

The following Pandemic Court House Guidelines replaces the guidelines dated September 1, 2021 and implemented by Court Services effective September 3, 2021.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Court Services has relied on the advice of public health to inform safety measures implemented in court facilities throughout the province.

Court Services has received updated advice from the Chief Medical Health Officer and his officials for Court Services to enhance its current protocols for the public entering any court facility. This is largely due to the surge of the extremely transmissible Omicron variant, and the relatively low rate of boosted individuals to date, alongside the broad and expansive nature of court operations throughout the province.

In light of this advice, **as of Tuesday, January 4<sup>th</sup>**, all individuals who attend at a court facility (including permanent court houses as well as circuit court and offsite locations) will be required to wear a **medical grade mask to enter the facility**. Once in the facility, those entering will also be required to keep their mask on, unless otherwise directed in a courtroom by the presiding judge. Should an individual not have their own mask, one will be provided to them; if a person refuses to wear a mask, their entry will be restricted to provide the Court Security Deputy Sheriff an opportunity to consult with the judiciary through the court office on next steps. If the individual's attendance is required, the individual will be advised whether the person's in-person attendance will be facilitated or if their attendance will be facilitated by other means such as by phone.

In addition to the mask mandate, all individuals who attend at a court facility will be screened to determine whether they can safely enter the court facility. As part of the screening, Court Security Deputy Sheriffs will ask each individual if they:

- have, in the last 14 days, been identified as a close contact with a confirmed or presumptive case of COVID-19;
- have, in the last 14 days, been tested for COVID-19 and therefore are required to self-isolate; or
- are experiencing any symptoms commonly associated with COVID-19.

If an individual does not pass the COVID screening questions, their entry will be restricted to provide the Court Security Deputy Sheriff an opportunity to consult with the judiciary through the court office on next steps. Should the individual's attendance at court be required, the individual will be advised whether an in-person attendance will be facilitated or if attendance will be facilitated by other means such as by phone.

The public continues to be encouraged to pay fines online, by phone or by mail.

Court Services will manage individual entry into court facilities to ensure capacities are not exceeded and encourage physical distancing between those in attendance outside the courtroom. Court Services will follow the direction of each presiding judge/justice on the physical distancing requirements in each courtroom. Physical barriers as well as enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols for court facilities will remain in place.

Court Services staff will now be required to wear a mask at all times while in the workplace.

Court Services' policies, e.g., face protection, screening, jury management will reflect the protocols outlined above. Court Services will continue to review these guidelines on an ongoing basis and in light of any updated advice from public health officials.

January 4, 2022