

The good doctor is in but just not here

Chris Cooke - October 2020

Dale Indiana has a population of just under 1600 people.

Visitors immediately notice that the tiny community is very much aware of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are signs everywhere.

At Freedom Bank, you can't get any money without a mask.

No shirt, no shoes, NO MASK, no service!

That's right no mask and business owners can and will turn individuals away. Although Clerk Treasurer Cindy Morrison says local police have enforcement issues businesses and municipalities don't.

And they don't because Republican Governor Eric Holcomb and medical officers of health have made masks mandatory.

There but not here.

At least not in Lambton County until earlier this month. A grocery cashier in Wyoming recently told me masks are "optional".

I suspect the COVID virus doesn't operate that way and if asked let me suggest Ms. Morrison doesn't view it that way either.

There is a ruler in the sliding glass window that separates her from the public. Chairs are spaced two meters apart (six feet) and she wears a mask. There is a sanitizer bottle by the front door and she asks visitors to produce a mask if they aren't wearing one.

"We aren't letting this get out of control" she told me and it shows.

In nearby Spencer County, there have been 263 cases and three deaths since March.

Winkler Wholesale Grocers has two sprawling warehouses in the tiny community and is a primary employer. The wholesaler also owns Holiday Foods, the local grocer with six stores along with more than 100 independent customers.

Twenty minutes away at Santa Claus, Indiana next to the Holiday Foods head office and the post office is a statue of the legendary character wearing a mask. Inside the store signs are everywhere reading "Mask Up Hoosiers. Masks required, no shirt, no shoes, NO MASK, no service! We want everyone to be safe!"

Would it be unreasonable here to suggest that the medical officer of health in Southern Indiana not only believes in masks but actually believes in wearing them?

Unlike Dr. Sudit Ranade, Lambton's Medical Officer of Health who teeters and totters on the issue and made local businesses like Huron Web Printing and Graphics do his heavy lifting his counterpart in Indiana appears to be just the opposite.

I don't know Dr. Stanley Tretter but I do know he is an actual doctor with a family medical practice who according to his staff "understands the importance of social distancing and is tough on the wearing of masks".

His tough on COVID approach is everywhere and mask wearing isn't "optional".

By now you are probably wondering how I know all this.

From Wyoming, Ontario to Santa Claus, Indiana it is exactly eight hours and 21 minutes and last month I made the drive twice within three weeks.

It was both insightful and rewarding.

Rewarding in the fact Holiday Foods is now printed by a Canadian printer eight hours and 21 minutes away.

Insightful in that I could see the handiwork of a Medical Officer of Health making tough decisions in the midst of a pandemic.

Let me suggest he is doing what he is paid to do.

Which is more than what Ranade has done here.

Instead of doing his job and requiring Lambton County to mask up he sat on his hands as COVID cases escalated across the Province and the pandemic worsened.

There is nothing "optional" about wearing a mask and the Premier shouldn't have had to step in and do a job for which our Medical Officer of Health is paid \$300,000.00

I wonder if the Medical Officer of Health in Indiana is paid \$300,000.00?

If not he should be.

If not Lambton County should offer him the job.

In my view Ranade should be shown the door.

I could be wrong about this but I'm usually not.

