

Bylaw 22-2020

Temporary Mandatory Face Coverings Bylaw

FAQs (December 1st, 2020)

Why has the Town of Taber enacted a bylaw for face coverings?

Council of the Town of Taber enacted this bylaw due to the rising COVID-19 cases in our region and to help protect our citizens and those who are vulnerable to the virus. The Taber region is under “Enhanced” status, meaning that the Government of Alberta deems our case numbers have a “risk level that requires enhanced public health measures to control the spread.” The bylaw has also been done to decrease the risk of overloading our local, regional, and provincial healthcare systems with more cases of COVID-19.

What spaces does this bylaw cover?

The bylaw covers all indoor, enclosed, or substantially enclosed public place and public vehicles.

A “public place” means any property or portion of a property (whether publicly or privately owned) to which members of the public have access as of right or by express or implied invitation, whether on payment of any fee or not. A “public vehicle” means a motor vehicle used or offered for the transportation of at least one passenger in return for a fee, and includes (but is not limited to) motor vehicles typically referred to as buses, taxis, shuttles, transportation network vehicles, and limousines.

What about outdoor spaces?

This bylaw is specific to indoor spaces however, as per the Government of Alberta’s recommendations, face coverings should be worn any time physical distancing cannot be maintained.

What qualifies as a face covering?

Face coverings under this bylaw means a medical or non-medical face covering or any other face covering that fully covers the nose, mouth, and chin.

Will the Town provide face coverings?

Citizens are encouraged to provide their own face coverings as the Town will not be providing them.

Who is exempt?

- persons under the age of 10;
- persons who are unable to place, use, or remove a face covering without assistance;
- persons unable to wear a face covering due to a mental or physical concern or limitation, or a protected ground under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*, RSA 2000, c A25.5, as may be amended;
- persons consuming food or drink in designated seating areas or as part of a religious or spiritual ceremony;
- persons engaged in physical activities, water activities or the paid supervision of water activities, or attending within a sauna or steam room;
- persons providing care or assistance to a person with a disability where a face covering would hinder that caregiving or assistance;
- persons engaging in services that require the temporary removal of a face covering;
- persons participating in a dance, theatrical or musical public performance, if all participants in the performance are able to maintain at least two metres of physical distance from each other and do not enter the areas where the public is viewing the performance;
- persons providing or receiving a service that requires personal consultation if that activity occurs in a closed office or meeting room and all participants in the personal consultation are able to maintain physical separation of at least two metres from each other; and
- persons separated from others by physical barriers or shields such as Plexiglas.

What if I can't wear a face covering or just don't want to wear one?

Wearing face coverings is most effective when everyone participates. If you cannot wear a face covering, you may be exempt (see previous question). If you are not exempt, but uncomfortable wearing a face covering or do not wish to wear one, we encourage you to avoid public spaces as much as possible. Many of our local businesses offer curbside pickup or delivery services for your convenience. Face shields are also an alternative that can be utilized if you have concerns wearing face coverings.

How is this bylaw being enforced?

The Town does not intend this bylaw to be punitive, but those who refuse to comply may be subject to a \$100 fine unless they are otherwise exempt.

It is important to note that we have to be patient, understanding, and non-judgmental during times of crisis. We ask that citizens take personal responsibility for your own actions and wear a face covering unless you are unable to do so. Those who comply and wear face coverings will help people stay safe, businesses stay open, and help prevent another surge of COVID-19. We need everyone's cooperation and compassion during these difficult times.

As with any situation, anyone who feels threatened or encounters violent behavior is asked to call 911.

How long is this bylaw in effect?

This bylaw is in effect as of November 30th, 2020 and will remain so when the “total number of active COVID-19 cases within the region of Taber (as determined by the Government of Alberta) is reported by Alberta Health Services to be 50 cases or more per 100,000 in population and will remain in effect until the repeal of this bylaw.”

What about schools and school busses? Does this bylaw affect them?

No. Schools have their own rules and regulations, so please speak with your school division to find out what specific rules apply to their services.

What about churches or religious services?

Mandatory face coverings for religious or spiritual services is required by Public Health Order of the Government of Alberta (as of November 24th; please see www.alberta.ca/covid19). Should the Government of Alberta remove these restrictions, the Town of Taber’s bylaw would require face coverings at religious services except in the following circumstances:

- persons consuming food or drink... as part of a religious or spiritual ceremony;
- Platform and stage areas in places of worship during worship services, provided that physical barriers or physical distancing practices are implemented between any person not required to wear a face covering by operation of this exception and any other person.

I’m a business owner. How can I enforce this?

As businesses are private property, owners have the right to refuse service to anyone who does not comply with any measures you put forth, including mandatory face coverings (provided that person is not exempt or protected under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*). The Town recommends reminding customers about the bylaw and offering them alternative means of shopping (delivery, curbside pickup, online shopping) if they still refuse to comply.

I know people who refuse to wear a face covering. What can I do?

The Town of Taber encourages everyone to be kind, regardless of each other’s viewpoints. You can remind others of the mandatory bylaw and that face coverings are recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health in conjunction with other health measures.

Can I call the Taber Police if I see someone not wearing a face covering?

The Taber Police Service is able to provide enforcement. As we mentioned previously, the Town does not want this bylaw to be punitive and we encourage everyone to be kind, compassionate, and non-judgmental. However, if you see flagrant disregard for these mandatory measures, please contact the Taber Police Service at their non-emergency line at 403-223-8991 and their officers will respond appropriately in the circumstances. They have many tools at their disposal including enforcement as a last resort.