

Worshipful Mayor, Members of Committee, City Staff and Members of the Public.

I delegate here today in support of the initiative to mandate the wearing of face coverings in those indoor places where we conduct our daily lives and commercial activities to help us return, as quickly as is responsibly possible, to a degree of normalcy as we attempt to reopen businesses and restore economic activity.

My delegation is essentially the op. ed. piece that both the Hamilton Spectator and Burlington Gazette published on Monday, a copy of which is submitted with my delegation documents, but rather than bore everybody with a re-reading of that I will try to re-emphasise the important parts.

This virus has not gone away it is still killing people and wreaking economic havoc throughout the world. We in Canada, in Burlington are not immune.

To recover from the worst of its economic impact we must start to re-open our businesses and our economy. If we fail to do that safely the economic damage will be revisited upon us, with even greater magnitude as will the sickness and death.

Opening unwisely or carelessly will return us to the disastrous place we were in January of this year. But starting from a higher plateau the economic, social and health damage will be greatly accelerated.

Just look south to our American neighbour. It does not have to be that way.

Physical distancing, hand cleanliness and wearing face coverings to limit the spread have brought us to a much better place today than we were in January. Will we now abandon the sacrifices made by businesses, families, seniors in long term care, students and healthcare workers which has put us in that safer space today?

Please do not be deluded that this better place indicates a weakening of the virus or its deadly potency. The current respite is a result of mandated lockdowns and the use of the limited tools we have to fight this virus.

The most effective tools we have at the moment are not the drugs, medications or vaccines promised by scientists at some future date. They are tools we already have in our hands, tools recommended by those same scientists while we wait for the alternatives to be developed. They are fairly simple and straightforward.

The most effective have been hand cleanliness, physical distancing and the wearing of face coverings or shields indoors where physical distancing is not an option.

The science is conclusive, health experts estimate that 30 to 60 % of all spread, by proximity, breathed droplets or hand contact, may be asymptomatic. Masks reduce that spread significantly.

Figures from New York suggest the Covid19 transmission rate in health care workers is reduced by 61.3%. (12.2% in health care workers compared to 19.9% of the general public.) Those working closest to infected people spread the virus least because they wear face coverings. Given recent evidence that respiratory droplets may linger in the indoor air, even longer than initial estimates makes the issue of face coverings all the more pressing and acute.

Other levels of government vacillate. The Feds want the provinces to act, the provinces want municipalities to act; they all agree that mandatory face covering in close public proximity is a good idea, yet no-one acts. They claim it will be difficult to enforce.

Please don't buy into that argument. A good idea is still a good idea! If enforcement is a barrier, we should work to eliminate the barrier not the idea. Public smoking, speeding and drunk driving are tough to enforce, and municipalities manage that.

Please do not fear offending those on the "civil liberties" left or the "don't infringe on my freedoms" right. This virus may be the only non-partisan thing in North America today. It is neither Liberal, Conservative, Democrat, Republican, left or right. Covid 19 attacks us all, straight down the middle.

The job of leaders is to lead, the people of Burlington are urging you to lead on this issue and the province has apparently abdicated that responsibility to you.

The fundamental duty of government is to protect its citizens. I urge you to adopt a position commensurate with that basic duty. To create and implement a by-law which helps us protect each other by wearing face coverings in indoor settings where social distancing is difficult and proximity dangerous and possibly deadly.

For the sake of businesses, keen to resume business once again, who may fear offending customers, failure to enforce face covering will put their employees at risk as it does their customers. Putting customers at risk has never been a good business strategy nor a way to encourage a commercial reboot in our city.

Other than a very small number of pulmonary health limitations, there is no health argument for not wearing a mask. They are not too warm. The places we should be wearing them are mostly air conditioned. The time spent masked up is minimal. No-one is mandating citizens to wear face coverings at home, in their cars, or walking in the park.

For those who find masks inconvenient I offer the words of Infectious Disease Specialist, Dr. Lilian Abbo: "If you don't like wearing a mask You sure as hell won't like wearing a ventilator."

The ultimate argument for mandating face coverings may be to protect those front line healthcare workers worker beside us in stores, in check-out lines or reaching past us for that last bottle of hand sanitizer. They wear them all the time to protect you and I!

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to this delegation.

Jim Young, Aldershot.

Supporting Article and Data (Burlington Gazette and Hamilton Spectator)

If Governments will not act to protect us, we must protect each other.

As we watch our neighbours to the south descend into self-inflicted chaos over their refusal to grasp the importance of wearing masks in a pandemic, I am reminded that we Canadians sometimes feel superior to Americans. We are not, and viruses treat us equally. We are however different. Our founding principles make us so. While Americans seek the *“unalienable rights to the preservation of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”*, we in Canada settle more modestly for *“peace, order and good government”*.

Nothing highlights this more than the issue of face covering to reduce the spread of Covid 19. The evidence is conclusive, health experts estimate that 30 to 60 % of all spread, by proximity, breathed droplets or hand contact, may be asymptomatic. Figures from New York suggest the Covid19 transmission rate in health care workers is reduced by 61.3%. (12.2% compared to 19.9% of the general public.) Those working closest to infected people have lower infection because they wear face coverings and other PPE. Have we learned nothing from the resurgence in the USA, where freedom from masks has become the political war cry of the US re-opening?

Our politicians vacillate. The Feds say the provinces must act, Ontario Premier Ford says it should be decided locally, GTHA municipal leaders beg the province for universal standards. Everyone agrees that mandatory face covering in close public proximity is a good idea. Yet none of them act. They claim it will be difficult to enforce. Sorry, but a good idea is still a good idea! If enforcement is a barrier, eliminate the barrier not the idea. Public smoking, speeding and drunk driving are tough to enforce, and we do that. The job of leaders is to lead. Please don't squander the months of sacrifice by millions of Ontarians, putting lives, jobs and businesses on hold, to fight this virus and save lives. That fight is not yet over.

What drives this reluctance to enforce face coverings? It should not be fear of offending voters on the “civil liberties” left or the “don't infringe my freedom” right. This virus may be the only non-partisan thing in North America today. It is neither Liberal, Conservative, Democrat, Republican, left or right. Covid 19 is coming for all of us, straight down the middle.

For retail corporations, keen to resume business as usual, mandating masks seems not to be a priority. Need we remind them, as they seek every minor competitive advantage, failure to enforce face covering puts their own employees at risk as it does their customers? Any perception of reduced risk spells danger for their reopening too. The virus is still out there; and putting customers at risk has never been a good business strategy.

The US re-opening failure should remind us that abandoning caution and masks, in the *“pursuit of happiness”*, and economic recovery has consequences. Avoiding a similar disaster will mean re-opening smarter. The more Canadian approach of *“order and*

good government” demands that our political leaders get off the fence and mandate wearing face coverings when safe distancing is difficult or is not an option.

Other than a very small number of pulmonary health limitations, there is no argument for not wearing a mask. They are not too warm. The places we should be wearing them are mostly air conditioned, in malls, stores and indoor spaces. The time spent masked up is minimal. No-one is asking you to wear one at home, in your car, or walking in the park.

To those who demand the freedom not to wear a mask, store workers and other customer’s rights must be equally respected. The saying: “Your right to swing your fist freely, ends at my nose!” makes: “No Mask No Entry” a reasonable position. Considering all the freedoms we have sacrificed until now to fight this virus, giving up the freedom to make others sick seems hardly worth of defending.

My mother would have said: “For goodness sakes stop whining and put your mask on.” Infectious Disease Specialist, Dr. Lilian Abbo said it better: “If you don’t like wearing a mask You sure as hell won’t like wearing a ventilator.”

Face coverings will not end Covid 19, and we must be careful not to let masks lull us into a false sense of safety, but they will help and If you won’t wear a mask to protect your neighbours, please wear one to protect the front line health worker beside you in the check-out line or reaching past you for that last bottle of hand sanitizer. They wear them all the time to protect you!

Jim Young. Burlington.

Jim is an occasional contributor to the Spectator on political and civic issues.