

# Winnipeg care home outbreaks may be turning the corner, new data suggests



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WINNIPEG -- Several long-term care homes in the city have declared active COVID-19 outbreaks, and recent data from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority shows that many others in the city are turning the corner.

The province has started testing asymptomatic people and hopes to bring vaccines into care homes in the new year.

Jan Legeros, the executive director of the Long Term and Continuing Care Association of Manitoba, said the pandemic has disproportionately affected people in long term care.

"40 per cent of deaths in Manitoba from COVID are in personal care homes, so I would say that we are certainly in a very tragic situation."

Legeros believes the province was caught off guard in the second wave.

"I think that if we had prepared a little better perhaps the mortality rate wouldn't be as high, and the outbreaks wouldn't be as many."

Wednesday, the WRHA released an update regarding outbreaks in long term care homes.

It said there are currently 28 active COVID-19 outbreaks in long term care facilities in Winnipeg.

Outbreaks are declared in care homes when a positive COVID case is identified among a resident, staff member, or an external service provider.

Out of those 28 active outbreaks, 18 had zero resident cases as of Wednesday morning.

The WRHA said there are currently 166 active COVID cases among care home residents in Winnipeg, the fewest since Nov. 22.

The active number of cases among staff is 66, the lowest since Nov. 1.

Wednesday, Dr. Joss Reimer, Manitoba's medical lead on COVID-19 vaccine, said health care workers were the priority for COVID-19 vaccine, and it plans to begin on other priority groups in the new year.

"We will be working to expand both to the future category of health-care workers, and potentially concurrently to residents in personal care homes and First Nations populations," said Reimer.

Legeros said personal care homes now have medical outbreak directors on-site daily at every facility with an outbreak, as well as a rapid response team of nurses and physicians.

She said despite a slow start, care homes are trending in the right direction.