



## Saskatoon: 31 May 2023 – Story 2

Eric: But yeah, we had to get here the next morning.

Deb: We had to get here the next morning to tell staff that we were closing the doors.

Eric: Hello, my name is Eric Anderson and I'm the communications leader for Sherbrooke. And sitting beside me is the great...

Deb: [laughter] Deb Schick, and I'm the leader for professional practice.

Eric: I'd never done crisis communication before. And I quickly learned that when you're in a situation like this, especially when families can't come in, and visitors can't come in, the more communication, the better.

Deb: And to give the message in a way that was easy to understand and easy to access.

Eric: We held a couple of virtual town halls during the pandemic. I was nervous about those because I thought we were just gonna get yelled at for like an hour. And it wasn't that case at all. The families had some hard questions, but they just wanted to know, like, what is happening, what's going on?

Eric: For those people that don't know what Sherbrooke's really big, we have 263 residents. we've got big grounds and stuff. And we had to separate the grounds by like, specific neighborhoods because residents couldn't if you were on the fourth neighborhood or the fourth floor, you couldn't interact with people from Deb's neighborhood and the First Neighborhood. So yeah, there was fences everywhere. Like a maze.

Eric: If a neighborhood was in an outbreak, that was considered two or more residents tested positive. You had to go 28 consecutive days without a new case. And if you went, say, 15 days and had a new case, it would reset to zero. That's hard, isn't it?

Deb: It's very hard. Yeah, that's a very long time to be isolated. I remember one of my last outbreaks. We had a gentleman that had been he grew up at home and he came into Sherbrooke. And he, he had had the freedom for the first time to be in his wheelchair and be able to move around like a much larger space. So, he would have his breakfast and he was gone.

And he ended up contracting COVID. And I actually believe that he just gave up. That the fact that he was [sigh] gonna have to stay in his room was just too much for him. And he died very quickly, actually.

# COVID<sup>IN THE</sup> HOUSE OF OLD



Deb: So, for a long time, our residents like weren't allowed to leave the community. Like public health, like nope, you stay in your little bubble. And what our staff saw was that people were very anxious then to go back into the community.

Eric: I can think of one resident in particular who was not eager to go out and I was surprised by it. Because this resident was very, very active out in the community. And then they were just not ready to go out - they were worried about getting the virus and is it am I going to be safe out there.

Deb: So, do you still look for your mask when you leave your office?

Eric: Yes, I do. I remember the first like, the first day I felt so naked. I didn't have a mask on my face. I – also I wasn't shaving as much as I normally was. So, then it was like, oh, gosh, like, “How do I look? How does my face look?” And there were so many, like, we hired a lot of staff during the pandemic. We've never seen their faces.