaccine hesitancy and providing information in a culturally appropriate way. Consultations were held with community leaders and stakeholders to inform, plan and design vaccine communication plans. These plans include translations for COVID-19 vaccine information and videos on how to pre-register, as well as diverse health care practitioners speaking to why they chose to be vaccinated.

Public Health and Corporate Communication teams continue to share important COVID-19 information with media, residents and staff through the [Region of Waterloo website](#), social media accounts and regular media briefings.

All 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