

Town of Caledon makes masks mandatory in public buildings

Written By ALYSSA PARKHILL

Shortly after the Region of Peel entered Phase 2 of Ontario's economic reopening, municipal leaders started to discuss the idea of making the wearing of facemasks mandatory in all public buildings.

Areas such as Toronto, Dufferin County, Guelph and Brampton have already enforced a temporary bylaw that all residents must wearing a face mask when entering any indoor public area within their regions. Now, Caledon is following suit.

The Town of Caledon council passed the temporary bylaw for mandatory masks for indoor public areas within Caledon on Tuesday (July 7), as recommended by staff.

The bylaw will be put into effect starting on Friday (July 10).

"Last week on Tuesday (June 30) I offered a strong recommendation that the masking requirements in indoor spaces be enacted. This is in light of the evolving situation that we have around COVID-19 in the Region of Peel," said Medical Officer of Health of Peel, Dr. Lawrence Loh. "It's important for me to state the evidence around masking, while it is evolving rapidly and has evolved since the pandemic, has not changed in view of why I'm recommending this requirement, and you all know since about early May, I have strongly recommended the use of masking, where it is not possible to physically distance."

The evidence provided to respond with mandatory mask concerns, is the ventilation within indoor public spaces, as the transmission of the COVID-19 virus tends to spread quicker and easier indoors.

"We know that wearing a mask in indoor spaces can help reduce the risk of transmission," said Dr. Loh to council. "Especially as we move to the end of the tail of the first wave, in the Region of Peel, in our community."

As Peel Region entered Phase 2, and more restrictions began to lift, more and more residents are feeling comfortable enough to go back into public, whether it be shopping or visiting local businesses that have reopened. The Mandatory Face Covering Bylaw will help reduce transmission from one person to another, by keeping the mouth and nose covered.

There are to be exceptions for vulnerable or senior residents who are unable to wear a mask due to respiratory issues and health concerns.

As of last Friday (July 3), Peel Region has reported a total of 6,294 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with the majority of cases situated at long-term care and nursing homes as well as correctional facilities. Caledon has had a total of 176 cases.

Dr. Loh is hopeful that through this temporary bylaw, Stage 3 of the provincial reopening will be close by.

"This is intended to be a temporary bylaw. We certainly don't intend for this to be long-term," he explained.

Dr. Loh added, "At this time, what we're looking at is trying to really push down our case counts and be able to enter Stage 3 in the coming weeks. My hope is that if we're able to see case counts come down, definitively, if we're able to continue to see transmission slow in the community, that we may revisit it in the coming weeks if it's still required."

Ward 3 and 4 Area Councillor Nick DeBoer asked about residents who have concerns or complaints over having difficulty breathing while wearing masks, in which Dr. Loh responded there are no evidential studies that proves respiratory issues when wearing a face mask.

?There's no evidence of that in repeatable studies, that I've been able to see at this point in time. Really, the biggest and the only concern that is typically around the masks, that have been able to be identified, is more individuals feel either claustrophobic, or have a sense of stress or anxiety,? said Dr. Loh. ?That is why in the bylaw we've identified both physical as well as mental wellbeing concerns as potential exemptions for wearing a mask. ?

The bylaw title, named 'face coverings' rather than 'mask', was used to inform that masks along with bandanas, scarfs and other similar items that fit over one's mouth, nose and chin, are all suitable under the bylaw.

For more information, the Mandatory Face Covering Bylaw in the Town of Caledon, please visit [Caledon.ca](#).