



Convenience Industry Opposes Retailer Liability for Face Mask Usage

TORONTO, ON (July 13, 2020) - The Convenience Industry Council of Canada (CICC) opposes moves by some provinces and municipalities to make retailers liable for customers' refusal to wear face masks.

"The first priority of the small business operators we represent is the health and safety of our employees and our customers. Convenience retailers have continually made their best efforts to ensure that customers and staff comply with all public health orders, including the increasing number of mandatory face mask requirements being implemented across the country," said Anne Kothawala, President and CEO of the CICC.

The approach taken by Quebec and some Ontario municipalities unfairly places the ultimate responsibility for customer compliance on small business owners, who are at risk of significant fines, financial penalties, and physical and verbal abuse when confronted by individual customers that refuse to comply.

"Individual retailers should not be held liable for customers' refusal to comply with public health orders," continued Kothawala. "Convenience retailers should be required to ensure that they have a policy in place, that the policy is communicated to all staff and customers, and that their best efforts to ensure compliance have been made, but ultimately it should be an individual's responsibility to comply with the law," Kothawala said.

"Given the variety of human rights exemptions to this policy that exist, and the inability of retailers to demand proof of exemption, it is unreasonable to expect customer service staff to perform the duties of the police or risk significant fines," Kothawala continued.

In addition, retailers have seen a significant increase in physical violence and verbal abuse directed at employees who attempt to enforce face mask requirements. "We have a responsibility to protect our employees and customers from these types of altercations. Our role should be to de-escalate these situations, not to play part-time police," concluded Kothawala.

The CICC represents the interests of more than 25,000 retailers and the 220,000 front line workers employed in the convenience sector across Canada.

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