

For Better Retirement Living



December 22, 2021

Dear Augustine House Community,

As you are probably aware, the new Omicron Variant of COVID-19 is spreading rapidly. Dr. Henry has again introduced a number of restrictions meant to slow the spread of this variant, including closing or limiting capacity at a variety of venues and businesses. She also stated during her press conference on Tuesday that much of the spread of this variant is happening within families, at home and at smaller social events. In light of this information, Augustine House is putting in place a number of protocols to keep our community as safe as possible:

- 1) Increasing the use of **rapid testing**. Dr Henry stated at the Tuesday press conference that rapid testing will increase at Long Term Care and Assisted Living residences. Guidelines have not been released but we suspect this will include increases to staff and visitor testing. This will most likely happen as the provincial stock of rapid tests increases. Currently Augustine House has been using rapid testing with non-symptomatic residents who return, after being away for **48** hours. We have updated this to be used with residents who are away for **24** hours, based on the transmissibility of the new variant. We have also been testing many service providers who are entering the building as well as entertainers, anyone staying overnight, and staff who may be concerned re: exposure but are non-symptomatic.
- 2) We are asking visitors **whenever possible to make appointments** when they come to visit. This would assist in ensuring that traffic continues flow appropriately in the reception area. We will not turn a visitor away, but we would also prefer not to require people to wait outside until the screeners are ready. And please remember, if you are feeling unwell or have any of the Covid-19 symptoms, please do not visit.
- 3) We are asking families and visitors to **keep their masks on for their entire visit**. Visitors have been permitted to remove their masks in resident rooms, but due to the rapid transmissibility of this variant we are concerned that this is no longer safe. We understand that this will be a sacrifice, especially at this time of year when sharing food and treats is traditional, but the safety and health of all our community is our number 1 priority
- 4) We will no longer be taking reservations for our private dining room. Although restaurants are permitted to seat up to 6 people, we are suspending this service at this time.

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- 5) We **continue to screen** both staff and residents for symptoms of Covid-19 daily as required. These symptoms have been updated to reflect the presentation of the new variant.

This year has been a difficult year. The emergence of the Omicron variant right at Christmas is certainly not what any of us would have hoped for. But we will get through this by working together and doing what we can to keep each other safe.

We wish you a safe and healthy Christmas.

Yours,

Jackie Reiners
Executive Director
Augustine House.