

From: Mel Sheehan

Date: July 15, 2020 at 6:16:45 PM EDT

To: "City of London, Mayor" <mayor@london.ca>, "van Holst, Michael" <mvanholst@london.ca>, "Lewis, Shawn" <slewis@london.ca>, "Salih, Mo Mohamed" <msalih@london.ca>, "Helmer, Jesse" <jhelmer@london.ca>, "Squire, Phil" <psquire@london.ca>, "Cassidy, Maureen" <mcassidy@london.ca>, "Morgan, Josh" <joshmorgan@london.ca>, "Lehman, Steve" <slehman@london.ca>, "Van Meerbergen, Paul" <pvanmeerbergen@london.ca>, "Turner, Stephen" <sturner@london.ca>, "Peloza, Elizabeth" <epeloza@london.ca>, "Kayabaga, Arielle" <akayabaga@london.ca>, "Hillier, Steven" <shillier@london.ca>, "Hopkins, Anna" <ahopkins@london.ca>, "Mackie, Dr. Christopher" <christopher.mackie@mlhu.on.ca>, "Saunders, Cathy" <csaunder@london.ca>, "citycouncillors@london.ca" <citycouncillors@london.ca>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Regarding Maskwearing By-Law Implementation

Dear Dr. Macke, City Council, Mayor Holder, & others trying to determine a course of action for mandating masks....

As Bill Nye would say.... "Please.... consider the following"....

All these anti-maskers & elected officials in our own city & Health Unit are seemingly losing their minds & claiming a human rights violation b/c they'd be denied or denying access to a physical public space once masks are mandated.... some questions & reflections for you & them by extension.....

- 1) What on Earth did you do to survive when public spaces were closed due to COVID-19 precautionary measures? Seems y'all managed just fine considering no human rights were violated then b/c alternative accomodations existed. (& still do)
- 2) Where exactly in any legislation does it say you or anyone (regardless of condition or ability) are exempt from following laws, rules, & policies like everyone else? Oh right, nowhere. Accomodations exist as alternatives, but you're still not exempt. Period.
- 3) What about the rights of those employers & employees to keep themselves & their colleagues safe from COVID-19 by adopting & mandating maskwearing policies? Oh right, THEIR rights aren't being infringed on, right? Well, you not wearing a mask is a human rights concern to them.
- 4) Haven't most doctors advised strongly against anyone with an underlying medical condition putting themselves in public spaces that may impact their health negatively for years prior to this? And offered accomodations as a result? Yes, otherwise, malpractice suit for sure.
- 5) Would you risk your health going out at all in public during a heat alert? No. Why? Because alternative accomodations exist to ensure you get what you need safely & without injury. So what's the difference with a mask policy exactly?!

Conclusions:

- 1) COVID-19 precautions changed from public spaces being closed to a mask policy. The reasons & justification remain the same.
- 2) Public spaces being closed wasn't a human rights violation, nor is it if they deny you access to them if you can't/won't wear a mask.
- 3) The only time a human rights issue could arise is if the stores DIDN'T offer alternative accomodations (aka exemptions) to their mask policy. Since most if not all do in fact offer those accomodations to EVERYONE, your claims of human rights infringements are unjustified.
- 4) If you're going to complain about how you shouldn't have to prove your accomodation need with documentation upon request of the business or space owner, then you really need to consider that they're only doing so to protect you & them from possible liability suits.

5) Businesses need & have every right to ask for documented proof of a need for accommodation in order to determine how best they can accommodate & help you get the service or goods you seek. They do still don't have to grant you access to the space in order to do that either.

6) If you're upset because you can't go into a space to get what you want, but still can get the things you seek from that company by other means, that isn't a human rights violation. It's an inconvenience at best. And doesn't mean you're being discriminated against/oppressed.

7) No one, even with the most accommodations or most severe medical conditions, is exempt from being responsible for adhering to any rules, laws, or policies. Nor is anyone guaranteed access to a public space regardless of those things either. Welcome to the reality of life.

8) Your right to privacy, & your right to health, life, & well-being doesn't exempt you from the responsibility of working together with others to ensure theirs. Nor does anyone else's rights to privacy, etc. exempt them from that same responsibility.

9) It's baffling to me that mandating masks is somehow a human rights concern. When not doing so presents way more possible human rights concerns, not to mention liability for the legal & health systems, than mandating them ever would.

Thank you for your time & attention to this email. I do wish it is included in the agenda for the special meeting this coming Monday if at all possible.

Sincerely,

Melissa Sheehan

P.S. Full disclosure, I am myself a lifelong severe asthmatic, who has been wearing masks by choice since the onset began of COVID-19. I also have experience wearing hospital masks at some times of asthma attacks in the past as a child and can attest to the majorly more inconvenient hospital masks & being on a machine than the minor inconvenience of wearing a cloth mask or other face covering for my outings.

I am one who has always sought to inform myself on both sides of an issue and sought to challenge my own biases and opinions on things. In this case my support of masks was not waived after the thorough unbiased investigative research on both sides of the equation, though I do understand & empathize with those who are concerned about the inconveniences to their life that wearing a mask would or has caused.

I also have family & friends who are PSW's, healthcare, education, & service workers, & some members who live in long term care homes who have been more negatively impacted by COVID-19 than the minor inconveniences caused to other people by needing to wear masks. I've had several family & friends pass away from COVID-19, & some are still in hospital throughout North America. Some are actually recovered due to masks being mandated in long term care homes and hospices. Some of my friends and family have also had friends pass away or be otherwise negatively impacted. I have to constantly consider & think of them, and how different things could have went if we mandated masks from the get go across the board.

But even with my implied bias based on my own experience or narrative, I'm still able to see both sides & understand that although even for me a mask is an inconvenience & not something I want to be doing, I'm not selfish or self-centered enough to think that my comfort & convenience somehow overrides the good of the overall community when it comes to slowing the spread of the virus.

I would hope that I, our essential workers across the city & community, and our community as a whole can count on those we voted to represent not only us but the entire city, to do what's best for everyone, and not be at all discriminatory or biased in any way about who, when or how we implement proactive safety precautions.

Some further suggestions:

If you're going to mandate masks, make it clear that those who would need alternative accommodations are still not permitted to enter the spaces due to the mask policy. Just like the curbside pickup policy at various stores stated long before reopening (with no claims of discrimination or human rights violations I might add). And make it clear that we are not in a position to ultimately exempt anyone from adhering to a mandated proactive safety measure in the midst of a pandemic of a virus that in itself doesn't discriminate in who it infects, however accommodations in lieu of access to a public space will be available for anyone who needs it. Meaning even people who can't travel are still able to access those goods and services just as easily as those not permitted to enter them due to the mask bylaw/policy/mandate. And make it clear those accommodations being available are the reason why there is no plausible human rights concern for anyone.

I would look at long term care homes as an example of how to go about this. Masks are mandatory and visits are still not permitted in the traditional sense, but accommodations are & have been offered. And no further cases or outbreaks have happened, nor has any resident launched an OHRC complaint for having to wear a mask at times.

Thank you again for your time.