

Staff members at Dufferin Oaks contract COVID-19, County declares emergency

Written By MIKE BAKER

A pair of staff members from Dufferin Oaks long-term care home in Shelburne have tested positive for COVID-19.

News first broke on Monday (March 30) that a member of staff had contracted the virus, with a second staff member diagnosed on Tuesday. The County of Dufferin, who operates the care home, informed media that both staff members are currently isolating at home, and have not been on site since first exhibiting symptoms.

This comes just days after the County implemented new protocols at the local care home, directing staff who felt unwell in any way not to report to work.

As of press time, no resident at Dufferin Oaks has shown signs of being affected by the outbreak. As a proactive measure, the units the two members have recently worked in have been closed and all residents are self-isolating in their rooms.

“Dufferin Oaks is continuing to work closely with Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health to identify any staff that may have been in close contact with (these) staff members,” said Michelle Dunne, Deputy Clerk for the County. “Currently, none of our residents have presented with symptoms and staff are continuing to monitor them.”

Ms. Dunne went on to note that Dufferin Oaks is following the guidance of public health, implementing several measures to ensure the health and safety of both staff and residents. All staff members are wearing surgical masks throughout the day, and making use of additional personal protective equipment as recommended by public health, while staff and residents are regularly having their temperature taken to help identify any possible early COVID-19 symptoms.

“Families of residents are being contacted to let them know of these new measures, and to provide support and answer questions,” Ms. Dunne said. “The safety and well-being of our residents and staff are of the utmost importance.”

Extra precautions are being taken following news of a devastating outbreak at a long-term care facility in Bobcaygeon, Ont. A total of 13 people have died following the outbreak at Pinecrest Nursing Home – 12 residents, and the 82-year-old wife of an infected resident. A respiratory outbreak was declared at the facility on March 18 and has escalated in the weeks since. In total, 24 staff members at the facility have tested positive for COVID-19, with a further three elderly residents also testing positive. Testing has not been conducted on another 35 residents experiencing symptoms, but they are being treated as if they have the virus.

In other news, the County followed several municipalities within its jurisdiction last Thursday (March 26) in declaring an emergency in accordance with the provincial Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.

Under the Act, an emergency is defined as a situation, or an impending situation, that constitutes a danger of major proportions that could result in serious harm to persons, or substantial damage of property and that is caused by the forces of nature, a disease or other health risk.

“Due to the rapidly changing conditions, it has become necessary to declare an emergency so that we may be able to address resident needs in a more timely manner,” said County Warden Darren White.

The emergency declaration does not change the rules and regulations that exist to ensure the County operates effectively. The regional municipality continues to provide essential services to the community, including operating long-term care homes, providing income and community housing supports, carrying out waste and recycling pick-up, keeping up with general maintenance of County roads and processing building permit applications and inspections.

Residents are encouraged to stay home if at all possible with the global COVID-19 pandemic now hitting home here in Canada. As of noon on Wednesday, there were 885,864 cases worldwide. From that total, 185,226 individuals have recovered, while 44,220 have died. Canada is ranked 15th in terms of total COVID-19 cases, with 8,612 as of press time. Since the outbreak was officially declared a global pandemic last month, 101 Canadians have died.

Acting decisively as a community can help maintain the public safety and well-being of residents. Residents should follow the advice of our public health unit to help alleviate pressures on the healthcare system, and best protect themselves and loved ones, a County release reads. Precautions to prevent transmission include: self-isolation, maintaining at least a two-metre distance from others, avoiding all unnecessary travel, washing hands often and regularly disinfecting high touch zones in shared spaces in your home.

For more information on precautions you should be taking, consult WDGPH. You can visit their website at www.wdgpublichealth.ca.