



Benoit-Antoine Bacon
President & Vice-Chancellor
Carleton University

Dear President Bacon:

On behalf of approximately 4,000 Faculty Members, Professional Librarians, Teaching Assistants, Research Assistants, and Contract Instructors, we write to express our deep concern over the state of Carleton's current health and safety protocols, and to urge you to immediately re-introduce a campus-wide mask mandate, and introduce KN95 mask dispensers throughout campus.

Last week, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health strongly recommended public masking in indoor settings given the current triple-threat of COVID-19, influenza, and respiratory syncytial virus, which is being called an "extraordinarily unprecedented [...] crisis" that is "beyond any previous wave that we've ever seen" ("It's time to bring back mask mandates in Ontario, says ER doctor," CBC News, Nov. 14). There is moreover growing evidence that the new COVID sub-variants now circulating escape prior immunity, while repeated infections can triple the potential for critical life-long infirmities. Dr. Vera Etches has called for an even more robust response, vowing that Ottawa Public Health "would support any organization and institution that introduces a mask mandate" ("Ottawa-Carleton District School Board to debate mandatory masking," CTV News, Nov. 15).

Now is the time to do just that. The current recommendations to mask are manifestly not working, and the majority of people on campus at any given time remain unmasked. Yet, a recent Nanos survey found that most Canadians would support the return of face mask mandates if deemed necessary by officials. Our community awaits only your official word to do the right thing.

Our campus is a densely populated congregate setting through which people circulate at a higher rate than in most office settings, gathering in crowded classrooms, elevators, tunnels, and study spaces. The imminent approach of colder weather and final exams will only accelerate the spread of illness. For that very reason, the University of Waterloo has already re-instituted its mask mandate for all indoor activities connected to academic instruction; Western University has gone further still, also requiring that everyone on campus be vaccinated. These schools are leaders in health and safety, just as Carleton once was in the early days of the pandemic.

We can prove ourselves as leaders once again. We urge you to demonstrate your commitment to our community's health and safety by re-instituting proper masking protocols until the crisis abates, with the full support of Ottawa Public Health, in order that everyone might have a healthy and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,



Noreen Cauley-Le Fevre
President
Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 4600



Marylynn Steckley
President
Carleton University Academic Staff Association

CC: Jerry Tomberlin, Provost & Vice-President (Academic)
Catherine Khordoc, Deputy Provost (Academic Operations and Planning)
Suzanne Blanchard, Vice-President (Students & Enrolment)