

The background of the slide is a photograph of the York Region Council Building. It is a modern, multi-story building with a curved facade and large glass windows. Two prominent, tall, cylindrical towers stand in front of the building, each featuring a clock face. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

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

Presented to  
**YORK REGIONAL COUNCIL**

Presented by  
**Dr. Fareen Karachiwalla**

July 09, 2020



# **SETTING THE STAGE**

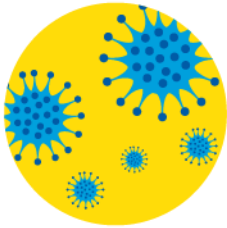
# York Region recommends the use of face coverings when distancing cannot be maintained

The main rationale being source control:

- People wearing face masks protect those around them



# Many factors can be considered when debating mandatory use of face coverings, such as:



Current  
epidemiology



Science on the  
effectiveness of face  
coverings



Possible effects of more  
widespread use, positive  
and negative

# **TAKING A CLOSER LOOK**

# CURRENT EPIDEMIOLOGY

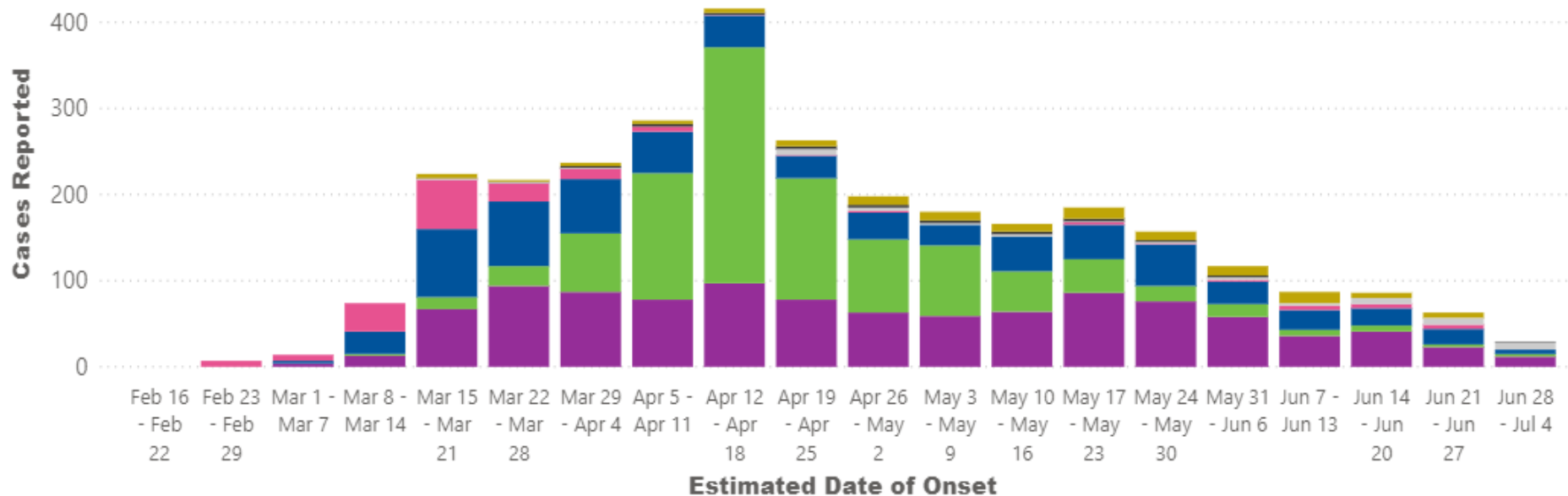


## Epidemic Curve of Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in York Region

As of 9:00am  
July 2, 2020



● Close Contact ● Institutional Outbreak ● Local Transmission ● Travel ● Under Investigation ● Unknown ● Workplace Outbreak



# SCIENCE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS

**While the evidence has its limitations,  
it generally supports the following:**

- Non medical or cloth face coverings can sometimes be adequate substitutes for medical masks for source control
- Widespread use of face coverings can have a positive effect on the course of the epidemic
  - Uptake in the population likely needs to be high (~80%)
  - Policies mandating use are generally most effective when implemented early in the pandemic
  - Lower quality face coverings can still make a difference when uptake is high



# ESTIMATED TRENDS IN USE

**Observations by York Region Public Health Inspectors at three malls in the Region found:**

Location	Face covering use upon entry to the mall
Markville Mall	<b>83%</b>
Upper Canada Mall	<b>52%</b>
Vaughan Mills	<b>61%</b>

A recent population survey found that **56%** of people in Ontario wear face coverings when out in the community



# UNINTENDED BENEFITS & RISKS



## Benefits

- Empowering
- Reduced stigma
- Visual cue
- Impact on physical distancing
- Front line and essential worker benefits



## Risks

- Side effects
- Impact on supply chain
- Increased waste and litter
- Equity
- Inadvertent contamination

# SAFELY WEARING A FACE COVERING: DO'S



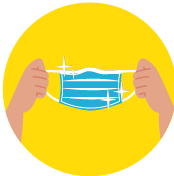
**DO** wear a non-medical mask or face covering to protect others



**DO** ensure the mask is made of at least two layers of tightly woven fabric



**DO** inspect the mask for tears and holes



**DO** ensure the mask or face covering is clean and dry



**DO** wash your hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching the mask or face covering



**DO** use the ear loops or ties to put on and remove the mask



**DO** ensure your nose and mouth are fully covered



**DO** replace and launder your mask whenever it becomes damp or dirty



**DO** wash your mask with hot, soapy water and let it dry completely before wearing it again



**DO** discard masks that cannot be washed in a plastic-lined garbage bin after use



**DO** store reusable masks in a clean paper bag until you wear it again



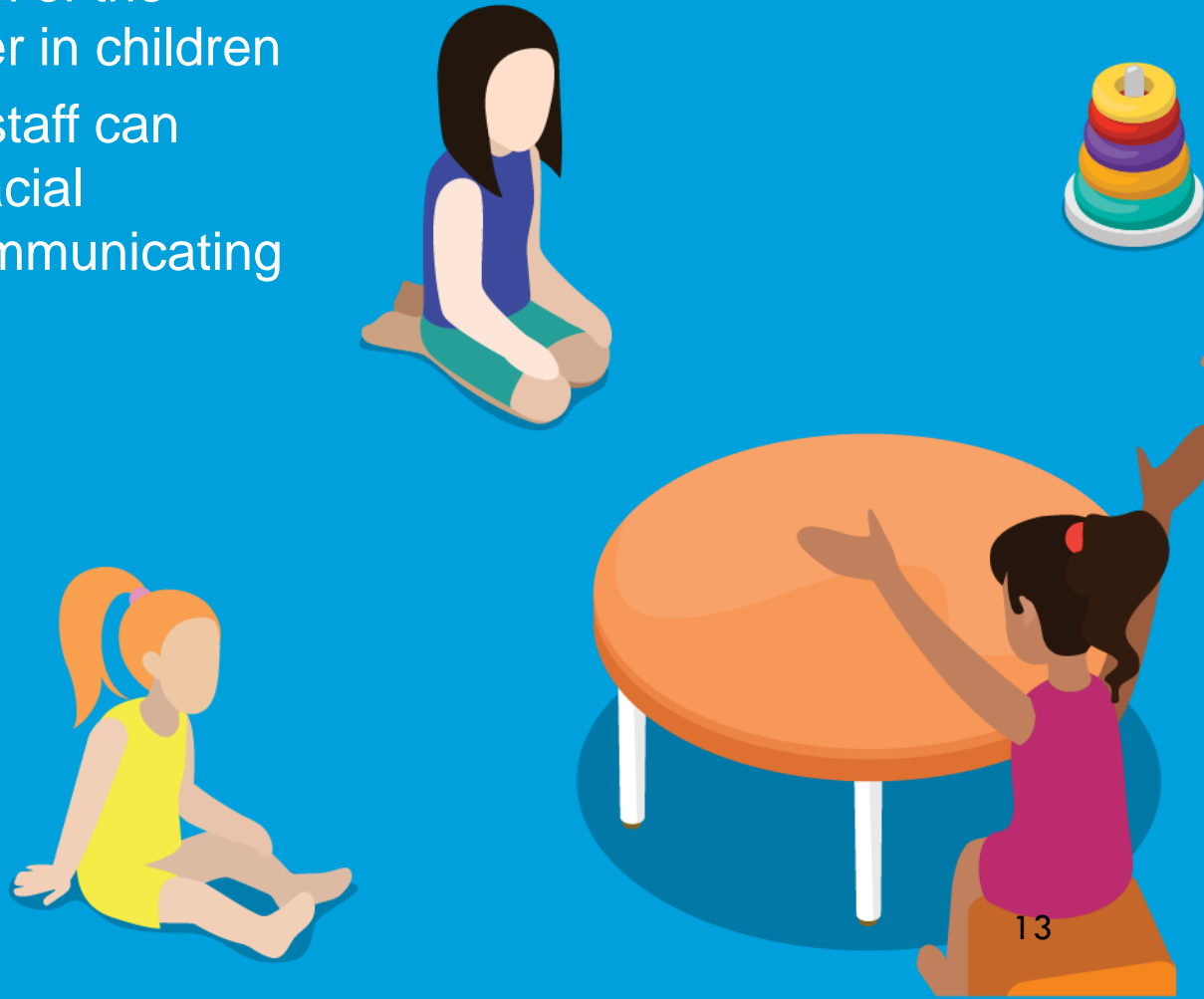
# **PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY CONSIDERATIONS**

# PUBLIC HEALTH POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Use of facial coverings is not a standalone intervention, and must be coupled with 2-metres distancing, hand hygiene and others
- Any policy on more widespread use needs accompanying health promotion efforts to educate the public on safe handling and use
- Consideration should be given to ensuring
  - Proper disposal options and education on disposal
  - Support for low income households to acquire face coverings

# Schools and daycares

- COVID-19 risk and transmission is different in children
- Risk of contamination of the wearer may be higher in children
- Widespread use by staff can deprive children of facial expression when communicating



# Outdoor environments

- Typically have reduced opportunities for spread through:
  - contaminated surfaces,
  - improved ventilation
  - Increased opportunity for physical distancing



# **RECOMMENDATION**

# Recommendation

- The Medical Officer of Health issues an instruction to operators to have a policy that prohibits people from entering without face coverings
- The instruction specifies:
  - Best efforts be made by operators in good faith
  - Goal is primarily education rather than enforcement
- Complementary communication efforts advise the public on face covering benefits, exemptions, proper use and disposal





# Questions