

July 8, 2020

Niagara Regional Council
Special Meeting

Subject: Support for a Motion To Make The Wearing of Masks Mandatory (in inside spaces)

By now, most or all of you will be familiar with me from the various e-mails I have sent to you.

I apologize for this late submission but I only just learned that I am able to do this.

I have had several responses from members of council regarding this motion both supporting this motion and expressing reservations about it. I thank those members for replying to me.

I understand that at one level this is not simple and there are various concerns that have to be considered. To develop a solution to combat this pandemic is a huge task and to get 100% certainty will take more time than this virus is giving us. The longer we wait to take positive action the more people will get sick, need intensive care and die.

I have been following recommendations from all levels of government to wear a mask when I go out to places like the supermarket. I know when I do this the mask is not protecting me but I am offering some protection to others in the event that I (unknowingly) have the virus and will not spread it as far. Dr. Hirji congratulated me for setting an example. However, the majority of people in supermarkets (and other stores) are not wearing masks or obeying the 6' rule as they reach over me to get a product. It is of no comfort to me to be protecting others and they aren't protecting me. When my wife went to the supermarket today she noticed even fewer masks and less control of how many people are being allowed into the stores. I suspect that our vigilance is declining the longer this lasts.

I am extremely disappointed in the federal and provincial governments that recommend the wearing of masks but not only don't mandate it but have sloughed it off the local governments. We are seeing a complete hodge podge of city and regional governments trying to solve the same problem. Regardless of their inaction you now have the opportunity and responsibility to take action.

It is my belief that the wearing of (non-medical) masks to reduce the spread of the virus is an all or nothing situation. In a supermarket when only 20% wear masks that is pointless. It is only when everyone is wearing a mask that everyone has increased protection. People are not following the recommendations. (Note: I acknowledge there are people who can't wear masks and the number will be somewhat less than 100%).

It is unfortunate that the scientific community has not yet delivered to us studies and statistics that make this decision trivial. What we do see are a variety of different reports with varying degrees of evidence and sometimes even conflicting evidence.

The Virus is not going to wait for these studies. Just look what is happening in the southern US right now.

Despite the lack of consistent information I believe that there are some facts that you can use to support a mask decision:

- 1) The virus absolutely travels from person to person via the air
- 2) When we breathe, speak or cough we exhale the virus.
- 3) We are told that a separation of 6' helps to minimize our exposure to virus in the air
- 4) When we speak or cough, the virus cloud goes beyond 6'
- 5) Masks will reduce how far that virus cloud spreads. The latest simulation studies I have seen show that a cloth mask will reduce that distance to about 6".

So now I want you to imagine that you are in a supermarket. The person ahead of you is not wearing a mask. Even if they are just breathing they are putting a cloud of droplets into the air for about 6'. If neither of you are moving then that may be safe and you will not be exposed to any virus that they breathed out. The problem is that we don't just stand in supermarkets. We walk, so within about 1 second of the person in front of you breathing or coughing you are walking into their cloud, potentially full of CV19.

However, if that person was wearing a mask that cloud could shrink from 6' to 6" and with the mask filtering out some of the virus you would have much less chance of walking into a virus laden cloud.

On a bit of a final note, I continue to see CV19 being referred to in the same context as catching the flu. This is nothing like the flu unless of course you want to compare it to the Spanish flu that killed 50 million people. We don't have any vaccinations for it and probably won't see them readily available for maybe 2 years. The medical world is now realizing that this is not just a respiratory disease, it is a disease that is attacking the circulatory system and organs. Some survivors of the virus are living with various amounts of organ damage.

You have the chance today to pass this motion and help protect me and my family, yourselves and your families and everyone else in the region.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Geoff Aldridge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Geoff" and last name "Aldridge" clearly distinguishable.

Geoffrey Aldridge

[REDACTED], Crystal Beach