

January 20, 2021

Dear York Region Council Members,

I don't feel that York Region is doing enough to educate business owners and their employees about how they should treat people with medical exemptions who can't wear face coverings.

From York Region information under **Mandatory Use of Face Masks and Coverings** section at their website https://www.york.ca/wps/portal/yorkhome/health/yr/covid-19/MandatoryUseofFaceMasksandCoverings/MandatoryUseofFaceMasksandCoverings!/ut/p/z1/jY_BbsIwEES_pR8Q7doNiXN0U8A2RKIUAAkvIRVCsAAAbJVEk-HqiiksPTbO3Wb3ZnQENBWhnelubznpnzpP-0tG35EspxApVHrIUOeZc0ZjhPCGw-wHwj-ElEop_BNDj59V_D4YGtMnSrAZ9Nd0xsO7goSh9b_cBSaDIjNubzje3TVv5w8KUVWbaUztsU99XjXV1Ow3agf6dZfnJQpRbFfMtyTGUr0-A0jASJEWFIImcoF_HH7J0Jgiv6BEbqXi-b4r5-S6TILw_pAuVa/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/#.YAhZmZnKiWY

Mandatory Use of Face Masks and Coverings

Exempt:

Those exempt from wearing a face mask or covering in indoor spaces are:

- is a child who is younger than two years of age
- Has a medical condition that inhibits their ability to wear a mask or face cover

As well, under **Information for Business Owners and Operators** it states

- All staff, customers or visitors must wear a mask indoors, with some exceptions (e.g., children under the age of two and people with certain health conditions, employees in designated areas or protected by a physical barrier)
- Proof is not required if someone has an exemption

According to the bylaws, people who are unable to wear masks or face coverings because they have a medical condition are exempt from the mandatory rule of wearing masks in public places. That should mean that once the store owner or staff have been informed of that, they should not hassle that person about it. However, that has not been my experience. A few weeks ago, I was barred from entering the Canadian Tire store in Newmarket. The manager Brian told me that the store owner stated that they weren't to let anyone inside who wasn't wearing a mask. I told him the bylaws said they weren't allowed to do that. He said it was a privately owned business and they could refuse me entry if they wanted to. I was disgusted and insulted and I left the store.

On Tuesday of this week, an employee of Michael's NoFrills in Stouffville stopped me in the entranceway and asked if I could put on a mask. I told him I couldn't because I have a medical condition. He then said that he would let me in "this time" but he was "warning" me that the cashiers could call "the authorities" on me if they wanted to for not

complying with the laws. I explained to him that I checked the bylaws and that they still said I was exempt. He said it was the store, not the employees that made the rules. So when I go into that same store next week to do my grocery shopping, I don't know what I'll be facing. A fine from a bylaw officer, perhaps? Maybe being escorted out of the store in front of other customers? That remains to be seen.

According to the current Covid-19 laws put out by York Region, I am complying with the laws. The laws clearly state that I'm allowed to be in a public place without a mask. But the store owners and staff are not abiding by those laws. They are shaming, harassing, and berating me, often in front of other customers.

It's not my fault that I can't wear a mask or face covering. I have every right to be out in public walking, shopping, getting fuel, and doing everything that everyone else is allowed to do. I'm not a threat to anyone because I have spent most of my time inside my home for the past 24 years due to my work. The only time I go out these days is for grocery shopping. Doing that is crucial for my mental and physical health. But every time I do, I'm subjected to the kind of public harassment I've only barely covered above. There is so much more to tell, such as when one of the cashiers from the NoFrills spotted me in another store and sent two staff members after me because I wasn't wearing a mask. That is only a small taste of what I have to endure while I try my best to just live my life as normally as possible. That is, if the way all people are living right now can even remotely be called "normal."

This is what people like me who can't wear masks have to endure every time we go out. It's stressful and aggravating and makes leaving the house a living hell. I implore York Region Council to do more to help people with medical conditions live as normal a life out in public as those who wear masks. Please better educate the store owners about the laws and what they should not be doing. Life is hard enough right now. Please help people like me.

Thank you for your time and for your attention to this matter.

Wendy Scavuzzo
Stouffville