

Media Release
Tuesday, July 7, 2020

Local Health Unit Issues Requirement for Mask Use in Commercial Establishments

Under instructions issued by the local Medical Officer of Health, area businesses will have to have a policy in place that requires people to wear a non-medical mask or face covering before entering their commercial establishment.

Dr. Lynn Noseworthy, Medical Officer of Health (MOH) for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit today issued instructions to the owners and operators of commercial establishments currently open during Stage 2 of the province's reopening. The instructions have been issued under the authority of Ontario Regulation 263/20 under the provincial Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA).

"Although we have seen a decline in the number of COVID-19 cases in our area, we want to be sure we continue to see a decrease as we move towards the reopening of more businesses within the province," says Dr. Lynn Noseworthy, Medical Officer of Health for the HKPR District Health Unit. "We need to do everything we can to avoid the chance of a resurgence in activity that we have seen in some other places."

The requirement for non-medical mask or face covering use within local businesses will come into effect at 12:01 am July 13, 2020. The use of masks will be required while the provincial Emergency Order remains in force or until such time that the MOH lifts the requirement.

Under the Health Unit's instructions, commercial establishments are premises that are openly accessible to members of the public and used for the purposes of offering goods or services for sale. An establishment would include a mall or other structure containing commercial premises, including: retail stores, convenience stores, restaurants, personal services settings, grocery stores and bakeries, gas stations, indoor farmers' markets, areas of mechanics' shops/garages/repair shops which are open to the public.

Wearing a mask is about protecting other people, Dr. Noseworthy says, and reduces the likelihood that someone could unknowingly spread the virus to another person.

"Provincially, we have seen a number of asymptomatic cases," she says. "This is just another step in doing what we can to protect our family, friends and neighbours in our communities."

The policy of the commercial establishment should be enacted and enforced in 'good faith' and should be used as an opportunity to educate about the use of non-medical masks or face coverings in indoor commercial establishments. Additional education and enforcement will be conducted by Health Unit staff, as well as local municipal bylaw and police officers.

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There are exemptions to the policy and a person will be exempt from wearing a non-medical mask or face covering in the premises if:

- The person is a child under the age of two years; or a child under the age of 5 years either chronologically or developmentally and he or she refuses to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver;
- The person is incapacitated and unable to remove their mask without assistance;
- For any other medical reason, the person cannot safely wear a non-medical mask or face covering such as, but not limited to, respiratory disease, cognitive difficulties or difficulties in hearing or processing information.
- For any religious reason, the person cannot wear a non-medical mask or face covering or cannot cover the face in a manner that would properly control the source.

In issuing the instructions to commercial establishments, HKPR District Health Unit is joining a growing list of health units across the province that is requiring non-medical mask or face covering use in public spaces.

For more information about the instructions requiring non-medical mask use or face coverings, visit the Health Unit's website at www.hkpr.on.ca or call toll-free at 1-866-888-4577, ext. 5020.

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