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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 17, 2020**

**Additional Public Health measures to prevent the spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the region**

In light of the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation and in line with updated recommendations from the Government of Canada and the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, Region of Waterloo Public Health's Acting Medical Officer of Health Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang is recommending further measures to those shared on March 15, 2020 in order to prevent the spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the region.

**New recommendations – March 17, 2020:**

I am now asking Region of Waterloo residents to **avoid large gatherings of over 50 people.**

- This includes indoor and outdoor sporting events, conferences, meetings, religious or social gatherings, festivals, markets or other similar events.

In addition, I am specifically requesting the **closure of the following settings** as soon as possible:

- **All recreational programs**
- **All private schools**
- **All daycares**
- **All churches and other faith settings**
- **All bars and restaurants, with the exception of restaurants that can shift to takeout/delivery mechanisms**

I know these new measures will be difficult. However, they will further help to slow the spread of the virus, and further reduce cases of serious illness and death. Everyone in Waterloo Region can help to protect our most vulnerable.

**If you start to feel symptoms that are compatible with COVID-19:**

- Anyone who begins to feel unwell (fever, new cough or difficulty breathing) should return home and **self-isolate** immediately.
- People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone - either through TeleHealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000) or by calling their primary care provider's office.
- If you need additional assessment, your primary care provider or TeleHealth will direct you to in-person care options.
- If you are in medical distress and need urgent care, you should call 911.

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## Continuing recommendations (first issued March 15, 2020):

### Social distancing recommendations:

- In addition to practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, practice social distancing as much as possible.
  - Social distancing means maintaining distance from others (two arms' length or 2 meters).
- Organizations should look for ways to take advantage of virtual options to continue providing services.

### Travel recommendations:

- Waterloo Region residents postpone all non-essential travel outside of Canada, including to the United States.
- The Government of Canada has issued a broad recommendation that all travelers returning from destinations outside of Canada [self-isolate for 14 days](#).
  - <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notice/221>
  - For certain groups, such as health care workers, different recommendations may apply.
- Returning visitors from Hubei Province (China), Iran and Italy should also reach out to their local Public Health unit within 24 hours of return.
- Returning travelers to Waterloo Region should also refrain from:
  - Visiting patients in hospital
  - Visiting long-term care homes or retirement homes
  - Visiting the elderly or those with chronic health conditions

### Long-term care, retirement homes recommendations:

- Long-term care homes, retirement homes, supportive housing and hospices should allow only essential visitors into their facilities until further notice.
  - The Ministry is identifying essential visitors as those who have a resident who is dying or very ill or a parent/guardian of an ill child or youth in a live-in treatment setting.
  - These visitors must continue to be actively screened into these settings.

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