

Statement from Mayor Walter Sendzik in support of Dr. Hirji

February 13, 2021 – It is disturbing to see the threatening behaviour towards Niagara's Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Mustafa Hirji over the last 24 hours since the provincial government announced Niagara would be in a grey – lockdown stage of reopening on Feb. 16.

Working with the rest of the Niagara Region Public Health team, Dr. Hirji, the region's lead medical professional since the start of the pandemic, has prioritized the health and safety of Niagara residents since day one. He remains committed to keeping the best interests of our residents in mind as we continue to navigate the second wave of COVID-19.

While I understand the frustration and disappointment following Friday's provincial announcement, Dr. Hirji and the medical professionals across the province have been clear over the past several days that while progress to contain COVID-19 has been made we are not in position to let down our guard. The emerging contagious variants of COVID-19 pose a real threat and medical professionals are making very calculated decisions to best protect their respective communities.

Meaningful and passionate engagement is always welcome - and while we may not always agree - any type of bullying and harassment is not acceptable - PERIOD. We are better than this Niagara.

People are hurting. People's livelihoods have been torn apart due to COVID-19. People have lost loved ones. Many people in our community are struggling - really struggling due to the impacts of the pandemic. We must all acknowledge this - and we must ensure that there are supports for people to access to get through these troubled times.

But we cannot afford as a community to come apart.

Now is the time to come together. Support local businesses in any way that you can. Check out www.loveSTC.ca for the businesses in our community that are finding new ways to reach you.

Dr. Hirji is in one of the most difficult positions that very few people would want to be in right now. He is making decisions based on what he sees as the best for Niagara - right now - and into the future. His decisions are based on data and science that he has been trained to understand and interpret.

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We will never know the full impacts of any of our decisions during this pandemic — but I can assure you Dr. Hirji is doing what he thinks is right for the greater good of our community and for that we should be understanding and grateful.

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