

Aurora grappling with more than 100 active cases of COVID-19

In the first wave of COVID-19, Aurora rarely had more than 20 active cases of COVID-19 at any one time. Now, there are more than 100 active cases of the virus, most of which have been acquired within the community.

By Tuesday, January 12, Aurora was grappling with 104 active cases of COVID-19.

Since the start of the pandemic, there have been a total of 718 confirmed cases of the virus within the community, 23 of which have proved fatal. 591 cases are now marked as recovered.

The twenty-third Aurora resident to lose the fight against COVID-19 was a 90-year-old female resident of Willows Estate, a long-term care home in Aurora's south end, one of two active long-term care outbreaks in the community.

She lost her fight at the residence on January 11 after receiving positive test results and the onset of symptoms on January 4.

The twenty-second resident, this time a 91-year-old female resident of Kingsway Place Retirement Residence, lost her fight at Southlake on January 6 after receiving positive test results on December 16.

Willows Estate was issued an order under the Province's Health Protection & Promotion Act on Thursday. The order instructs Willows Estate, which has been in outbreak mode since Christmas Eve, to take a series of actions to ensure the health and safety of their residents and staff, said Patrick Casey, Director of Communications for the Regional Municipality of York.

The order, issued by Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Medical Officer of Health, states that York Region Public Health has received information and conducted inspections evidencing that the residence has inadequate staffing levels to meet the needs of residents; has inadequate senior leadership (supervisory staffing) presence on the institution's units, at all times, to ensure appropriate adherence to IPAC (Infection Prevention and Control) measures; and has inadequate and/or insufficient IPAC knowledge and processes to protect resident needs and requires assistance from York Region Public Health, Southlake Regional Health Centre, Public Health Ontario, and the Local Health Integration Network to provide IPAC expertise to the institution to help contain the stop of COVID-19 outbreak at the institution.

According to Patrick McCarthy, President & CEO of OMNI Health Care, which operates Willows Estate, the residence will work closely with the Region, Southlake, and the Ministry of Long-Term Care to support staff and residents.

The situation evolved rapidly over several days, as test results were received by the home, said Mr. McCarthy. In addition to the increase in residents affected, several key staff from the leadership and nursing team were quarantined and unavailable. OMNI mobilized its response team with our Director of Operations on site to assume leadership. As well we have brought in management and nursing staff on site from other OMNI homes as support, and recruiting additional staff and agency contract staff to supplement our existing staffing during the outbreak.

We continue to work closely with York Region Public Health, Southlake Regional Health Centre, Ministry of Long-Term Care and Ontario Health and have arranged a site visit this week with federally sponsored Canadian Red Cross for IPAC and possible ongoing staffing supports.

At press time this week, 32 of Aurora's 104 active cases of COVID-19 were related to institutional outbreak.

71 active cases are attributed to local transmission or close contact, with 94 new cases in this category reported to York Region Public Health in one week alone.

1 active case is attributed to workplace cluster and there are zero travel-related cases.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter