

As the COVID-19 situation evolves across the province, we are writing to provide you with an update following our recent discussions with the Chief Medical Officer of Health's Office.

Even with the new COVID-19 variants of concern (UK, South African, and Brazilian), the ministry has been assured that the existing overlapping layers of protection within our courthouses remain effective at mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission. However, out of an abundance of caution, new and enhanced masking requirements have been recommended for all justice sector participants, including our staff, the judiciary, and any person entering a courthouse.

Effective Tuesday February 16, the following enhancements will be applicable in all courthouses across the province:

- Anyone entering a courthouse (including all critical justice participants) will be provided a 3-ply face covering, to ensure that a consistent, quality, face covering is being worn by everyone who enters a court. In most cases this will mean that an individual attending a courthouse will need to replace their own personal face covering, with a ministry-issued one.
- In light of the ministry's responsibilities for our staff under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*, the ministry is exceeding current provincial masking recommendations, and all ministry staff will be issued surgical/procedure masks for use within the courthouse. Ministry staff can no longer wear their own personal face coverings, and the ministry-issued surgical/procedure masks must be worn at all times in all locations.

As before, the exceptions in place for individuals who can not wear a face covering, for medical or other accommodation issues, remain in place.

The updated masking policies were communicated to our ministry managers and employees internally earlier today. In addition, the new masking requirements for the public are now reflected on [Ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca), to inform individuals who are planning to attend a courthouse.

Over the next few weeks, we will be updating our Recovery Guidebook, [COVID-19: Recommended Precautionary Measures](#), to reflect these and other adjustments. The updated version of the Guidebook will be distributed once finalized, and will continue to be available on Ontario.ca for broad public access.

Thank you.

**MAG Recovery Secretariat**