



March 16, 2021

VIA E-MAIL

Mark Paralovos
(mparalovos@gmail.com)

Dear Mr. Paralovos,

Re: Mask Mandates

WDGPH does not have the mandate or resources to execute the type of studies you refer to in your email, but relies on provincial and national evidence-based medical guidance, while also aligning ourselves with what we consider to be the present scientific consensus regarding best practices for reducing the risks to the community arising, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We understand that you may disagree, however it was and remains our understanding that requiring the use of masking in indoor places is necessary to control the spread of a disease that can cause serious illness or death, especially in circumstances where it is difficult to ensure social distancing.

It is also our understanding that the use of masks and social distancing will increase our ability to safely open-up the economy, as soon as possible.

In the specific context of schools, we believe that, at this point, masks are necessary to protect students, staff and the families of students and staff to the greatest degree possible in order to permit in-school instruction. The fact that some people would prefer not to wear masks must be balanced against the risks to other members of the community. If there are particular students who, for medical reasons, are genuinely unable to safely wear masks, then schools are permitted to provide accommodations.

While it is not our intent or our role to get into a back-and-forth debate with you regarding the weight to be given to the various articles and social media posts that you are citing, we do note that the article concerning the German study regarding the psychological effects of mask wearing has the following editorial comment:

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EDITORIAL NOTE:

This study is based on a survey regarding the adverse effects of mask wearing in children. Due to multiple limitations, this study cannot demonstrate a causal relationship between mask wearing and the reported adverse effects in children. Most of the respondents were parents, and the survey was distributed preferentially in social media forums that, according to the authors, “criticize the government’s corona protection measures in principle”. The limitations of the study include sampling bias, reporting bias, and confounding bias as well as lack of a control group. The use of masks, together with other precautionary measures, significantly reduces the spread of COVID-19 and is considered safe for children over the age of two years old.

Even if this study were to be taken at face value, which, for the reasons stated in the editorial note, we do not, it is also necessary to consider the psychological and practical benefits to children and their families of in-school instruction even if masks are required to permit this to be done in a safe and sustainable manner.

Finally, to avoid misunderstandings, WDGPH has not issued an Order requiring that children be isolated from members of their households in cases where a classmate has tested positive. Although no Order has been issued, we do recommend that children who have tested positive or who are experiencing symptoms consistent with Covid-19, should be isolated from other members of the household but only to the extent that it is possible to do so without compromising their care.

Sincerely,



Dr. Nicola Mercer, MD, MBA, MPH, FRCPC, C.Dir
Medical Officer of Health and CEO
Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health

c.c. WDGPH Board of Health