

Updated: 30 cases of COVID-19 confirmed at Chartwell Aurora

The Region of York is reporting 30 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among residents at Chartwell Aurora (formerly Resthaven).

Four health care workers at the residence have also tested positive for COVID-19, according to data released Saturday afternoon.

Three residents have died as a result of the virus.

COVID-19 has claimed the lives of four Aurora residents as of April 25.

The situation at Chartwell Aurora comes as the Province brings forward new measures to protect vulnerable residents in long-term care homes and other residential settings across the Province.

On Friday, the Province announced additional measures to protect Ontario's most vulnerable citizens and ensure frontline service can continue to be delivered in priority areas.

New protocols include restricting retirement home employees from working in more than one retirement home, long-term care home or health care setting, with compliance required by April 22; providing Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) with the ability to direct home care service provider organizations to safely re-assign frontline staff to areas where they are most needed, including home and community care settings, long-term care homes, supportive housing, retirement homes and hospitals; and providing municipalities with flexibility to offer reassignments to certain staff to where there is local need during this outbreak, including childcare, bylaw enforcement and public health services.

"Every day, incredible sacrifices are being made by frontline workers in every region of the province to care for our most vulnerable citizens," said Premier Doug Ford. "In order to better protect our seniors, people with various abilities, and the homeless population, along with our heroic frontline workers, our government is adopting emergency measures to provide flexibility in a variety of staffing arrangements to help stop the spread of this terrible virus."

In addition to the three key measures, additional steps are being taken to ensure there are enough paramedics and emergency medical attendants on call by allowing the flexibility to hire and assign college students who have not yet graduated or completed exams to provide some services appropriate to their competence level and scope of practice.

"We continue to take decisive action to contain the virus and support our heroic frontline workers during this challenging time," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. "Expanding the capacity of our health care workforce will support their incredible efforts to provide patients with the care they need."

At the start of the week, Dr. Karim Kurji, York Region's Chief Medical Officer of Health, addressed the outbreaks in long-term care homes, as well as the growing number of outbreaks in community care settings.

?We have been redirecting our resources to managing these group home outbreaks,? he said. ?The group homes do not have the same culture of infection prevention and control that long-term care and retirement homes have. So, we have actually been asking them to screen their visitors and staff at entry and we have been asking them to monitor their residents twice daily. We have also been asking them for their staff to be wearing masks at all times.?

At the same time, Dr. Kurji reiterated his emphasis on testing, urging anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms, such as sore throats, runny noses, headaches, weakness, myalgia, fever, cough, and respiratory symptoms, get testing at local assessment centres, including Southlake Regional Health Centre.

?Our hospital partners have the capacity to test,? he said. ?So, I would urge anyone with COVID-19-like symptoms? please, please ensure that you self-isolate, ensure that your close contacts are self-isolated and then seek out the assessment centres in our Region.

It is important that you know the diagnosis of COVID-19 as well because, unfortunately, some of our clients tend to deteriorate rather fast and it is important to call 911 if your medical condition deteriorates. Almost half of the deaths we are seeing are happening within the community, many of whom haven't even been to hospital.?

By Brock Weir