

Residents and staff of York Region's LTC to be vaccinated by January 21

The Region of York has begun the roll-out of Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine to area long-term care homes and all residents and staff of area facilities will be vaccinated by January 21, according to the Province.

The Ontario Government announced Tuesday that all residents, healthcare workers and essential caregivers at long-term care homes in York, Peel, Toronto and Windsor-Essex will receive the vaccine by this date.

"Ontario continues to make important progress in quickly and safely vaccinating our frontline health care workers, our most vulnerable and those at greatest risk, and we continue to administer doses to thousands of Ontarians across the province," said Health Minister and Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott. "Our Vaccination Distribution Task Force, led by General Rick Hillier, has put a plan in place to get these doses distributed and administered as quickly as possible and that plan is working."

Two residents of Aurora's Kingsway Place Retirement residents have now lost their battle with COVID-19. Just before the start of the weekend, an 89-year-old female resident, became the Town's 20th fatality attributed to the virus after first testing positive on December 24 and experiencing symptoms on December 27.

She lost her fight at Southlake Regional Health Centre on December 31.

A further resident of Kingsway Place lost to COVID was announced January 5, this time an 88-year-old woman who died January 3 at Southlake. She experienced her first symptoms on Christmas Eve and tested positive the same day.

Last week, a 56-year-old Aurora man became the Town's 19th fatality, having acquired the virus through close contact. He first tested positive on December 3 and experienced the first symptoms the following day. His battle was lost at Southlake on Monday, December 28.

By Tuesday, January 5, Aurora had seen a total of 614 cases of COVID-19, 86 of which remain active. Of the active cases, 63 are attributed to close contact and local transmission, 22 to institutional outbreak and 1 to workplace cluster. There have been 507 recoveries.

At press time this week, the community was grappling with two outbreaks, both in long-term care and seniors' residences. Willow Estates in Aurora's south end has seen 2 active cases amongst its complement of 90 caregivers and 1 case amongst its 72 residents. Kingsway Place on Murray Drive has seen 8 cases amongst its 50 caregivers and 8 within its residential population of 82.

"Vaccines are being dispatched on a priority basis and taking into account resources and readiness, ultimately making their way to all long-term care facilities," said Dr. Fareen Karachiwalla, York Region's Associate Medical Officer of Health. "Healthcare workers and residents of long-term care homes are appropriately prioritized to be the first people to receive the vaccine. Residents of retirement homes and other congregate care settings for seniors will be included in the next phases of the Provincial plan. We're optimistic that the rollout of the Provincial immunization program will make great strides in protecting and saving the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents. As more vaccines become available, public health is ready with plans to distribute the vaccine using different delivery models and partnering with local physicians and pharmacists and other immunizers. The idea is that eventually every resident in York Region who wishes to receive a vaccine will be offered the opportunity."

"Vaccination is a cornerstone of public health and historically has been one of the most effective ways of reducing the death and disability caused by disease. Immunization is one of the safest ways to protect you and your family. COVID-19 vaccines will serve as an important tool in helping to stop the spread of the virus and allow people and families the chance to safely return to a normal life. The COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary, but highly encouraged for those who are eligible. Not only for your own protection, but for the safety and wellbeing of others, as well as the protection of our healthcare system at large and society."

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