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Face masks must be worn in stores, businesses as County enters Phase 2 of provincial reopening

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Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health has issued an order requiring all persons to wear face masks while visiting local stores and businesses.

?The best available evidence indicates face coverings reduce the possibility of transmission of COVID-19,? said Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. ?By ensuring we can move to Phase 2 in the safest way possible, we are all making an investment in a safer community.?

Made as Dufferin enters Phase 2 of reopening in the wake of COVID-19, the order was issued by Dr. Mercer at 10:00 a.m. Wednesday (June 10) and will come into effect at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, June 12.

?I fully support the order issued today by Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health for the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Unit, requiring the use of face masks in commercial establishments,? said County Warden Darren White. ?As Dr. Mercer and other health professionals have explained, the use of face coverings is effective in limiting the spread of COVID-19. With the opening up of additional businesses in our region, as part of the move to Stage 2 in the provincial plan, I expect it will be quite busy in Dufferin County establishments in the coming days.?

The order requires anyone who owns or operates a commercial establishment in the health unit's jurisdiction to prohibit access for anyone not wearing a face mask. A media release from Dufferin County says face masks must be worn inside these businesses at all times. It also requires that alcohol-based hand sanitizer be available at entrances and exits.

?Commercial establishment is any commercial premises used for the purposes of offering goods or services to members of the public,? said Danny Williamson, a communications specialist at WDG Public Health.

Phase 2 will see more businesses and services allowed to reopen while following health and safety protocols. A few of the businesses and services allowed to reopen include outdoor dining restaurants, hair salons, outdoor recreational facilities and camp grounds.

?I understand that this may prove challenging for some local businesses,? said Warden White. ?We all want our businesses to be successful and as we adjust to this new reality it is important to take measures that will mitigate the need for future closures.?

A fine of up to $5,000 will be issued for non-compliance to the order for every day or part of each day. Along with the Public Health order, municipalities will also be issuing their own with Dufferin County addressing a bylaw at the next meeting.

An exemption for wearing a face masks applies to children under the age of two, and if wearing a face covering will inhibit a person's ability to breathe or there is any other medical reason a face mask cannot be safely worn.