

July 8, 2020

Re: Face coverings or non-medical masks

Dear Members of Regional Council,

As the Medical Officer of Health, I continue to strongly recommend the use of face coverings when physical distancing could be a challenge. I am also supportive of approaches and measures that aim to increase the use of face coverings as an additional layer of protection in our response to control COVID-19 in our community. Should a municipality choose to implement a by-law for this purpose, I would support this.

Current evidence indicates that COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through respiratory droplets expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or speaks. Individuals can become infected by breathing in these droplets, or by touching contaminated objects or surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Face coverings or non-medical masks can act as a barrier to help stop the spread of droplets.

Evidence about COVID-19 and its prevention and treatment is continuously emerging. While the existing body of evidence regarding face coverings is not conclusive, wearing a face covering when physical distancing is a challenge may help to reduce community spread of COVID-19, especially from individuals who are infected with COVID-19 but asymptomatic.

Some municipalities have developed by-laws to mandate the use of face coverings in indoor public spaces. It is also important to continue to encourage residents to wear face coverings in other situations where physical distancing is a challenge (for example, crowded outdoor gatherings).

I am proud of the Halton community's efforts to date in flattening the curve, through physical distancing, washing hands regularly and staying home when ill. These important voluntary actions have allowed us to have fewer cases, hospitalizations and deaths, compared to early projections.

As we prepare for a second wave of COVID-19 and influenza season, it is important to maintain a culture of precaution while the economy reopens. Increasing face covering or non-medical mask use is one additional way we can protect each other. Wearing a face covering is not a substitute for other public health measures, and alone is not enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is essential to continue to maintain physical distancing whenever possible, wash hands regularly, and stay home when ill.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to protecting the health and wellbeing of Halton residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Meghani".

Dr. Hamidah Meghani

Regional Municipality of Halton

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