

Dufferin Oaks taking a 'long-term approach' in addressing ongoing COVID-19 pandemic

Written By JAMES MATTHEWS

Dufferin Oaks staff and residents are undergoing arduous COVID-19 testing at the county-run facility.

Brenda Wagner, the administrator at Dufferin Oaks in Shelburne, told Dufferin County Council last Thursday (April 16) that a proactive approach has been taken against the virus that's caused a worldwide pandemic.

COVID-19 cases started to emerge in North America by the end of January. Many seniors' facilities began then to screen existing and new residents for symptoms of the virus.

Staff and visitors to Dufferin Oaks were also screened, visiting hours eventually were reduced, and pandemic planning was undertaken.

Administration was informed March 30 that two Dufferin Oaks residents had been in contact with a COVID-19 positive healthcare worker at hospital in Orangeville. The Dufferin Oaks residents had received care at Headwaters Health Care Centre.

'Both residents at that time were placed on precautionary measures and were tested for COVID-19,' Ms. Wagner said.

'We were later informed that day a staff member at Dufferin Oaks had tested positive for COVID-19. This was after experiencing very mild symptoms. At that point, with that one positive case, a COVID outbreak was declared at Dufferin Oaks.'

Staff started wearing surgical masks at the facility the following day.

Most recently, all residents have started to be tested for the virus multiple times.

Five staff members and four residents have tested positive for the novel coronavirus, said Wagner. As many as 105 residents have been tested and there are about 50 left to be tested.

One resident has died of COVID-19, she said.

'Our heartfelt sympathy to the family during this difficult time,' she said.

All recommendations and directives from public health officials have been implemented at Dufferin Oaks.

'Our staff continue to work tirelessly to ensure the safety of our residents,' Ms. Wagner said. 'We will continue to provide the level of care to our residents throughout this pandemic that we have been entrusted to provide for almost 60 years.'

Councillor Sandy Brown, Orangeville's mayor, asked about the rigorousness of testing at the facility.

'Just the one test isn't enough,' he said. 'You're going to have to continually test, are you not?'

Ms. Wagner said staff members and some residents have indeed been tested multiple times.

'This is a long-term approach,' she said.