

From: "Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>

To: "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

CC: "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"

Date: 10/13/2020 12:00:29 PM

Subject: VCH guidance - use of non-medical masks

Attachments: VCH Letter- CoV Cllr Kirby-Yung's Mandatory Mask Motion.pdf

Good morning Mayor and Council,

Please find attached for your information a letter from Dr. Daly and Dr. Lysyshyn setting out their advice on requirements for the use of non-medical masks for COVID infection control.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie | Deputy City Manager
Office of the City Manager | City of Vancouver
paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca
604.873.7666



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

October 13th 2020

Councilor Sarah Kirby-Yung
City of Vancouver

Dear Councilor Kirby-Yung,

Re: Mask Policy for City of Vancouver Facilities

Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers value our collaborative working relationship with staff and elected officials at the City of Vancouver. This includes our support for the City of Vancouver Emergency Operations Centre, and our support for recent pandemic response efforts initiatives such as the “Room to Queue”, “Room to Move”, “Room to Load” and the “Slow Streets” which have all helped re-shape public spaces to support the goals of reopening our communities and minimizing the transmission of COVID-19. We acknowledge these and other extraordinary steps the City of Vancouver has taken to prevent further spread of COVID-19 in communities and support the health of the population.

Non-medical mask use is a popular issue with some members of the public, and many City of Vancouver residents choose to use wear them in a variety of settings. In Canada, public health experts recommend use of non-medical masks or face coverings when people are in public settings and it is challenging to maintain a 2-metre distance from others, particularly in crowded settings, and *when local epidemiology and rate of community transmission warrant it*.¹ In BC, including Vancouver, public health experts have encouraged use of non-medical masks in uncontrolled public locations where people are not able to maintain a 2 metre physical distance from other people they do not know.^{2,3} However, we do not support mandatory non-medical mask policies.

In the Vancouver Coastal Health region, there is no public health order or recommendation for people to wear non-medical masks in all public spaces or buildings. While there has been an increase in COVID-19 cases reported in BC with Phase 3 of the province’s reopening plan, there has been a recent flattening of reported cases and the overall rate remains relatively low, including in Vancouver, when compared to other jurisdictions in Canada and abroad, and therefore our present circumstance does not warrant such orders or recommendations. The City is likely aware of a few local governments in Ontario that have recently implemented mask requirements; these were brought in at the recommendation of local public health in context of local COVID-19 transmission risks.

In the hierarchy of measures to prevent COVID transmission, non-medical mask wearing is one of the lowest, and should not replace more effective measures (i.e. staying home if feeling unwell, limiting social contacts, especially outside your own family or close friends/co-workers, and keeping physically distanced when

¹ Regulatory considerations on the classification of non-medical masks or face coverings: Notice to industry, Health Canada, accessed at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment/medical-masks-respirators/face-covering-classifications-notice.html>

² <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/masks>

³ Non-medical cloth masks are your choice during COVID-19, Dr. Bonnie Henry, Ministry of Health <https://news.gov.bc.ca/factsheets/non-medical-cloth-masks-are-your-choice-during-covid-19>

interacting with strangers, etc). These are actions that all people in Vancouver can take, and do not require buying masks or other face coverings which may create additional financial costs for struggling households. City of Vancouver buildings and facilities have robust COVID-19 safety plans in place, therefore there is no need for a policy requiring use of non-medical masks.

Masks cannot be tolerated by everyone, including for those with certain underlying medical conditions, and municipal staff are not in a position to determine who might qualify for an exemption to the policy. Therefore, any move to make non-medical mask wearing mandatory could create barriers and risks for vulnerable people, such as a lack of access to essential services and the experience of further stigmatization and marginalization if they are unable to afford or wear such items.

Given the excellent COVID-19 safety plans in place at City facilities, and the relatively low rate of COVID-19 infection in the local population, there is no justification for a mandatory non-medical mask policy in City of Vancouver facilities at this time and we strongly recommend that it not be pursued. The city should continue to diligently implement its COVID-19 safety plans with confidence that you are serving citizens in ways consistent with provincial and local public health guidance. Our staff are available for any review or advice regarding City of Vancouver COVID-19 safety plans.

Sincerely,



Patricia Daly, MD, FRCPC
Chief Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health



Mark Lysyshyn, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Deputy Chief Medical Health Officer
Vancouver Coastal Health