

Bobcaygeon relief fund announced to help Pinecrest and community

Sarah Sobanski

Bobcaygeon residents are stepping up to support their community as it battles COVID-19.

Bobcaygeon has had the worst COVID-19 outbreak in Ontario after an outbreak at the community's long-term care facility, Pinecrest Nursing Home. There had been nine deaths related to the virus in the home as of March 30.

In response to the crisis, a group of concerned citizens has announced the Bobcaygeon and Area COVID-19 Relief Fund to support health-care workers, Pinecrest residents, their families and others in need in the community.

The fund will be administered by the Community Foundation of Kawartha Lakes, advised by the citizens' group headed up by Kawartha Lakes Ward 2 Coun. Kathleen Seymour-Fagan.

"This staff at Pinecrest, they care deeply for the residents," she said. "(The fund) will go to support the workers if they need mental health support, maybe they need housing, maybe they're in isolation — we will have a look at it and see if it makes sense."

Seymour-Fagan said community members were continuing to reach out to her to see how they could help, especially after the news at Pinecrest broke. She said the fund had already received "major donations" to be released in the coming days.

Seymour-Fagan said because the fund was a community fund, it would be able to be administered quickly — not held down by regulations, as, for example, a municipal fund might be. It will fund immediate support for recipients, including food supplies, transportation, technology, hiring and overtime costs, and mental wellness counselling.

The eligibility of fund recipients will be determined collaboratively by the Community Foundation of Kawartha Lakes and the Bobcaygeon advisers, according to a press release. It stated the approach to determine recipient eligibility would be accountable as well as generous and inclusive.

"This is what community foundations do: rapid, professional response to helping each other here locally," foundation president Mike Perry said in the release. He said it took less than 24 hours from the call for need to the fund being established.

"There were calls, emails and procedural issues back and forth of course. But this is a health and economic crisis here at home so it's all hands on deck," he added.