

## Caledon businesses get their questions answered in online webinar

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

With Caledon Council recently making it mandatory to wear masks in town, many local businesses have wondered how to go about enforcing the new rules.

On July 10, Mayor Allan Thompson, alongside Peel Region Medical Officer of Health Dr. Lawrence Loh, provided additional information about mandatory masks, and, in an online webinar, answered questions submitted by the local business sector.

The temporary bylaw for mandatory face coverings, went into effect last Friday (July 10), and will last until October of this year.

With Caledon entering Phase 2 back in June and the new bylaw set in place, local businesses have been enduring big changes in their daily work lives, with new safety measures and stricter restrictions implemented.

Dr. Loh began the meeting with vital information for local businesses, including recovery, resources available, the control of risk of transmission in the workplace, keeping employee and customers safe and what needs to be done in a team effort to reduce the risk of infection.

"The most key thing that I want everyone to know is that we are absolutely committed to helping businesses reduce the risk of COVID-19," he said. "I view reopening as a critical component to reducing the social and economic impact that COVID-19 has had. Now that things are getting under control, we know what we need to do - adapt to the core four behaviors and take the necessary steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19, and we're completely committed to helping you do that."

The first question from the public came from a local business owner who owns an office that is only visited by carriers or other employees for meetings, with public appearance very rare. This business owner wondered if they are still required to wear masks in their office.

"In general, wearing non-medical masks, particularly if you're interacting with someone outside of your workplace setting, may be helpful," answered Dr. Loh. "In terms of broader wearing of masks, it's important to be clear that the bylaw speaks to a requirement to wear a non-medical mask in settings that are ordinarily accessed to the public."

The next question was brought forward by a receptionist who works behind a sheet of protective plexiglass, who wondered if it was necessary for her to have to mask-up on a day-to-day basis.

"If someone is in an enclosed plexiglass setting that maintains physical distancing and is unique just to them, then the need to wear a mask is significantly reduced," said Dr. Loh. "If it is fully enclosed and not open to the public, such as some of the cash registers that we see at the supermarket for example, people do not need to wear a mask when they're in that enclosure."

An independent gym submitted a question regarding specific guidelines to the reopening of workout spaces, and what those specifics may be.

"The province is maintaining a list of essential workplaces that are allowed to operate and they're changing it with each stage that is coming there," answered Dr. Loh. "I think what they're doing is they're trying to release sector-specific guidance at the same time that they are permitting things to reopen."

The opening of gyms is part of Phase 3 of the reopening of the province. Premier Doug Ford announced on Monday that 24 regions in Ontario will be able to move into Phase 3 as of Friday (July 17). Ten regional health units, the majority of them located within the GTA, will remain in Phase 2, including Peel Region. This means that, for the time being, Caledon will remain in Phase 2 of the

provincial reopening.

One business owner asked if they have the right to refuse someone who is not wearing a mask access to their facility, and if they refuse to leave what they should do in that sort of situation.

?The bylaw does not prevent the right of business owners to decline individuals who choose not to wear a mask, as I understand,? said Dr. Loh. ?As I understand from our legal colleagues, that is always the purview of businesses. In terms of the bylaw specifically, the bylaw speaks to the idea that individuals who do not have a valid medical exception, should wear a mask when on premises.?

One Caledon staff member, Ben Roberts added, ?We don't want to encourage anybody to necessarily refuse services because somebody is not wearing a mask. because there are exemptions. However, in this case, I think it's really important to keep in mind, physical distancing is a key, other way of protecting everyone. And the other aspect is that you never want to put your employees in harm's way. So, if things became escalated at all, keep in mind that you can certainly contact the Town for assistance.?

For more information regarding the mandatory face covering bylaw, and business inquiries visit [Caledon.ca](#).