

# Coordinated COVID-19 Response Newsletter

**April 17, 2020**

The purpose of these 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/living-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](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary). This Dashboard illustrates the trends and is updated daily at 10:30 am.

The Ministry of Health continues to update and release guidance documents and directives for all sectors working in health. These changes have resulted in a broadening of the criteria for COVID-19 testing, increased guidance for long term care and retirement homes and those operating congregate living spaces such as group homes, assisted living, shelters etc. In addition, the Province has mandated Public Health to ensure that new targets for testing are achieved within each sub-area of Ontario Health West. Public Health continues to work within the Health Sector table to facilitate compliance



with the testing mandate.

**Personal Protection Equipment (PPE):** Ontario Health West has implemented a distribution process for all PPE received from the Province. A number of online tools including order forms have been created and the distribution team monitors the needs across hospitals, long term care, retirement homes and community needs such as shelters. All organizations continue to work through their normal supply chains and this process will be initiated when an urgent need is identified.

**Health Human Resources:** Our community lead from the Health Sector table, Sharon Bal has been working with a number of partners within Ontario Health West and locally to ensure there is a process in place should a local facility (LTC/RH) experience a staffing crisis.

**Work with the Business Sector:** There are connections being made with the Business Sector representatives to develop lines of communication between local businesses and public health, and to enable public health to create resources to provide businesses with relevant public health messaging for managing COVID-19 risks in the workplace.

**Enforcement and Monitoring:** Public Health Inspectors, Regional and Municipal Bylaw Officers, Regional Security and Waterloo Region Police Service are actively monitoring and responding to complaints regarding provincial and regional directions during the COVID-19 response. The goal is to obtain compliance through education. Enforcement will be taken if there is a record of education/warning or blatant non-response and ongoing non-compliance observed.


**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**

**Translated resources:** Key COVID-19 information resources and 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](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/COVID19)

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

**Central phone line for referrals:** The control group is working on designating a central phone line for all referrals for community supports for people affected by COVID-19.

**Housing and homelessness:** This week, the A.R. Kaufman YMCA in Kitchener began opening during the day (at 2 p.m.) for people who are registered to stay there.


### **Food hampers and meals:**

- In the past week, more than 1,596 hampers were distributed to 17 locations across Waterloo Region and over 9,744 meals were provided by community meal programs and shelter and residential programs.
- [Home meal delivery](#) launched this week for people during the pandemic who do not have friends or families to help them with grocery shopping and cooking.
- The [emergency pet food bank](#) launched this week for pet owners who need support during COVID-19.

**Emergency child care:** Eighty-six children are now enrolled in the emergency child care program. Work continues to expand the program to meet demand.

**Emergency foster care:** Experienced caregivers will be sought out to care for children whose parents become ill with COVID-19 and have no other safe options for care. Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent can learn more at [www.fosteringkids.ca](http://www.fosteringkids.ca).

**Religious and spiritual supports:** Celebrations may look very different this year as we practice physical distancing, but communities are finding creative ways to connect and be together- from a distance. Through a partnership with Interfaith Grand River, Wellbeing Waterloo Region and the Psychosocial and Spiritual Pandemic Working Group we have created a list of the COVID-19 adapted Religious and Spiritual services being offered in our community. <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Religious-and-Spiritual-Supports-during-COVID-19.pdf>



**Volunteer coordination – matching community needs with volunteer supports:** The Volunteer Service Working Group (VSWG) is developing a Regional intake, screening, and placement process for volunteers in the community. If your organization is expanding existing programming or developing new measures in response to the pandemic and would benefit from volunteer support, complete the Volunteer Needs Assessment survey. [Volunteer Needs Assessment - https://surveys.regionofwaterloo.ca/?e=192975&d=e&h=C7EE75015380F96&l=en](https://surveys.regionofwaterloo.ca/?e=192975&d=e&h=C7EE75015380F96&l=en)

### 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):** Weekday bus services will begin on reduced scheduling starting Monday April 20<sup>th</sup> due to reduced staffing levels and low ridership. [View schedule changes.](#)

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. 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.


**Waste Management:** Curbside yard waste collection began this week in the Cities of Cambridge and Waterloo. The City of Kitchener and the Townships will have this service commencing the week of April 20. Please refer to regular waste collection days outlined on the waste management collection calendar schedule. Resident are asked to consider whether they have the ability or capacity to store yard waste or delay set-out, wherever possible. Should our collection crews' ability to provide service be impacted by illness, yard waste collection will have to be cancelled.

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. As a result of this increase, bulky/large item collection has been postponed/cancelled. Citizens are reminded that all garbage must be placed in bags in order for it to be collected.

An ongoing reminder that both the Waterloo and Cambridge sites have been closed for residential drop-off. We continue to ask that citizens remember to respect the environment and do not dump or burn garbage or yard waste.

**Water/Wastewater:** Notice for the Naturescaping webinars running April 22<sup>nd</sup> to May 13<sup>th</sup> can be found on the Region's website and will be advertised in the local papers. Water supply operations continue to provide safe drinking water. Wastewater treatment operations and biosolids disposal continue.

**Capital/Construction projects:** All municipalities are planning to continue with as much of their capital programs as possible pending any changes or new direction. In early April, the Province of Ontario



outlined that construction of roads, watermains, sewers and other municipal services is essential to ensure that these services continue to work properly and continue to meet our community's needs. Operations and maintenance of our roadways is also critical to the ongoing daily needs of residents in Waterloo Region. In the coming days and weeks, residents will begin to see some essential construction projects resuming or starting. Residents will also see essential maintenance and operations work such as traffic signal maintenance and repair, sign replacement and installations, line painting, roadway/surface repairs, street sweeping, general debris pickup, bridge washing, safety device repairs, winter damage repairs, grass cutting, vegetation/tree/foliage maintenance, sewer/ditch maintenance and gravel shoulder maintenance. This work will be carried out with the health and wellbeing of residents and workers as a priority.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve at a fast pace, we will continue to evaluate and re-assess our approach with the safety of residents and workers as a priority. Communications have been developed and will be promoted in order to keep the public informed. Please visit the Region of Waterloo's [website](#) for further information.

#### **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:

- Extending all recreation facility closures and cancelling all spring programming up to and including June 30, 2020 to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to provide more certainty to program organizers and program registrants.
- Enhancing communications about the use of parks and trails to support physical distancing and closing parking lots of “hot spot” locations where large numbers of people continue to congregate.
- 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.



## 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:

- COVID-19 health updates.
- Developing common language, consistent messaging and signage related to construction and other capital projects across the Region.
- Internal communication challenges, including remote working.
- Collecting communication analytics related to social media, website content and media.

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 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. We are committed to this information cycle to ensure transparency and manage frequent media requests.
- COVID-19 content on the Region's website continues to grow quickly. This includes health content and non-health content (e.g. [enforcement](#), [community newsletter](#), [facility closures](#), etc.)
- COVID-19 pages on the Region's website have had more than 1.3M page views over the last month.
- Sharing COVID-19 messages through our Public Health and Region of Waterloo social media channels.

### **Who to contact if you have questions or need additional information**

Please email [publichealth@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto: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.



## 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/>

### **Emergency Pet Food Bank in both Waterloo Region and Perth County**

An Emergency Pet Food Bank for Waterloo Region has been established through the partnership of the Humane Society Kitchener Waterloo & Stratford Perth, KW Pet Food Bank and the Cambridge & District Humane Society. The temporary Emergency Pet Food Bank will be located at 55 Franklin Street South in Kitchener. Anyone who is looking for assistance with food and supplies for their pets are encouraged to call our dedicated number at 226-220-7885 and place an order. Donations of pet food (cat, dog and small animal) and cat litter are also needed. [kwsphumane.ca](https://kwsphumane.ca).

### **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 the link below:

<https://211ontario.ca/contact-211-with-service-updates/>

### **Business and Economic Support Team Waterloo Region (BESTWR)**

The Region of Waterloo, all seven area municipalities, Waterloo EDC (Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation) the Greater K-W Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, Communitech, and local partners have created the Business and Economic Support Team of Waterloo Region (BESTWR) to help all types of local businesses cope with challenges caused by COVID-19.

<https://www.waterloedc.ca/modules/news/index.aspx?newsId=76f6df9b-1c54-483f-876c-7bb16b93de56#>

### **Region of Waterloo Arts Fund continues to support local arts sector**

During this unprecedented time, when stress on artists and arts organizations is at an all-time high, the Region of Waterloo Arts Fund is finding new ways to support our Region's arts sector. The Arts Fund is committed to supporting the arts throughout this troubled time. Application guidelines have been revised and deadlines for project completion are extended. Details can be found on the Arts Fund website: [artsfund.ca](https://artsfund.ca) or [info@artsfund.ca](mailto:info@artsfund.ca).



## 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](mailto:helpusmakehistory@regionofwaterloo.ca) with the subject line "Writing COVID-19 History".

## Immigration and COVID-19

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](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/COVID19).

## 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 see how you can take part visit <https://bit.ly/2JLvRBI>

## Important Websites

### COVID-19 Information Center

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



### 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](http://regionofwaterloo.ca/2019NovelCoronavirus)

- COVID-19 Dashboard: [www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary](http://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary)
- Long-term care homes dashboard - [www.regionofwaterloo.ca/COVID19summary](http://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](http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx)
- Ontario Ministry of Health webpage: [covid-19.ontario.ca](http://covid-19.ontario.ca)
- Public Health Agency of Canada webpage: [canada.ca/coronavirus](http://canada.ca/coronavirus)

### Emergency Information: Alerts and information

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/emergency-information>





## Emergency Child Care

Check to see if you are on the Ministry of Education's [list of eligible workers](#) and [apply for emergency child care online](#). For more information call 519-514-1474 or email [ECC@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:ECC@regionofwaterloo.ca). To learn more please see the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Emergency Child Care](#).

## Support to Vulnerable Communities - Community Support Control Group

Work to support the health and safety of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19.  
<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/covid-19-community-supports-for-the-vulnerable.aspx#>

## Food Assistance Network Map

The Food Bank of Waterloo Region has created an [online resource map](#) which shows where all emergency food hamper programs are operating.

## 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#>



## 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 of Waterloo Region, 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.