

Lanark Lodge takes extra precautions to ensure safety

In light of the extreme heat experienced in eastern Ontario over the last couple of weeks, staff and Lanark County officials are taking extra precautions for residents in the county's long-term care home, Lanark Lodge.

"The residents of Lanark Lodge are safe," said Jennie Bingley, Interim Director of Lanark Lodge. "We are taking numerous steps to ensure they are safe and comfortable, and we continue to be in compliance with provincial regulations and local policies."

Concern was raised about room temperatures at the facility last week during the unprecedented heat wave. The accredited facility is located in Tay Valley Township and is home to 163 residents.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have attended onsite.

Under the Long-term Care Act, homes that do not have central air conditioning, such as Lanark Lodge, are required to have "at least one separate designated cooling area for every 40 residents." The Lodge has several such areas and has air conditioning in the hallways.

"The intention is for the cool air to be pulled into residents' rooms using strategies such as keeping doors open, keeping windows shut, closing curtains to prevent the sun from heating the room, and using large fans in hallways to help circulate the cool air through the rooms," Ms. Bingley said.

"Residents can have fans in their rooms, but window and/or portable air conditioners are not permitted for a number of safety reasons," she explained. The home's licence requires it to ensure windows have screens and to prevent them from being opened more than 15 centimetres, which means window units are not an option. Portable units require staff to empty condensation from them, and water from the units can become a slip hazard if it gets on the floor. The unit itself can become a tripping hazard for residents and staff.

Under the act, long-term care homes are also required to maintain a minimum temperature of 22 degrees Celsius. If portable units are adjusted too much, rooms could drop below this threshold and the home would no longer be in compliance.

The Lodge follows risk-management policies for heat, and staff have been directed to ensure residents are moved to cooling areas if they are hot in their rooms and to ensure they are well hydrated.

The Lodge's registered dietician conducted a hydration audit on July 7, which sampled three random residents to assess whether the minimum hydration standard of 1,500 millilitres per resident per day and individual hydration requirements (based on 25 mL per kilogram per day) were being met. Results showed minimums were being exceeded.

The Lodge has a risk management policy that is based on guidelines from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. It outlines staff education procedures, resident monitoring, and procedures to

undertake during heat events. In addition, the registered dietician implements adjustments to the home's menu during extreme heat, and dietary aides take extra precautions with residents to ensure they are well hydrated.

"The safety, health and well-being of our residents is of paramount importance," said Lanark County CAO Kurt Greaves. "Our staff will continue to be vigilant in safeguarding our residents whenever extreme heat conditions arise."

– 30 –

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