

DEPUTATION IN WRITING

REGIONAL COUNCIL

JULY 9, 2020

Subject: Public Health Considerations of Mandating the Use of Face Coverings as a Measure to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

Spokesperson: Jeffrey Chappell

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

Brief summary of issue or purpose of deputation:

I am not understanding the necessity of York Region to mandate the use of Face Coverings when in the current WHO guidelines, a mask is not listed:

To prevent infection and to slow transmission of COVID-19, do the following:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, or clean them with alcohol-based hand rub.
- Maintain at least six feet distance between you and people coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you feel unwell.
- Refrain from smoking and other activities that weaken the lungs.
- Practice physical distancing by avoiding unnecessary travel and staying away from large groups of people.

The WHO lists the following potential harms and Disadvantages of wearing masks by the general public:

Potential harms/disadvantages

The likely disadvantages of the use of mask by healthy people in the general public include:

- potential increased risk of self-contamination due to the manipulation of a face mask and subsequently touching eyes with contaminated hands;(48, 49)
- potential self-contamination that can occur if nonmedical masks are not changed when wet or soiled.

This can create favourable conditions for microorganism to amplify;

- potential headache and/or breathing difficulties, depending on type of mask used;
- potential development of facial skin lesions, irritant dermatitis or worsening acne, when used frequently for long hours;(50)
- difficulty with communicating clearly;
- potential discomfort;(41, 51)
- **a false sense of security, leading to potentially lower adherence to other critical preventive measures such as physical distancing and hand hygiene;**

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- poor compliance with mask wearing, in particular by young children;
- waste management issues; improper mask disposal leading to increased litter in public places, risk of contamination to street cleaners and environment hazard;
- difficulty communicating for deaf persons who rely on lip reading;
- disadvantages for or difficulty wearing them, especially for children, developmentally challenged persons, those with mental illness, elderly persons with cognitive impairment, those with asthma or chronic respiratory or breathing problems, those who have had facial trauma or recent oral maxillofacial surgery, and those living in hot and humid environments.

The WHO do also list the following:

Potential benefits/advantages

The likely advantages of the use of masks by healthy people in the general public include:

- reduced potential exposure risk from infected persons before they develop symptoms;
- reduced potential stigmatization of individuals wearing masks to prevent infecting others (source control) or of people caring for COVID-19 patients in non-clinical settings;(70)
- making people feel they can play a role in contributing to stopping spread of the virus; Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19: Interim guidance -8-
- reminding people to be compliant with other measures (e.g., hand hygiene, not touching nose and mouth). **However, this can also have the reverse effect (see above);**
- potential social and economic benefits. Amidst the global shortage of surgical masks and PPE, encouraging the public to create their own fabric masks may promote individual enterprise and community integration. Moreover, the production of non-medical masks may offer a source of income for those able to manufacture masks within their communities. Fabric masks can also be a form of cultural expression, encouraging public acceptance of protection measures in general. The safe re-use of fabric masks will also reduce costs and waste and contribute to sustainability.

But it seems that even the WHO list of potential benefits/advantages references the disadvantages list, and is much smaller than the list of disadvantages. In my education, looking at a list like this, it makes it complicated to understand the necessity to mandate masks. We should be making sure that those individuals that are working directly with the elderly and with people that are at high risk should have all the necessary PPE to provide the care and treatment they need to.

We seem to be jumping at the chance to remove the free will and choice of our citizens, while we also create more of a fear filled environment in York Region.

At this time, instead of making things like masks mandatory, shouldn't we be considering the enforcement of other specific health and employee problems that are becoming more present in York Region. With all the new requirements present during the COVID-19 pandemic, we are placing uneducated employees at the store front and they are being asked to enforce the use of alcohol based hand cleaners and various other cleansers and cleaners. A lot of these bottles and items seem to be missing the Safety Data Sheets, and also workplace labels that are required under the WHMIS 2015 federal government system. For the long term safety of my fellow residents of York Region, this would seem to be of greater concern, as we are asking uninformed individuals to sometimes mix and enforce the use of workplace chemicals.

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Thank you for your time.

Concerned Citizen:

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References:

WHMIS 2015

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/environmental-workplace-health/occupational-health-safety/workplace-hazardous-materials-information-system.html>

WHO- Masks

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

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