

## Long-term care homes now the frontline of COVID-19 fight: Premier

Long term care homes are now at the ?frontline? of Ontario's COVID-19 fight, according to Premier Doug Ford.

Mr. Ford spoke to significant virus outbreaks at nearly 100 long-term care homes across the Province, including Chartwell Aurora (formerly Resthaven), in a press conference on Tuesday afternoon, where he also confirmed students would not be returning to classrooms on May 4 as previously announced.

?We're in the fight of our lives right now and the enemy is ruthless,? said Mr. Ford. ?It preys on our seniors and the most vulnerable and the reality is despite our best efforts, we're dealing with a wildfire at our long-term care homes right now. This is extremely difficult on people and families. Families are separated from their loved ones right now and people are dying. My heart breaks for those who have lost their loved ones at long-term care homes.

?The sad truth is our long-term care homes are quickly turning into the frontline in the fight against this virus. My top priority right now is getting the troops and resources needed at this front. We're going through everything we have at our long-term care homes and tomorrow (Wednesday, April 15) we will launch an enhanced action plan to fight COVID-19 in long-term care homes.?

The plan, he said, will include more support and more resources where they are needed the most. Ontario needs to deploy ?every available resource? to long-term care homes, including working with hospitals to address capacity.

?Thanks to our collective efforts, we have not seen the surge in our hospitals that we were so worried about,? he said. ?As a result, we have capacity within our health sector and I want available resources from our health system to be redeployed to those homes where there is a serious outbreak. We need to get hospital-based teams to help long-term care staff manage these outbreaks and I want to see specialized teams deployed into long-term care homes when there is a serious outbreak.?

The Province, he added, would be issuing a new emergency order ensuring every employee in long-term care homes will only be able to work in one residence.

On Friday, York Region Public Health added Chartwell Aurora to the list of long-term care homes experiencing an outbreak of COVID-19.

Additional outbreaks have also been reported at Bethany Lodge, Eagle Terrace Long Term Care Home, Kristus Darzs Latvian Home, MacKenzie Place Long Term Care, Markhaven Home for Seniors, Southlake Residential Care Village, Sunrise of Unionville ? Transitional Care Unit, Villa Colombo Vaughan, Villa

Leonardo Gambin, and Yee Hong Ho Lai Oi Wan Centre.

By Tuesday afternoon, as the Ontario Legislature met to extend the Province's State of Emergency for a further 28 days, the number of Aurora cases of COVID-19 continued to rise.

At press time, York Region Public Health reported a total of 36 confirmed cases among Aurora residents.

Of these 36 cases, 30 are active, five are reported as resolved, with one fatality. One case involves a healthcare worker.

On the education front, Premier Ford confirmed that despite an announcement made nearly two weeks ago, students across Ontario would not return to classrooms on May 4 as planned.

?Students will not be going back on May 4,? he said.

?That does not mean the year is cancelled.?

More details on continued school closures would be announced by the Ministry of Education ?in the next couple of days,? he concluded.

**By Brock Weir**