

DEPUTATION IN WRITING

REGIONAL COUNCIL

JULY 9, 2020

Subject: Mandatory Masks in York Region

Spokesperson: Ryan Kruger

Name of Group or person(s) being represented (if applicable):

Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:

Hello, my name is Ryan Kruger. I am a lifelong Newmarket resident, having graduated from Newmarket High School in June of last year. Since this past September, I have been studying at the University of Guelph, however, due to the pandemic, I have moved back home.

I am writing to you now to urge you to take action on behalf of your constituents and our neighbours. The provincial government recently announced that any mandate to wear masks while in public to help stop the spread of COVID-19 would have to be made by local, municipal governments. I am asking you to please propose such a mandate.

I understand that this may be an unpopular position among some residents, and I understand that this won't be an easy system to implement, but it is a necessary one.

For the past four years, I have worked in retail at Mark's, both here and in Guelph, and I have noted a major drop in the wearing of masks among the general public in recent weeks. I have also noticed this as I have spent time at various parks and trails around Newmarket, maintaining physical distance of course. People seem to be forgetting that there is a global pandemic happening right now.

One of the biggest complaints I hear about face masks, apart from them being uncomfortable, is that they do not completely prevent the spread of the virus. Until such a time that 100% of people are able to stay inside, quarantined, or a vaccine is developed, we cannot let a "perfect" solution be the enemy of a "good" solution. Studies conducted since the 2003 SARS outbreak have shown that wearing a cloth or paper mask helps reduce the risk of spreading illness by between 50 and 70%. That is not nothing. A 70%, or even a 50% reduction in transmission is far better than 0%, I don't feel the need to explain this to you.

Another point which is raised by people who oppose masks, and one which I think needs to be expanded upon, is that they don't actually help the wearer as much as they help everybody else. Living in a community requires empathy, and a certain amount of altruism. Living in a community during a pandemic requires even more of both these things. Again, I don't feel I need to explain this to you, sir.

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That being said, masks do benefit the wearer in other ways. As the weather begins to warm and people are more likely to be going out, a mask is a visual reminder to others that they should wear one as well. A mask also acts as a deterrent against touching one's face, a good strategy for further preventing transmission.

The long and the short of it is, wearing a mask, uncomfortable as it may be for the 20 or 30 or 45 minutes a person may be at the grocery store, the mall, or Mark's, should not be negotiable at the present.

As we continue on with Phase 2 of the Provincial reopening plan, with Phase 3 apparently on the horizon, I think any effort to ensure that all members of our community understand that we are still only in the eye of the storm, is a positive. If a mandate is not enforceable, a campaign educating people as to why they should wear a mask would be better than nothing. Again, we can't let the "perfect" be the enemy of the "good".

I appreciate your time, and urge you to act on this issue of public health. We have come so far, and I cannot in good conscious stand by and let that progress be wasted.

Sincerely,

Ryan Kruger