July 20, 2020

Statement to the Niagara Regional Council

RE: Bylaw -Mandatory masking in public

The Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association advocates for the passing of the mandatory wearing of masks in the Niagara Region. Research shows that masks keeps COVID-19 numbers down. It is imperative we keep numbers down for the safety of all community members. Specifically, we highlight a few effects of COVID-19 on marginalized members of our community.

Research has shown that COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting and affecting individuals who are on the margins of society.

HEALTH: Not actively taking every possible precaution to protect residents against COVID-19 deepens current inequalities and oppressions of multiple vulnerable groups including: people of colour, people experiencing poverty, LGBTQ+, people who are elderly and people with health issues. For this reason, we call on the Regional Municipality of Niagara to make mask wearing mandatory. In this way, the Region is taking an active measure to protect our most vulnerable residents from this deadly virus.

EDUCATION: Wearing masks now helps us to have a greater chance of successfully re-opening schools in September. Research has shown that marginalized people are disproportionately affected by school closure. Attending to the implications for people of colour, data shows that racialized people disproportionality experience poverty. Families experiencing poverty do not have the same structural supports available to support the education of their children on-line. For this reason, we call on the Region of Niagara to make mask wearing mandatory. In this way, the Region is taking an active measure to provide equitable access to education for all Niagara residents.

We call on the Niagara Region Councillors to implement mandatory bylaw so that our community can collectively work to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Niagara. Do it for all of our health, education, and economy.

Signed,

Vicki-Lynn Smith, on behalf of the Niagara Region Anti-Racism Association