

Masking requirements to remain indefinitely at Headwaters

By Paula Brown

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Masking requirements at Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) will remain in place indefinitely, says the hospital's CEO and president, Kim Delahunt.

Headwaters Hospital released a public notice on April 14 addressing their decision to take a 'cautious' approach in the coming months as the provincial government plans to lift mask mandates in all health care settings.

'Headwaters' continues to 'ride the wave' of [the] pandemic surge by putting patient's safety first,' said Delahunt. 'As COVID-19 cases in the community continue to rise' the latest estimates show anywhere from 100,000-200,000 cases per day in Ontario, based on wastewater and testing data 'Headwaters remains vigilant but challenged.'

According to Delahunt, the hospital's most significant challenge is related to staffing.

In the April 14 notice, the hospital reported more than 30 staff off work due to community acquired COVID-19. There are also a number of job vacancies the hospital is waiting to fill.

'Recruitment is challenging because Headwaters is only one of many health care organizations in this situation; we are all competing for highly skilled employees,' said Delahunt. 'This puts extra strain on remaining staff and requires us to carefully plan schedules to ensure patient care is never compromised and that we can continue to provide excellent care.'

Despite the provincial government announcing that masking mandates in health care settings will lift on April 27, Headwaters says they intend to continue with their current guidance.

On top of masking requirements remaining indefinitely, the local hospital is also keeping COVID-19 guidelines related to vaccination, screening, and PPE.

'We believe taking a cautious approach to this is the safest course of action for our patients and all of us,' said Delahunt.

She also noted the hospital will continue to monitor the situation and will update their policies as needed over time.