

# August 30, 2020 COVID-19 in three Manitoba care homes



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A long-term health-care worker in Brandon tested positive for COVID-19 Saturday — the case involves an employee at the Hillcrest Place personal care home, which is the third long-term care home in the province to see cases of the novel coronavirus since mid-August.

Now, Jan Legeros, executive director of the Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba, says it was only a matter of time until COVID-19 spread to care homes, but cautioned it was to be expected amid the provincial reopening.

“I don’t think it was a matter of if — it was a matter of when we would see (COVID-19) walk into a personal care home,” Legeros said in an interview.

“We have cases rising exponentially throughout the province and so it is to be expected that we’ll see more and more — with the rise in cases we’re going to see more visitors and more staff test positive for COVID.”

Manitoba’s case numbers have risen dramatically in recent weeks — as of Sunday, there are 462 active cases of COVID-19 in the province, while 1,186 cases have been announced since March and 710 people have recovered.

Two of the long-term care homes are in the Prairie Mountain Health region, which has over half of the province’s active cases as of Sunday — 243.

Meanwhile, the province lifted visitation restrictions at long term care facilities in June.

“Personal care home staff are working around the clock to try to make sure that there isn’t an outbreak in a personal care home... it’s very difficult to do with the number of people coming in, coming and going now with visitor restrictions so much lifted,” Legeros said.

On Aug. 17, an outbreak was declared at Bethesda Place, a Steinbach long term care facility. Eight people have contracted the virus. Three were residents, while five were employees. Two residents died.

In Brandon on Aug. 27, an employee at the Rideau Park Personal Care Home tested positive for the virus — that worker wore personal protective while at the home, the province said earlier this week, as did the worker at Hillcrest Place.

“I don’t think it matters if it’s a visitor or a staff member, our numbers are climbing very rapidly and we are allowing many people to come and go from personal care homes,” Legeros said.

Hillcrest Place has restricted visitation since the positive test, the province said Saturday.

Legeros said the people in long term care are some of the most vulnerable to the virus. “Many times, the seniors will have multiple physiological issues, such as liver disease, kidney disease, on top of having dementia — so they could have multi-system failures going on at the same time as this terrible virus,” she said. **“Seniors in care homes are at the very, very highest pinnacle of that risk.”**

Personal care homes in the province have incurred hundreds of thousands of dollars of COVID-19 related expenses since the pandemic began in Manitoba in March, while the province has not yet committed to reimbursing the money spent, according to Legeros.

“It’s right now that we need those funds,” she said.

Legeros said long term care in Manitoba and Canada as a whole needs more investment.

“We have shone a light on long term care and the terrible deficits that are going on — it’s not just in Manitoba, it’s across Canada — we have allowed our seniors to be placed in a situation where not only are they there at the highest risk because of the physiological problems that they have, but they’re at high risk because of the terrible infrastructure that we have,” she said.