

New cases still coming in during COVID-19 outbreak at Simcoe Manor

Positive cases of COVID-19 continue to trickle in at Simcoe Manor as it battles a six week long outbreak that's infected 75 individuals and resulted in the passing of 10 residents.

Most recently a staff member tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday and three other employees, as well as three additional residents, have become cases since the start of November.

Presently, the three residents with the virus are quarantined at Simcoe Manor while one other resident recovers in hospital.

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Charles Gardner issued an order to all long-term care facilities in the region to restrict non-essential visitors, similar to what the Province has mandated in Toronto, Peel and Ottawa.

"I'm also prohibiting residents from going on visits off of the premises; they can go for medical appointments but not for visits," he said.

The decision was made due to the long-term care facilities being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and to prevent future outbreaks from occurring.

As well, the incidence rate of COVID-19 is 25 cases per 100,000 population in Simcoe Muskoka and a review conducted by the Scientific Advisory Committee for Ontario noted that any figure exceeding 24 cases per 100,000 warrants action.

"My main concern is the trajectory and where it's headed," said Dr. Gardner.

"I'm also very concerned that as the rate goes up the risk goes up for these facilities and we've had a significant number of our facilities affected by being in outbreak status."

Dr. Gardner noted that he wants to strike a balance of protection that also addresses the quality of life and mental health needs of residents, so, through the order, up to two family members can be deemed essential to visit individuals in long-term care.

The health order may be lifted once the pandemic is declining and the incidence rate is well below 25 cases per 100,000 population.

Meanwhile, at Simcoe Manor, all of the positive COVID-19 cases are in isolation with droplet precautions in place as well as full PPE for staff.

Additional management, leadership, and human resources, including physicians, infection control practitioners and infectious diseases specialists, have been brought into the long-term care home to offer support.

"There's been a lot of assistance provided in the response to this outbreak and I would like to commend Simcoe County for providing their additional resources, they are the operator of the facility, and also Stevenson Memorial for the resourcing that they provide and very much would like to thank RVH," Dr. Gardner said.

"It's very much a collaborative effort continuing, a very tight communication and work among the parties involved, and certainly we as a health unit are very much there as well."

By Sam Odrowski Local Journalism Initiative Reporter