



Outbreak at Forest Heights Declared Over, Scheduling of Outdoor Family Visits to Begin

June 30, 2020 KITCHENER – St. Mary's General Hospital announces today, in consultation with Waterloo Region Public Health, that the outbreak of COVID-19 has been declared over at Forest Heights (Revera) in Kitchener. Forest Heights has been in outbreak since April 1, when one resident tested positive for the virus.

"This is a significant milestone achieved with tremendous effort by the Forest Heights team and its front-line workers after a prolonged and devastating outbreak," said Lee Fairclough, President of St. Mary's General Hospital. "Our hearts go out to the families of those who suffered loss during this time and to residents and staff who became ill," added Wendy Gilmour, Senior Vice President, Long Term Care, at Revera.

Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Acting Medical Officer of Health for Waterloo Region Public Health, said that declaring an end to the outbreak at Forest Heights means that there is currently no evidence of further spread of COVID-19 at the home. "The outbreak has been well controlled for a few weeks," said Dr. Wang. Recent testing of residents identified no new positive cases. Current residents who were previously diagnosed with the virus either tested negative in recent repeat testing, or their infections are considered resolved.

Four cases in asymptomatic staff, detected as a result of close monitoring and increased testing of staff in long-term care homes, have been carefully assessed. These cases are not believed to be associated with a risk of ongoing spread, and the affected staff have remained off work since being diagnosed. All other testing of staff revealed no further cases.

St. Mary's and the St. Joseph's Health System have been working collaboratively with Forest Heights (Revera) toward ending the outbreak and stabilizing operations through a management order from the Ministry of Long-Term Care issued earlier this month. "We are also grateful to have been supported by many system partners who have worked diligently over the last few months including Dr. Sharon Bal, Waterloo-Wellington's Non-hospital Regional Triad Lead, Waterloo Region Public Health, Grand River Hospital, Cambridge Memorial Hospital, family physicians, Ontario Health West Region and others," said Ms. Fairclough.

With the outbreak over, planning is beginning to allow scheduled outdoor visits for families and residents starting Thursday, July 2. Planning is also underway to resume more programming and for the safe return of residents from hospital to the home, designed with new infection control practices in mind. Every effort will be taken to ensure a smooth transition of residents back to their home at Forest Heights.

"We cannot thank the community enough for its ongoing support, which touched the hearts of our residents and energized our front-line workers," said Ms. Gilmour.

"Though this is an important step, we know we cannot let down our guard and will need to continue to build on these efforts," said Ms. Fairclough. "Adhering to Public Health measures both inside and outside the home will continue to be critical to sustain the gains that have been made and to ensure residents, staff and visitors are kept safe."