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Dear Councilors,

I am an emergency physician practicing in the Toronto area. I grew up in Richmond Hill and graduated from Richmond Hill High School, and my parents live there, so this issue is of personal importance to me.

I have been involved since the start of this pandemic in preparations, drills and in important education and research work regarding Covid-19. Covid-19 is not something to trifle with, and any precautions we can take to prevent its spread, especially amongst our vulnerable elderly, should be taken.

I am co-chair of the #Masks4Canada campaign, one that brings a coalition of physicians, lawyers, engineers and many others together to encourage governments to mandate masks in public spaces. 2 weeks ago we circulated an open letter and obtained the signed support of over 1500 fellow health professionals, including many prominent physicians, hospital CEOs, nurses, the director of a major organ transplant program, and prominent Infectious disease physicians. We have made presentations and deputations across the country -- now much of Ontario and now Montreal are requiring masks.

There is some understandable confusion on masking, as there was different advice given at the outset of the pandemic and now. This is a reflection of how our scientific understanding has evolved and that we know much more about the virus now than we did a few months ago. We know now that transmission is most likely in enclosed indoor spaces where people are in close contact, very often speaking to each other. We know transmission is much less likely outdoors. There is controversy over whether the virus is spread by droplets or aerosols, and the truth is likely going to fall somewhere in the middle.

We also know there is very little controversy over the science of masking in the medical community, though there were some disagreements over where it fits in with handwashing and physical distancing, and the efficacy of cloth masks. Can we wait for randomized control trials on cloth masks while we let Covid ravage our communities and carry away our vulnerable loved ones? In these cases, the precautionary principle should apply.

In the acute care ER and ICU world, many of the best treatments of Covid came from careful study and bedside observations, which months later are only now being verified in randomized control trials. Lung protective ventilation settings, low-dose steroids, anti-coagulation are all treatments that reduce mortality significantly and are already being used... but the research

from RCT's was only published in the last few weeks. Waited for perfect evidence is asking for thousands more unnecessary deaths.

So far as we can tell, it is only fringe and mostly discredited sources that push possible mask dangers. No credible expert will say that wearing a mask harms the wearer or leads to 'lack of oxygen' or accumulation of 'bacteria' or 'lowering immune response' This is absolutely false pseudo-science and should not affect your decision making. I wore N95s, much harder to wear than the lighter surgical masks, for 16 hours at a time during the SARS crisis. I and the thousands of other health care workers did not suffer ill effects or get bacterial pneumonia or any of these other alleged effects.

The goal is to prevent asymptomatic transmission of the virus, something known as early as January in case study in Munich to occur several days before the development of symptoms. The only way to do is by preventing your droplets or aerosols from getting to others around you by wearing a mask. A mask does not protect you perfectly but does significantly protect everyone else from you.

Recent models published by Dr. David Fisman at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health show that universal masking will save lives in Canada in a potential second wave. Similar models published at the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at University of Washington show the same in the US - that thousands of lives will be saved with masking policies.

Canadians are generally a law-abiding people who will listen to direction. We are sensible enough not to let this issue divide us as it has for our unfortunate cousins south of the border. Wearing a mask is an act of generosity and protectiveness – of those vulnerable people around you who may not fare well with Covid-19. We have required masks at my hospital since late February, and we see some of the highest numbers of patients in the province, and not one nurse or physician has become ill with Covid-19.

There are many strong economic arguments -- we need to do everything we can to prevent a second shutdown as is already happening in Florida, Texas, Israel and now Melbourne. Many of our businesses may not survive another lockdown.

It also is the most reasonable way for most businesses to resume normal activity, to make some indoor spaces safe again. Many workers have confided in me and have asked for notes to avoid returning to work because they are fearful of bringing Covid home. Service workers such as the cashier at a Tim Horton's or a Walmart greeter are exposed to thousands of people a day – and are completely helpless in setting the standards of PPE in their work settings. These folks often have little voice or little time to present their view, and rely on you to protect them.

Thank you for bringing forth this by-law, and I hope you and your families endure through this pandemic in safety and good health.

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