

RE: Wearing of Masks

From: D Davies [REDACTED]
Reply-To: D Davies [REDACTED]
To: Blais, Diane <diane.blais@ottawa.ca>
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Dear Ms Blais

The recent publication in the Lancet on June 27, 2020 clearly states that there is **a paucity and no direct evidence** that masks prevent either the transmission or the contraction of the virus. This was a comprehensive systematic review- a **meta analysis of all studies** in the field pertaining to the spread of viruses.

Since there is no direct scientific evidence to justify a mandatory mask policy I totally reject this policy by public health and the City of Ottawa. Unless you can send me randomized studies with experimental and control groups that clearly show that masks are effective at preventing the transmission/contraction of the virus than I believe you are grossly misleading members of the public by instituting such a requirement.

The lancet makes this crystal clear and health officials in this City have failed to provide any data that is statistically significant that masks make a difference. At no time has anyone at any press conference outlined any scientific evidence to justify the decisions that have been taken in dealing with this virus either at the federal, provincial or municipal level. It's a sad commentary on the people in charge of public health in this country. Either provide the scientific evidence or stop misleading the public.

Darryl T Davies

----- Original Message -----

From: "Blais, Diane" <Diane.Blais@ottawa.ca>
Date: July 13, 2020 at 10:30 AM

Dear Mr. Davies,

Thank you for your email regarding masks and for your interest in evidence to support the mandatory use of masks in enclosed public spaces. Your email was forwarded to me for a response on behalf of Ottawa Public Health. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

Throughout this pandemic, Ottawa Public Health's objective has been, and continues to be, to protect the health of Ottawa residents by limiting the potential spread of infection.

As more businesses and public spaces open and people increase their contacts, the risk of a rapid rise in infections and outbreaks is ever-present. Increasing evidence supports wearing a mask when in enclosed public spaces as an important measure in reducing COVID-19 transmission, while the risk of rising rates of infection continues. The consensus in the scientific community and amongst public health organizations around the world is that the cumulative weight of evidence supports that non-medical face masks lessen the rates of transmission of COVID-19 from wearers. Most agree that face masks work best by reducing the amount of virus that is projected into the air in respiratory micro-droplets from someone who is infected with the virus. Additionally, other community level measures such as physical distancing and hand hygiene should continue to be employed to decrease transmission of COVID-19.

Because this is a new virus, public health agencies have had to act on emerging evidence that has been developing as the pandemic spread and as different jurisdictions have tried different interventions. Waiting for evidence, such as randomized clinical trials, to promote mask use is not ethical as mask use is already supported by an increasing body of evidence gained during the pandemic.

This emerging evidence has evolved from physics, engineering, and laboratory studies looking at materials to block respiratory droplets, then augmented by modeling studies of the potential benefits at a population level of even if masks would only be modestly effective, to more recently increasing numbers of studies assessing the impacts in regions and countries that have already implemented mass masking policies during their COVID-19 response. These lines of evidence are coupled with the evidence about the impact of asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic transmission, the higher rates of transmission in indoor versus outdoor settings, and risks of resurgence with continuing community transmission as demonstrated in other jurisdictions.

As a result, it is important to take steps now, such as mandating mask use in indoor public spaces, and to provide guidance, based on the best available information. This will enable the population to be in the best position possible during the next phase of re-opening businesses and services and of resuming activities while minimizing the risk of a resurgence.

Should you be interested in reviewing some of the emerging evidence on mask use to reduce the spread of COVID-19, please refer to resources from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) as well as the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) Updated Guidance dated July 9, 2020](#), an excerpt of which is copied below:

Given that infected people without symptoms can transmit the virus, it is also prudent to encourage the use of fabric face masks in public places where there is community transmission. Fabric masks, if made and worn properly, can serve as a barrier to droplets expelled from the wearer into the air and environment and where other prevention measures, such as physical distancing, are not possible.

You can also visit [OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Masks](https://ottawapublichealth.ca/Masks), which now includes the following links:

- Public Health Ontario: [COVID-19 – What We Know So Far About...Wearing Masks in Public](#)
- [Ontario Ministry of Health](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#)

Please also note that representatives from Ottawa's business sector have expressed strong support for this measure and noted that a mandatory mask policy would ensure all businesses are on a level playing field, ensure employees feel protected in the workplace and that the public is confident in visiting retail settings. The Ottawa Board of Trade has issued a [public statement](#) supporting this approach.

Ottawa Public Health understands that COVID-19 continues to pose challenges and that residents may be concerned about both the short and long-term impacts of the pandemic. However, as previously indicated, as more businesses and public spaces open and people increase their contacts, the risk of a rapid rise in infections and outbreaks is ever-present.

Lastly, we ask that residents support local businesses and their staff as they are required to implement this mandate in their stores and places of business. Many people are working under difficult conditions and it is important that we continue to support one another with patience and understanding.

Thank you for reaching out and sharing your concerns.

Diane Blais

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