

Hamilton

COVID-19 outbreak declared at Schuyler Farms after 3 migrant workers test positive

Farmer Brett Schuyler says more than 200 workers will be tested

[Dan Taekema](#) · CBC News · Posted: Nov 06, 2020 11:57 AM ET | Last Updated: November 6



Health officials in Haldimand-Norfolk have declared a COVID-19 outbreak at Schuyler Farms after three migrant workers tested positive. (GoogleMaps)

A COVID-19 outbreak has been declared at Schuyler Farms near Simcoe after three migrant workers tested positive for the virus.

The Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit says additional testing has been carried out and a public health management plan has been put in place.

Simcoe-area farmer Brett Schuyler made headlines earlier this year when he challenged an order from the county's medical officer of health.

Dr. Shanker Nesathurai issued a section 22 order in March saying the some 4,000 workers who arrive from other countries must quarantine for two weeks to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The order also restricted workers to three per bunkhouse, regardless of floor space.

- [Haldimand-Norfolk farmers and health unit battle over migrant worker bunkhouse order](#)
- [Court restores order limiting number of quarantining migrant workers to 3 per bunkhouse](#)

A group of Norfolk farmers, led by Schuyler, argued that number seemed arbitrary and the Health Services Appeal and Review Board ruled in their favour.

However, the order was later restored following a ruling from an Ontario court.

On Friday, Schuyler said his opinion on the bunkhouse order hasn't changed and he's still seeking leave to appeal the court's decision.

He said the three-worker limit is only a rule in Haldimand and Norfolk and the counties should be consistent with the rest of the country.

It's after workers complete their two-week quarantine that the real challenge of controlling exposure risk and potential spread begins, he said.

Farmer says entire workforce will be tested

Schuyler said the cases on the farm started with one worker who had mild symptoms.

Twenty workers who were living together have since been tested and are currently isolating in individual hotel rooms, he said.

"They're going to end up testing everybody on the farm," he said. "That's over 200 tests that will be done, and see what we can find in that."

The farm is preparing for the possibility of more positive cases by setting up isolation residences, said Schuyler.

Brett Schuyler is a part owner of family-run Schuyler Farms in Simcoe, Ont. (Skype)

He said the farm has made efforts to maintain at least two metres of distance between workers, has posted signs at bunkhouses reminding residents to keep their cohorts separate and placed sanitizer at every door.

"The whole team here overall has worked very, very hard within a high-risk environment to make this work," explained Schuyler. "The main thing is that everyone stays healthy."

While the testing does represent a disruption to some of the work on the farm, Schuyler said he's more concerned about the well-being of the workers, some of whom were preparing to head home for the season.

"There were guys planning to fly out this week who now can't go home, and that's just as devastating for those people."

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