

To Mayor and council,

In advance of the meeting with public health, I would like to register my concern about the lack of a vaccine mandate related to ski resorts, particularly those with enclosed gondolas. For those of us who have done the right thing throughout the pandemic, it is really disconcerting that the lack of regulation or direction by Public Health gives a ski resort the ability to operate "as usual" with the exception of indoor dining.

Whether it was mandated last year or simply an operational necessity, the practices put in place by Vail last year meant that we could all feel safe when skiing. And, spacing the lift lines, riding in gondolas with your own bubble and masking did prove to be safe. This year, all of this, except the mask mandate, has been abandoned. Why? Because it is not required.

The fact that a significant majority of the Whistler/Blackcomb community is in favour of a vaccine mandate is obviously irrelevant to Vail. This is so disappointing.

The fact that the government suggests that there is little evidence of COVID transmission to support a mandate entirely misses the mark. There was little transmission because of the rules that were put in place. Rules that have now been abandoned.

The biggest concern is access up the mountain. On 2 mountains, there is only one outdoor lift in the heart of the village, a lift that would most likely be unused by anyone who does not live close to or is not staying in the village. This means that the rest of us must brave crowds of people that we do not know and sit shoulder to shoulder with them in a tiny, enclosed space for 10-20 minutes. As someone who has avoided crowds and eaten inside a restaurant maybe 2 times in 18 months, this is just not a comforting thought.

It is fine to say that most of us are vaccinated and all of the people coming in by plane will be vaccinated, but there are undoubtedly those in our midst who are not. And if they are not vaccinated, and they have been exposed, they carry a large viral load that can be transmitted.

My spouse works at ski school. He also is a school teacher. If he catches the virus, he risks infecting the children. He risks infecting me. And what if I then go see my friend who has cancer and is going through chemotherapy and radiation and who has a weakened immune system. I risk exposing her. And if I should have to fly out to see my mother in a long term care residence in Ontario? I hate to think about it because I can have it before I even know it.

It is one thing to tell me that it is up to us to practice social distancing but it is no longer possible if we have to share a gondola to get up the mountain.

And what about once we're on the mountain? I may not be eating inside but most of us are going inside to use the washrooms and to warm up. Thousands of people everyday use these facilities. On some days, they are seething, with dampness, sweat and far too many bodies – and no ability to distance. Vail does suggest that all those eating on the mountain must be vaccinated, how will this be regulated given that much of the cafeteria space is shared?

It seems to me that the solution is simply to require all riders to be fully vaccinated as a condition of riding. Requested once at the time of ticket purchase. This should not be an onerous condition for

Whistler Blackcomb as all tourists arriving by air will be vaccinated and the local population has a high vaccination rate. It is also required by other resorts so clearly others have put this mechanism in place.

I also want to state that as much as I personally believe in vaccinations, I do support people's choice. However, the choice not to be vaccinated has and should continue to have consequences, including the denial of service where appropriate to protect the majority. I think this is one strong example of where a vaccine mandate ought to be used.

Thanks,

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