

Headwaters Health Care Centre faces record number of patient transfers

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With the COVID pandemic becoming increasingly dire in Ontario and the provincial government enforcing stricter protocols, Headwaters Health Care Centre President and CEO Kim Delahunt released a statement regarding the impact it is having on the hospital.

"Almost a year ago to the day, we asked staff and physicians to work in long-term care in our region," said Delahunt. "Many stepped up, and we were extremely grateful. There is no doubt their involvement helped abate that outbreak and save lives. This time, the request is to support the teams in our own hospital to help work in different capacities as part of the provincial COVID pandemic response.

"We are grateful to have staff and physicians, some of whom are from our community, step up to support these efforts in what has been over a year of professional and personal challenge."

As more hospitals in the province are in need of healthcare workers, and with the military being deployed in Ontario with the worsening third wave of COVID-19 on the heels of the highest positivity rate of the pandemic, Delahunt says Headwaters will be assisting in any way it can.

"We have been called upon to do more to support the COVID burden on hospitals experiencing high demand that is exceeding acute care capacity caused by new COVID cases. The situation has become dire," she said. "Some hospitals have run out of space and are treating patients in waiting rooms, meeting spaces and cafeterias. We are fortunate not to be experiencing this at Headwaters, but the possibility does exist.

"We understand physicians are working in redeployed nurse extender roles, where appropriate, to support their local hospital as well. There is no doubt, these are very difficult and challenging times. These requests of hospital staff are occurring across all hospitals in Ontario. We know that locally our team at Headwaters will continue to do whatever we can to support our local patients and our broader Ontario health care system."

As of April 27, over 100 people have passed away with COVID-19 in the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health region and cases since the start of the pandemic are approaching 1,500, with 150 still active and 27 in hospital

Headwaters has felt the effects of the third wave with a record number of patient transfers as hospitals deal with capacity issues.

"This week we accepted five of an expected seven COVID recovering patients from other hospitals," she said. "This is the highest transfer of patients we've received yet. We opened more beds this week in traditional care spaces to accommodate this need, which is in addition to opening 13 extra beds earlier on in the pandemic. Non-clinical departments are also doing more to support these pressures, including our food services and environmental services teams.

"We have created capacity in our hospital in the event we need to accept an even higher number of patients. We are following provincial direction to stop elective or non-urgent surgeries to release space and the people within our hospital to manage a surge in the system. It's some of those staff who are now working in new roles, to support our current challenges.

"Locally, we are seeing an increase in the number of admitted COVID-19 patients. As of today, we have eight COVID-19 positive patients, with two needing care in our Intensive Care Unit. We have transferred out patients who required a higher level of critical care. The situation is becoming much more serious across Ontario."

With variants spreading faster and more aggressively, Headwaters is seeing some of its highest daily testing numbers and is doing the most they can given the circumstances of the situation.

“Our COVID-19 Assessment Centre, which is open seven days a week from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. is now seeing over 330 people a day,” she said. “Dufferin County paramedics have increased their staffing and are also supporting provincial patient transfers. We acknowledge that fatigue is prevalent within our hospital and in the community. We need to rally together and support each other through some challenging days in the near future. We will continue to draw upon our values of courage, kindness, passion, and teamwork to ensure that we are one community, caring together and meeting the needs of those who need us.

“We are planning and working together, thoughtfully, and with the collaboration that we all know is a hallmark in Dufferin County-Caledon. Please know, our emergency department is open 24/7. Emergency and urgent surgeries such as cancer care will continue. We are also continuing our dialysis, chemotherapy, and transfusion services. If you require our services and care, we are here for you.”

Delahunt encourages people who are able to get the vaccine to book an appointment as soon as possible and everybody in the community to stay diligent following protocols put in place to keep the spread of the virus at a minimum.

“We will continue to do our part to keep our community safe and I hope you will do yours. Please register to get vaccinated when you do qualify. More and more opportunities are available at vaccination clinics locally as well as in pharmacies. Continue to follow public health guidelines, even after you are vaccinated. Take appropriate precautions and get tested if you experience any symptoms of COVID-19. Please continue to stay safe, take care of one another and know that Headwaters is here for you if you need us.”

To book an appointment at Headwaters COVID-19 Assessment Centre visit
[www.headwatershealth.ca/Resources/Coronavirus-\(COVID-19\)/COVID-19-Assessment-Centre](http://www.headwatershealth.ca/Resources/Coronavirus-(COVID-19)/COVID-19-Assessment-Centre).