

Simcoe Manor reports zero cases of COVID-19 within its walls

For the first time in more than a month, Beeton's Simcoe Manor is reporting zero cases of COVID-19 within its walls.

Simcoe Manor, which was declared in an outbreak situation on September 29, is now at zero cases as of Monday night.

The long-term care home has seen 43 residents test positive for the virus since the start of the outbreak, resulting in the deaths of 10. 32 residents have now recovered from COVID-19, with one resident currently being treated in hospital.

32 staff members also tested positive for the virus and 30 of these cases are now marked as recovered.

"For the first time since the outbreak at Simcoe Manor was declared, we have no active or symptomatic COVID-19 cases in our home," said the County of Simcoe on Monday evening. "One resident remains in hospital and we expect that case will be classified as 'resolved' when the individual returns to the home. Furthermore, we haven't had any new COVID cases since our testing on November 3 and 5 and we don't have any pending resident swabs.

"These are significant milestones and we thank staff, residents and family members for helping us get to this point. As a precaution, a number of residents remain in isolation and we'll assess their status this week."

Elsewhere in the community, New Tecumseth is on the cusp of a grim milestone: 300 cumulative cases of COVID-19 within the community since the start of the pandemic.

On Tuesday afternoon, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit reported the Town has seen 299 cases of the virus. Although 249 cases are now recovered, 38 cases remain active, with one presently hospitalized. 12 residents have died as a result of the virus.

25 cases have been reported by the local health unit between November 11 and November 17, with 14 cases noted on November 16 alone.

The Simcoe Muskoka Region is currently in the Yellow ("Protect") Zone of the Province's revised COVID-19 response framework.

According to Dr. Charles Gardner, the Unit's Medical Officer of Health, the community needs to be "mindful for potential change" as data is going in the wrong direction.

"People need to be mindful for the potential for change as well," he said. "With our data, as it continues going up, we might very well find ourselves in the Orange status."

"With our experience with Thanksgiving, there is definitely the potential for transmission within family gatherings," Dr. Gardner continued. "We had a 15 per cent increase in the number of cases associated with Thanksgiving, the two weeks that followed Thanksgiving, we can trace right back to gatherings. Transmission does happen in those settings, if you're not careful. You really need to stick to your own household for direct contact and otherwise be physically distanced from each other. This certainly goes for family gatherings as well."

The Province announced the new framework last week, with Premier Doug Ford noting the Province was "staring down the barrel of another lockdown." Friday's announcement moved surrounding communities, including York Region, into the Red Zone.

"Based on current projections, intensive care units could be overwhelmed in six weeks," said the Premier in Friday's update. "The impact on our hospitals would be absolutely devastating. As Premier, I can't accept that and I won't accept that. We must do whatever it takes to slow the spread of this virus. We must do whatever it takes to stop our hospitals from being overrun."

?Each of us have a role to play. Every one of us has a role to play in preventing a lockdown. We need to continue following public health advice, we can't become complacent. We need to fight and continue fighting. Please don't lose hope. Never in our lifetimes, in a generation, has so much depended on our collective action. Never has so much depended on us coming together as a people, as a Province. Together, we can and we will get through this.?

By Brock Weir