



Media Statement – Update on COVID-19 outbreak at Forest Heights Long Term Care Home, Kitchener – Dr. Rhonda Collins, Chief Medical Officer, Revera

April 16, 2020

We have received confirmation from Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services that, as of 12 p.m. today, we have 54 residents have tested positive for COVID-19 at Forest Heights Long Term Care Home in Kitchener. All these residents are in isolation. We regret to inform you that a third Forest Heights resident has passed away with COVID-19. We offer our most sincere condolences to the resident’s family and friends.

There are now 34 staff members at Forest Heights who have tested positive for COVID-19. Most of those staff are at home in self-isolation. Some staff, who do not have any symptoms of COVID-19, may, at the direction of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario, return to work if they remain asymptomatic 72 hours from their test, wear appropriate PPE during their shifts, and remain on work to home self-isolation.

Last week, the Government of Ontario updated their testing guidelines for COVID-19 to allow for testing of whole long term care homes where an outbreak has occurred. This new guideline was applied to Forest Heights Term Care Home by Region of Waterloo Public Health, where all the home’s residents and staff were tested, whether or not they had any respiratory symptoms.

We are grateful to Region of Waterloo Public Health for this proactive ‘whole home’ approach to testing. Knowing which residents have tested positive, even if they don’t have symptoms, puts us in better position to isolate affected residents and provide them with appropriate care and support.

We are working closely with public health officials and following strict infection control practices. All staff providing care for residents in isolation must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) which includes a mask, face shield, gloves and gown, while providing care. All staff have been directed to wear a surgical mask in the home at all times.

We monitor all residents for symptoms, including fever, twice daily. The staff members who tested positive are at home in isolation. We continue to screen all staff for symptoms at the beginning and end of their shifts.

We continue to do enhanced cleaning at Forest Heights. High touch areas like doors and handrails are receiving more frequent cleaning and common areas, resident rooms and staff rooms are being disinfected using a Clorox 360 Disinfectant Cleaner system.

We have adjusted our mealtime and recreation activities to promote physical distancing. Meals for residents in isolation are served on an over-bed tray in their rooms. The other residents are served meals in dining rooms modified for physical distancing while allowing the staff to provide supervision and assistance as required. Group recreation programs have been replaced by one-on-one activities to maintain social engagement.

We have updated residents, their families and the staff on the status of the outbreak and will reach out to all families of residents as often as possible to provide updates on their loved ones during this time of physical isolation.

We know this is a very stressful time for anyone who has a family member living at Forest Heights. We are singularly focused on doing everything we can to contain this outbreak. We are working closely with public health experts to implement and comply with their directives, and we are very grateful for their support.