

## 98-year-old woman is 18th Auroran lost to COVID-19

A 98-year-old resident of Chartwell Park Place is Aurora's 18th fatality due to COVID-19, the Region of York reported Friday.

The woman died at Southlake Regional Health Centre on Wednesday, December 9, after receiving positive test results on Sunday, November 29. She experienced her first symptoms the previous day.

An additional outbreak of COVID-19 was declared by the Region on Monday, this time at Chartwell Hollandview Trail. At press time, one positive case amongst the caregiver complement of 75 has been found. There were zero cases of the virus amongst the 109 residents.

A previously declared outbreak at St. Andrew's College is now deemed closed by the Region while three schools remain under surveillance for COVID-19: Lester B. Person Public School, Northern Lights Public School and Wellington Public School.

Schools under surveillance are those with a laboratory-confirmed case among staff, students and visitors where there is currently no evidence of transmission within the schools.

Since the start of the pandemic, Aurora has seen 438 confirmed cases of COVID-19. 30 cases remained active at press time and there have been 390 recoveries. 18 cases have proved fatal.

Of the 30 active cases, 25 are attributed to local transmission and close contact, 4 to institutional outbreak, and 1 to workplace cluster.

While Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health, said that many residents are likely disappointed about the Region joining Toronto and Peel in lockdown this week, there was, he said, a light at the end of the tunnel.

"We are very pleased the COVID-19 vaccine is now in Canada and the Ministry has prioritized certain groups to receive the COVID-19 vaccine," he said. "We can expect the residents and workers at congregate living centres and healthcare workers to be receiving the vaccine in short order. There will be other groups that will be receiving vaccines soon and eventually everyone will be able to access the vaccine.

"However, the timeframe for that will probably be a few months still."

In the meantime, targeted school-based testing continues.

"This is a voluntary program for four weeks," said Dr. Kurji. "It is available to staff, students and their families in those selected schools of which there are about 30. Schools have been selected because they may have had cases of COVID-19, they may have had outbreaks, or they are in areas of high positivity for COVID-19. In some cases, they have been selected because accessibility to testing is difficult and, in some cases, we selected schools as controls. [We have] already screened some 1,500 students and so far the positivity rate has been very low at 1.1 per cent. The testing is actually being conducted by Ontario Health with whom we have a good partnership.

"We are at a time when you may be thinking of having gatherings. Please do not have any gatherings that involve anyone outside your immediate household and resist the temptation of joining other gatherings. Not is this illegal now, but it is important for us to avoid any surges in COVID-19 and none of us really want any more cases of COVID-19. We want to keep all of our vulnerable people safe and we want to safeguard the healthcare capacities in the Region."

By Brock Weir  
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