



August 24, 2020.

Your Worship and City Council,

I'm writing on behalf of the Saskatoon Inter-agency Response to COVID-19 (aka Vulnerable Sector EOC) to thank you for your leadership through the COVID-19 Pandemic and to ask for some additional consideration of the vulnerable sector during the conversation about mandatory mask use in Saskatoon.

Over the last month, the Interagency Response has been working to create internal supporting documents for the partners regarding non-medical cloth masks, disposable masks and the limitations associated with use, access and laundering/replacement. The Interagency strongly encourages people to use masks when they can and agrees that mask use should be used in places where social distancing and other precautions are unable to be used, particularly inside smaller spaces.

We would like to ask that you carefully consider the impacts of making masking mandatory for some people, particularly those who are most vulnerable, oppressed and marginalized in Saskatoon. We would pose these things as points to consider:

- Vulnerable folks may not have the means to access masks (financial barriers but also more simply they don't have options to get to places where they can actually buy them)
- There is a general lack of understanding on how to use the masks appropriately. People will need clear and consistent messaging about how to use and care for these masks.
- Managing the cleaning processes - cloth masks require upkeep and some of the most vulnerable people in Saskatoon will not have access to laundering/washing options for cloth masks
- Many people who are vulnerable also have underlying medical and mental health concerns that limit the ability for them to use masks. This may lead to potential public judgement/criticism and potential confrontations in places. There will need to be clear and consistent messaging for these situations.
- Inappropriate disposal of masks (we have seen increased pressures for garbage pick-up etc. during the response - particularly on the corridor of 20th street) - this isn't necessarily an issue specific to vulnerable folks - though perceptions in the core corridor can quickly escalate to blame and judgement if the disposal isn't managed properly.

In addition, while we support the use of masks, upon reading the report to council and understanding the tight timelines for implementation, we are concerned that many people who don't access information in a conventional way (media releases, mainstream news etc.) will not be aware of the changes imposed. The Interagency Response would like to offer assistance for the creation and dissemination of social media and other forms of communications to the vulnerable sector and ask the council to consider using the week of Sept 01-Sept 04 as a media and communications week to allow a

better understanding of the issues we listed above and to create an opportunity for the agencies who work with this sector to better support clients and citizens in Saskatoon.

Finally, the Interagency Response would like to thank council for the opportunity to bring concerns forward for consideration and would like to reiterate how appreciative they are of the leadership and support from the City of Saskatoon during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

*Colleen Christopherson-Cote*

Interagency Response - Maintenance Committee member

Saskatoon Interagency Response to COVID-19

<https://saskatooninteragencyresponse.ca/>