

Long-term care association stresses importance of COVID-19 third-dose vaccinations

Three more care home deaths

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NURSING homes were on “high alert” after two more COVID-19 outbreaks were declared at facilities and three more residents died Thursday as Manitoba’s health minister urged residents and visitors to “remember the fundamentals” to stop further spread.

Public health officials reported the deaths of five seniors due to COVID-19 on Thursday, three of whom caught the virus while residing at personal care homes.

Currently, there are five personal care homes and three assisted living facilities where COVID-19 is known to be spreading in the building, resulting in more than 130 infections. Ten Manitobans have died in personal-care home outbreaks in the past month.

Asked about factors that contribute to spread of the virus in health-care facilities, Health Minister Audrey Gordon said she’s pleased public health expedited the rollout of booster shots in

personal care homes.

Recent changes to visitor guidelines that require essential visitors to be fully vaccinated will also help, she said.

She wouldn’t comment on whether the mandates, introduced within the past week and a half, came too late because she has no proof the outbreaks began with unvaccinated visitors entering facilities.

“There are a number of factors that may be leading to this but we continue to encourage individuals living in personal care homes and coming to visit, remember the fundamentals, because this virus spreads very, very quickly,” Gordon said.

Long Term and Continuing Care Association of Manitoba executive director Jan Legeros said care home operators are all “on what we would call high alert.”

New outbreaks were declared Thursday at Salem Home in Winkler and Country Meadows Personal Care Home in Neepawa; meanwhile outbreaks were

also declared at Seven Oaks General Hospital and Grace Hospital in Winnipeg.

“They are being extremely, extremely diligent in terms of their infection prevention and control measures, screening of all persons coming into the personal care home,” Legeros said.

More can be done, she said.

“We’re hearing a lot about COVID fatigue, and we’re hearing that some families aren’t aware of how beneficial it is for their loved one to get that third shot,” Legeros said.

“I think what we need to put out there to the public, and all of the families, is that it is extremely important that your loved one obtain that third booster, just as it’s extremely important for you to obtain that third booster.”

The rollout of third doses to care-home residents is expected to wrap up soon, the province said. The province hasn’t said how many residents have received their third shots.

Despite recent outbreaks, care homes haven’t had the same detrimental

effects on staffing levels as they did in the first and second waves of the pandemic, Legeros said.

“We’re seeing very few staff being affected, so hopefully that will carry on. I think what that means, of course, is that the vaccines are doing the job that they were meant to do,” Legeros said.

Manitoba NDP health critic Uzoma Asagwara said stagnant personal care home funding throughout the fourth wave may be contributing to large-scale outbreaks in care homes and hospitals.

“The tragedy at Maples should have been a turning point for the PC government, but unfortunately a year later, nothing has changed,” Asagwara said. “The health minister needs to acknowledge the crisis in our personal care homes and take action today.”

At Maples Long Term Care Home, 56 residents died from the virus in the fall of 2020.

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Outbreak fata

● On Nov. 1, the province of a man in his 70s from the Health region linked to the Benito Personal Care Home.

● On Nov. 8, the province of a woman in her 90s and linked to the outbreak at Home.

● On Nov. 18, the province death linked to the Benito her 90s. Two deaths linked Crossing Manor in the South also announced: a man and

● On Nov. 25, additional homes were announced: linked to the outbreak at and a woman in her 70s at Benito Personal Care Home.

As well, the province announced a woman in her 80s from a Health Centre and Russell and a man in his 90s from Winnipeg.

Third doses were opened personal-care home residents