

Information Report

Service Area	Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
Date	Friday, September 25, 2020
Subject	Vital Focus Series: Secondary Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This information report serves to make Council aware of a new series of Vital Focus reports that explore the secondary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Guelph and Wellington. The series is led by Toward Common Ground, with key contributions from partners including the City, County of Wellington, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health and the Guelph Community Foundation.

The Vital Focus series provides national and local data as well as recommendations for local community organizations, institutions and all orders of government on how to mitigate and address the secondary impacts of the pandemic over the longer-term.

Key Findings

The Guelph, Wellington and Dufferin communities have met the COVID-19 pandemic with resilience, agility and resourcefulness. By and large, the community have heeded the science, evidence-based decisions and policies put out by our public health and local government officials. And the results have been good.

The effects of the pandemic aren't limited to those who are infected with COVID-19 and their families. Toward Common Ground (a list of social and health system partners can be found [here](#)) with critical contributions from key partners, including the City, County of Wellington, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health and the Guelph Community Foundation, has created [Vital Focus series](#) of briefs that will build awareness of the secondary impacts of the pandemic using evidence-based analysis and provides recommendations to help mitigate those effects. It can also serve as a baseline for the partners to track progress in the community over time.

This series follows the best practices of other communities who have begun to explore community data in efforts to encourage dialogue, collaboration and evidenced-based decision making among governments, as well as other organizations and agencies, to better manage the secondary impacts of the pandemic and safeguard community wellbeing in the longer-term. In addition, as the group continues to consult and collaborate, the whole community has an opportunity to learn more about this virus and its effects.

Our significant partnership in this work gives us an opportunity to strengthen data-sharing relationships and increases the City's capacity to leverage local data resources, which will support the implementation of the Community Plan and the City's Strategic Plan.

The first briefs in the Vital Focus series are being released the week of September 21st with subsequent briefs released over the following months.

Financial Implications

The Vital Focus series is a collaborative project with multiple partners each contributing staff resources in a highly efficient and effective shared approach. The City's contribution to the research is being supported through existing staff resources.

Report

Details

Purpose of the Vital Focus series

- To raise awareness about the secondary impacts of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of communities and increase dialogue among governments, service providers and policy makers.
- To provide leaders, decision makers and elected officials with:
 - Information and data about secondary pandemic effects to inform their decisions and actions related to programs, services, system planning, resource allocation, funding and guidance in the context of safely managing the COVID-19 pandemic through the recovery phase.
 - Actionable high-level recommendations to address key secondary effects related to the pandemic.

What are secondary impacts?

In addition to direct health impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic has wide-reaching effects on work, family, and social lives, and we all experience and cope with it in different ways. Secondary impacts refer to changes in individuals and communities related to living through a pandemic and the measures that are being taken to control it.

While the COVID-19 pandemic touches all of us, some groups of people are more likely to experience negative secondary impacts:

- Individuals with low-incomes or precarious work
- Homeless or precariously housed individuals
- Individuals living with or having a history of physical or mental illness
- Families with children
- People who contract COVID-19 and their families
- Individuals who lack access to social support networks
- Black, Indigenous and People of Colour communities
- Health care workers
- Other essential workers
- People with disabilities
- Older adults

The secondary impacts are explored by looking at specific issues within our community in short online publications. These publications include a description of each topic area, local data and trends (as available), and recommendations on how to address the issue locally. The publications will be released over several months.

The first topic areas for release cover:

- Food insecurity
- Alcohol and substance use

The Vital Focus reports can be accessed on [Toward Common Ground's website](#).

These topics will be followed by:

- Mental health
- Families with children
- Employment

Further topics that are scheduled to be explored include:

- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- Built environment

The topic areas covered in the series are broad and no single organization has the ability or purview to address all the recommendations. As a municipality we may have a limited role in directly addressing some topics more than others however providing partnership support to the project, aligning our community response efforts and leveraging our data and intergovernmental resources are important roles.

There will be some topic areas that apply more directly to the City, for example topic areas of Employment and the Built Environment. This is a valuable opportunity to respond and increase alignment with our strategic plans and intergovernmental advocacy efforts.

Opportunities for the City – Links to the Community Plan and City's Strategic Plan

1. Data sharing

The Vital Focus Series presents several opportunities for our organization to work more closely with our partners to further our goals for better data sharing practices and to increase our analytical capacity as a community and organization. This is one of the key goals of the Toward Common Ground partnership that the City is part of and is a partnership looking to expand and elevate its role in this area.

2. Community Plan

Before COVID-19, the Community Plan work was focused on developing community measures and targets alongside community partners that would help track our collective progress toward the goals of the Community Plan. Undeniably, COVID-19 effects will influence what the community needs to monitor moving forward.

Through the Community Plan and the City's partnership with Toward Common Ground, it is the intention to explore how we can develop/align monitoring systems that reflect the longer-term impacts of the pandemic, the community's response to it, and the overall wellbeing of the community.

3. Community advocacy

The Community Plan framework acts as a platform for multi-organizational advocacy. The Intergovernmental Services team are preparing a strategy for Guelph Days in 2021, and the Vital Focus series will be leveraged to support the community advocacy agenda to ensure it is highly relevant to current needs and will resonate with other levels of government.

4. Data to support decision making

The Vital Focus series also presents the opportunity for staff as they implement the City's Strategic Plan to learn more about the secondary impacts of the pandemic. This information can support improved service and policy planning and delivery in all the five priority areas. Similarly, other Toward Common Ground partner organizations will be using this data to inform upcoming community strategic planning initiatives.

As part of the organization's new Data Strategy, the Strategy, Innovation and Intergovernmental team are supporting the development of a new community of practice for data practitioners that will showcase community and staff data expertise/projects and facilitate skill building and networking. The first session is planned for this fall and will include a presentation of the Vital Focus reports for staff data practitioners.

Timeline for release

The first two Vital Focus reports are being launched by Toward Common Ground and the Guelph Community Foundation during the week of September 21st.

Subsequent Vital Focus briefs will be released over the coming months. A social media campaign will accompany the releases with recommendations and resources for the public.

The pandemic continues to reveal new data and information regarding the secondary effects and although the Vital Focus series will not be continually updated to reflect this new data, the new information will be incorporated into advocacy efforts and in any monitoring systems that are developed.

Financial Implications

The Vital Focus series is a collaborative project with multiple partners each contributing staff resources in a highly efficient and effective shared approach. The City's contribution to the research is being supported through existing staff resources.

Consultations

The Secondary Pandemic Impacts Working Group is made up of organizations that are committed to raising awareness about the secondary effects of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of communities, increasing dialogue, and providing leaders, decision makers, and elected officials with information to support their decision making.

The organizations involved in developing the series include:

- Toward Common Ground (a local partnership of 13 local organizations)
- City of Guelph

- County of Wellington
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
- Guelph Community Foundation
- Guelph and Area Ontario Health Team

Further stakeholder engagement and consultation with relevant community partners has been and will continue to be conducted based on the different topics being addressed.

Staff who have been consulted on the Vital Focus series include:

- Executive Team
- Dave Elloway, Community Emergency Management Coordinator
- Danna Evans, General Manager, Culture and Recreation
- Alex Goss, Manager, Community Investment
- Krista Walkey, General Manager, Planning and Building Services
- John Regan, General Manager, Economic Development and Tourism
- Christine Chapman, Manager, Economic Development
- Tyson McMann, Business Development Analyst
- Leslie Muñoz, Manager, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations
- Leanne Warren, Accessibility Project Specialist

Strategic Plan Alignment

The data, findings and recommendations from the Vital Focus series align directly across all five Strategic Plan priorities. For example, employment data will help businesses to succeed and add value to the community. Data and findings related to people with disabilities, older adults and populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic will help design services, meet transportation needs, improve how we communicate and foster our collective resilience for everyone who lives here.

Understanding the effects of the pandemic on the people in our community helps us understand their most urgent needs and how best to serve them as we continue to work together to respond and recover from COVID-19. The strengthening of partnerships through Toward Common Ground and further stakeholder engagement will make Guelph a more resilient community that is better able to respond to future crises.

Attachments

None.

Departmental Approval

N/A

Report Author

Jennifer Smith, Manager, Corporate & Community Strategic Initiatives
Stewart McDonough, Community Plan Activator

This report was approved by:

Jodie Sales

General Manager, Strategy, Innovation and Intergovernmental Services
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
519 822 1260 extension 3617

jodie.sales@guelph.ca

This report was recommended by:

Scott Stewart

Chief Administrative Officer
Office of the Chief Administrative Officer
519 822 1260 extension 2221

scott.stewart@guelph.ca