



## Office of the President

CL-C 59-2020

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Friday, July 17, 2020

Mr. Jim Bradley, Regional Chair  
Niagara Region  
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way  
Thorold, ON  
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(For redistribution to Regional Council)

Dear Chair Bradley,

Brock University continues to work with you and our community partners in dealing with the crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We initiated our response to the potential impact of COVID-19 early. By March, we began to undertake steps with other postsecondary institutions such as increased cleaning and disinfection, communicating methods to prevent spreading of the virus, and eventually suspending face-to-face classes and moving significant parts of our operations to online and offsite. We recently communicated our plan to have a primarily online fall semester that balances student health and well-being, while also ensuring the health and safety of our 6,000 employees who live throughout the Niagara Region and support the educational success of our 19,700 students. Our staff and faculty have been working diligently these last few months to ensure that our planning allows students to have a high-quality learning experience, that will also help to prepare them to live and work in an ever changed post-COVID world. While this has been a significantly challenging time for everyone, Brock will continue to be a leader in Niagara's effort to fight COVID-19. We are the second largest employer in the Niagara region and we are committed to supporting the region in its reopening and recovery efforts.

As the provincial and federal government continue to move to increasingly re-open the economy, we would like to state our support for a mandatory mask policy moving forward. Research has continued to find that airborne transmission appears to be the dominant route for infection. A recent study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)* found that in New York State the daily new infection rate dropped by 3% per day after a policy requiring that people wear face masks or coverings in public took effect. The researchers estimated that requirements related to face masks and coverings significantly reduced the number of infections. The WHO has also acknowledged a growing compendium of observational evidence on the use of masks by the general public and has updated its

guidance to advise that to prevent COVID-19 transmission effectively in areas of community transmission, governments should encourage the general public to wear masks in specific situations and settings as part of a comprehensive approach to suppress SARS-CoV-2 transmission. The federal government's Health Canada and the United States' CDC have also updated their recommendations that people should wear cloth face coverings in public settings and when around people who do not live in their household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Overall, the growing body of evidence suggests that mandatory mask wearing can be an effective solution to stopping the transmission of COVID-19.

As we have witnessed over recent weeks in many countries around the world, the threat of the virus has not been eliminated and it can re-emerge with similar or even surpass transmission levels we saw in March/April at the peak of the first wave. With restrictions continuing to loosen up, now is the time more than ever to remain vigilant and take every step to limit the transmission of the virus until a solution is found to completely eliminate it. Wearing a mask is comfortable for most with minor inconvenience for a few, but wearing a mask is a proven action that can save the lives of many of our family members, friends and neighbours.

At Brock, our students, faculty and staff will be required to wear a mask in all of our indoor spaces and advised to do so outdoors if physical distancing cannot be assured. Our students, faculty and staff live across the region and we attract nearly 9,000 students to the Niagara region each year. We have put in place a recovery strategy to get students back to the region as soon as possible. The overall economic impact of Brock is \$640 million and we are building new residences to support the growth we have seen over the past few years. Wearing a mask is an action to improve health outcomes, but it is also a demonstration of the commitment we all have to the economic recovery of the region.

If you have any questions or if there is anything that Brock can do to further support the Region in its efforts to combat COVID-19 please do not hesitate to reach out to us. You may contact Meaghan Rusnell, Executive Director of Government and Community Relations at [mrusnell@brocku.ca](mailto:mrusnell@brocku.ca).

Sincerely,



Dr. Gervan Fearon  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
Brock University