

October 29, 2020

Mayor and Council
Town of the Blue Mountains
32 Mill Street, PO Box 310
Thornbury ON N0H 2P0

Dear Mayor and Council,

I have some concerns about the Town of the Blue Mountains' proposed by-law on mandatory face coverings being considered at the November 2, 2020 Council meeting.

First, I must make it clear, I wholeheartedly agree with the scientific and medical consensus about the efficacy of face masks in preventing the spread of covid. I think we all have a fundamental responsibility to do whatever we can to protect ourselves and our fellow citizens from this virus. Masks have been proven to be an important measure in preventing the transmission of covid.

To that end, the Federal Government, the Ontario Government, their Chief Medical Officers of Health and the Grey-Bruce Public Health Unit have provided clear direction as well as mandates on mask usage. The Ontario Government's Emergency Management and Civil Protections Act is a comprehensive piece of legislation that enacts restrictions relating to the covid pandemic. Under this Act, Regulation 364/20 mandates the use of face coverings in all public indoor settings across the province, such as businesses, facilities and workplaces. As well the Grey-Bruce Public Health Unit Medical Officer of Health has ordered that persons without face masks be restricted from entering public premises in our region.

Larger municipalities in Ontario such as Toronto have gone further and passed their own covid by-laws which are perhaps more appropriate for their densely populated urban environments. However, it is interesting to note that the Province of Ontario's mandatory mask requirements go beyond Toronto's own mask by-laws.

A motion put forward at the October 19, 2020 TBM Council Meeting is calling for a mandatory mask by-law for the Town of the Blue Mountains. The proposed by-law is scheduled to be voted on at the November 2, 2020 Council meeting. The motion lists almost every medical reason why masks are necessary, which is all well and good. However, I don't think most residents question the scientific need for masks; what hasn't been outlined in the motion is why existing mask mandates are not sufficient for our municipality. Certainly, our relatively low covid stats aren't driving the need and I am unaware of any significant anti-masker movement afoot in our community. The TBM already has enforcement measures they can execute under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. It makes no sense to add yet another layer of bureaucracy and set of redundant rules. If nothing else, this proposed by-law needs further consideration and public input. If we are being asked to accept this by-law with unprecedented urgency we need to know why.

I'm not arguing for complacency, we are all in uncharted territory and we must be able to adapt quickly, as required. The Town of the Blue Mountains' Council and Staff have done an commendable job during this crisis. But we must also be pragmatic and do what we can to ensure that some level of consistency is maintained across multiple jurisdictions. We live in a rural, small town

municipality with a strong sense of community and our by-laws must reflect that reality. Let's focus our efforts on issues that will make a meaningful and positive difference for our community.

Sincerely,

Jayne Sutherland
Thornbury ON N0H 2P0