

**COVID-19 Public Health Precautions**  
**Instructions Regarding the Use of Face Coverings/Masks in Enclosed Public Spaces**

Dr. Paula Stewart  
Medical Officer of Health/CEO  
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On Monday, July 6, 2020, Medical Officers of Health from Eastern Ontario Health Unit; Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit; Renfrew County and District Health and Ottawa Public Health announced a regional approach to the use of face coverings/masks in enclosed public places within their respective jurisdictions.

1. (1) Every Operator of an Enclosed Public Space shall adopt a policy to ensure that no member of the public is permitted to enter or remain in the public areas of the Enclosed Public Space unless he or she is wearing a face covering/mask that securely covers their nose, mouth and chin, with specific exceptions.
2. Implementation of the policy should be enacted and enforced in 'good faith' and should primarily be used as means to educate people on face covering/mask use in enclosed public spaces.

[https://healthunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Public\\_Health\\_Instructions\\_OEA\\_Stage\\_2.pdf](https://healthunit.org/wp-content/uploads/Public_Health_Instructions_OEA_Stage_2.pdf)

This decision followed a review of our current situation in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, research evidence, WHO, federal and provincial recommendations, along with input from many members of our communities.

**Current Situation**

During March, April and May 2020, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark community has experienced severe COVID-19 outbreaks in long-term care and retirement homes with many people becoming ill and some dying. Members of the public also became infected – many quite ill with some dying. We have learned that you have to be ahead of the virus to prevent people from becoming infected.

June and July have so far been quieter because of community response to the public health preventive measures of staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, keeping physically distanced when in indoor public places and wearing a face covering/mask when it is not possible, along with cleaning of common surfaces.

Stage 2 openings have increased opportunities for people to be exposed to others in enclosed public spaces. Along with this comes increased risk that COVID-19 could be transmitted from person to person or from commonly touched surfaces.

The COVID-19 outbreak at the nail salons in Kingston, after many weeks of no cases, reminds us that we must continue to be vigilant and use all of the available public health preventive measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark region has many visitors from the United States and elsewhere who may bring COVID-19 to our communities. The risk could also increase when we move into Stage 3.

There is increasing research evidence<sup>1</sup> that the wide use of face coverings/ masks by the community, when combined with staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, physical distancing, and regular cleaning, can make a significant difference in the spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 virus can be spread to others in the day or two before people develop symptoms, and sometimes people who are infected don't develop any symptoms yet can still transmit the virus to others. Face coverings/masks decrease the amount of secretions from the mouth and nose that enter the air around the person – the amount depends on the type of fabric being used and if the face covering/mask fits well.

### **Commercial Establishments**

Commercial establishments are currently required to follow public health advice, recommendations and instructions under the Provincial Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.9: Regulation for Stage 2 Closures <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/200364>

#### **General compliance**

(2) The person responsible for a business or organization that is open **shall operate the business or organization in compliance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting.**

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has outlined Public Health directions for businesses in the Guidance for Businesses document available at: [https://healthunit.org/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19\\_Public\\_Health\\_Guidance\\_for\\_Businesses.pdf](https://healthunit.org/wp-content/uploads/COVID-19_Public_Health_Guidance_for_Businesses.pdf).

Businesses have asked the Health Unit to make face covering/mask use mandatory because it creates a level playing field. If a business has a COVID-19 outbreak they will be closed, so it is important that we do everything we can as a community to prevent this from happening.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.Masks4Canada.org](http://www.Masks4Canada.org) and <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/covid-wwksf/what-we-know-public-masks-apr-7-2020.pdf?la=en>

## **Members of the Public**

Members of the public have asked the Health Unit to make face coverings/masks mandatory because when they wear a face covering/mask it protects others, and they want others to also wear it to protect them. It is about social responsibility.

Some people in the community have expressed concern about mandating the use of face coverings/masks in enclosed public spaces for people who can't use them for health reasons. This is why we have added specific exceptions to the instruction. People will not have to prove they have a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering/mask.

## **Going Forward**

Physical distancing measures, plexiglass protection, regular cleaning, hand sanitizer availability, screening employees and others, are all critical public health preventive measures in indoor public spaces and making face coverings/masks mandatory is added protection. This is one more measure for source control.

Now is the time to build our routine to wear a face covering /mask when we are in indoor spaces, so it becomes regular added protection for whatever the next few months will bring.