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**OUR MISSION:** DELIVER AN OUTSTANDING PATIENT CARE EXPERIENCE BY A PASSIONATE COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

## Media Release

December 22, 2020  
For Immediate Release

### **FIRST WINDSOR-ESSEX INDIVIDUALS ROLL UP SLEEVES FOR VACCINE**

**WINDSOR, ON.** \_ It was an exciting morning and a promising start of what's to come as the first individuals in Windsor-Essex were vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus today.

With initial vaccinations of the limited supply of Pfizer doses made available to employees who work at Long Term Care/Retirement Homes in our region, several individuals stepped forward to be among the initial vaccine recipients at the new vaccination centre at the St. Clair College Sportsplex – led by Krystal Meloche, a personal support worker who works at Seasons Belle River.

Krystal has endured many heartbreaking challenges when it comes to the COVID-19 virus. Earlier this year, her father contracted the virus. His health took a critical turn, as he was placed on a ventilator and later passed away in hospital, with family saying goodbye through an iPad screen due to visitor restrictions. Other family members also fell ill with the COVID-19 virus and continue to try to cope with its long-term effects.

“It may not take away what COVID-19 has taken from my family. But I’m very honoured to be among the first people in Windsor-Essex to experience this vaccine,” she said, urging the community to continue to follow guidelines such as wearing masks and social distancing until we can move past the pandemic. “People need to open their eyes and take extra precautions. People think it’s just the flu .... I can tell you, for my family, it’s not. People need to take this seriously.”

Also among the first individuals to be vaccinated was Edith Larocque, a Registered Practical Nurse who has worked at Amica Riverside since it first opened 10 years ago. Edith worked extra hours when positive cases first developed at the retirement home back in April. She was devastated to find out later that month that she herself had tested positive for COVID-19, as well as her husband. While this was extremely upsetting early on, she continued to support her colleagues, including others who contracted the virus, and completing administrative tasks for the facility from home.

“With these vaccinations, you see that there is light at the end of the tunnel now,” she said, adding that she is hopeful that the pandemic can end soon so that she can get back to vacation planning, socializing with friends, “and hugs.”

Also among those first to receive vaccines were Nancy El Hussein, a registered nurse, and Dr. Nick Krayacich. Both care for residents of Heron Terrace, a long-term care facility where many residents and staff acquired the

COVID-19 virus. Many Heron Terrace residents were later cared for at the field hospital set up at the St. Clair College Sportsplex.

“I saw the impact COVID-19 had on our residents and colleagues, and saw how COVID affected not just their physical health, but their mental health as well,” Nancy said. “I feel like these vaccinations is exciting for Windsor-Essex and I hope this first group of individuals being vaccinated is going to inspire the rest of our community.”

Dr. Krayacich said he has taken the time to thoroughly research the Pfizer vaccine and expressed great confidence that it is “tested, safe and effective” for widespread use.

“This vaccine is an amazing breakthrough that we should all embrace. Don’t be afraid of it,” he said, calling for individuals to step forward for the vaccine in the months to come as it becomes more widely distributed. “We all need to stem this pandemic and we all need to do our part to protect our friends and families.

“Don’t procrastinate – vaccinate.”

Teams of staff from various long-term care and retirement homes in Windsor-Essex came early Tuesday morning for their vaccinations and some of their administrators volunteered to be among the first vaccinations to help alleviate any anxiety among staff. Mike Cardinal, the owner of Cardinal Place in Windsor, Kari Sleiman, General Manager for Seacliff Manor Retirement Residence in Leamington, and Amy Sworik, administrator for Heron Terrace, all rolled up their sleeves this morning.

“We know there is some nervousness and anxiety in the community about vaccinations. We applaud Krystal, Edith, Nancy, Nick, Mike, Kari and Amy for demonstrating leadership to their colleagues – the vaccination process is going to be an important one for our community to move forward and back to a sense of pre-COVID-19 living in the hopefully not-too-distant future,” said WRH President and CEO David Musyj.

Vaccinations based on this limited supply of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine will continue over the next several days. It is not known at this time when the next round of vaccinations will arrive.

The vaccine is now stored in freezers at -80 degree Celsius, which is the temperature required for the vaccine storage until prepared clinically for inoculation. As noted previously, the Pfizer vaccine is not allowed to be transported from its initial delivery site (St. Clair College Sportsplex) and therefore requires that all individuals being inoculated attend to the site of the vaccine.

As more vaccines become available, WRH, in coordination with the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, will continue to follow the Government of Ontario’s priority list, which focuses on the following four groups of individuals:

- Residents, staff, essential caregivers, and other employees of congregate living settings (e.g., long-term care homes and retirement homes) that provide care for seniors as they are at higher risk of infection and serious illness from COVID-19;
- Health care workers, including hospital employees, other staff who work or study in hospitals, and other health care personnel;
- Adults in Indigenous communities, including remote communities where risk of transmission is high; and
- Adult recipients of chronic home health care.

More information about the Government Ontario's vaccination priority groups can be found here: <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/59508/ontario-identifies-key-groups-for-distribution-of-initial-covid-19-vaccines>

Both WECHU and WRH continue to finalize Pfizer vaccine logistics of the rollout with the Province of Ontario and will provide more information about additional vaccine supply as those details become available.

Supplies of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine are being secured with the support of Windsor Police Services. We thank them for their 24-7, around-the-clock support they are providing at the St. Clair College Sportsplex.

WRH also wishes to thank the college once again for its outstanding support and use of the Sportsplex since the beginning of the pandemic. It is important to note that the use of the St. Clair College Sportsplex as a vaccine centre does NOT preclude future potential use of the same site as a field hospital, should the conditions warrant reopening the facility for up to 100 beds. The area for vaccinations can be segregated from other use if the need arises.

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