

July 7, 2020

To the Councils and the CAOs of the municipalities in the County of Simcoe, the District of Muskoka, and the Cities of Orillia and Barrie:

Re: Instruction from the Medical Officer of Health regarding mandatory face coverings in indoor public settings

Please be advised that today I am providing instruction to the businesses and organizations within the municipalities serviced by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU), requiring persons within publicly accessible indoor locations, including public transit systems, to wear a face covering (i.e. a non-medical mask). Appended you will find a copy of my letter to them on this matter, which is being distributed by email today, located on our website, and communicated via the media and by social media. In doing so, I am drawing upon regulation O. Reg 263/20 s.4(2) of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act R.S.O. 1990, as follows:

The person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall operate the business or organization in compliance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting.

In order to more successfully reach all businesses and organizations, I request that you also forward the appended letter to those that you know of in your community. We are happy to take all enquiries on this matter at our [Health Connection](#) service.

With this approach, enforcement may be conducted by police officers as well as provincial offences officers (which includes municipal bylaw officers and public health enforcement personnel); I appreciate from communication with the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) of the municipalities that resources to conduct such enforcement will be very limited. As such, it will be incumbent on SMDHU in partnership with our municipalities and other stakeholders to educate and support these businesses and organizations, as well as the general public in order to achieve a high degree of compliance.

My rationale for proceeding with this course of action at this time is as follows: As we proceed through the stages of the province's plan to open the economy there is an increasing risk of resurgence of COVID-19 transmission in our communities. There have been very worrisome examples of resurgence internationally, and we have had some experiences of limited resurgence in Ontario (including in recent weeks in Simcoe Muskoka). With the summer upon us, Simcoe Muskoka is experiencing the arrival of a large and increasing number of visitors from parts of the province with a much higher incidence of COVID-19, and with resultant crowding in public spaces. There is emerging evidence, primarily based on ecological studies and modelling, suggesting that COVID-19 transmission rates can be reduced with a high level of population

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□ **Cookstown:**
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Cookstown, ON
L0L 1L0
705-458-1103
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□ **Gravenhurst:**
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□ **Huntsville:**
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705-526-9324
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compliance of face covering/non-medical mask use in conjunction with physical distancing, hand sanitation, and self-isolation and testing when ill. Voluntary compliance with mask use in indoor public places appears to be suboptimal at this time in Simcoe Muskoka. There has also been a high degree of support expressed from community partners, physicians, hospital leadership, some in the business community, and municipal CAOs and politicians for leadership from SMDHU to require face coverings/non-medical masks in indoor public places.

It has been noted that with 26 local municipal councils it would be very hard to achieve a timely, consistent and comprehensive approach to this end through bylaws alone; thus I am proceeding with my instruction using this regulation. However bylaws in support of my instruction could be helpful, given that my instruction is only binding until the provincial emergency declaration is discontinued (at which point further action on my part would be needed, depending on the situation at that time). If your council is interested in pursuing a bylaw, and if SMDHU could provide assistance in any way please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for the support that I have received related to this very important and challenging public health matter. COVID-19 is the pandemic of our lifetime, and it takes the collective efforts of us all to protect our communities from it.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

Charles Gardner, MD, CCFP, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

CG:sh

Encl. (1)