

Good morning.

In recent days, the ministry has received a number of inquiries regarding our courthouse active screening tool, new provincial isolation requirements, and requests for N95 masks and Rapid Antigen Tests. We are writing today to address these issues.

MAG's Courthouse Masking Policy and N95 Masks

Please be assured that throughout the pandemic, the Recovery Secretariat has relied on guidance from our leading provincial health and safety authorities, including the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, to ensure we have the appropriate health and safety measures in place within our courthouses. We have continued to adjust our policies and protocols throughout the pandemic, in line with their evolving direction.

As of today, there has been no change in direction from the Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development or the Chief Medical Officer of Health's Office about masking in courthouses, and we have received confirmation that the MAG courthouse masking policy remains appropriate.

N95 masks are not being recommended by our advisors in courthouses or other lower-risk workplaces at this point in time. As you can appreciate, supply of N95 masks is limited and these critical resources are being reserved for prioritized sectors and our most vulnerable populations (e.g. hospitals and other identified high-risk congregate care settings). In order to provide the respirator-level of protection for which they are manufactured, N95 masks must be fit-tested. Any individual who wishes to purchase and wear their own N95 mask may do so, however this is not required by the ministry and, as such, the ministry is unable to provide fit testing or ensure appropriate usage for any individual that chooses to wear one. A well-fitting ASTM Certified Level II surgical/procedural mask – the masks currently being provided in courthouses – continues to provide excellent protection.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health's Office has again confirmed that the overlapping and robust preventative measures currently in place in our courthouses continue to be effective in mitigating the transmission of all known variants of COVID-19, including Omicron. No new preventative measures have been recommended to us at this time.

Courthouse Active Entrance Screening Tool

The ministry is updating its [Courthouse Active Entrance Screening Tool](#) to align with new Ministry of Health guidance. The ministry's entrance screening tool (available online and in paper-based formats) continues to be a primary layer of protection against the potential spread of COVID-19 – it remains critical that everyone complete the screening before entering a courthouse.

New Isolation Requirements

As a result of recent changes in provincial direction, the ministry is also in the process of updating our Operational Guidelines, which will include updated guidance on isolation requirements. We understand this has been an area of confusion for some individuals.

If you [have tested positive](#) for COVID-19 or are simply [experiencing symptoms of COVID-19](#), you must isolate. You may also need to isolate if you were [exposed to someone who has COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19](#) (exposure to someone in your household who is experiencing symptoms or has tested positive).

This new provincial guidance was recently updated and is outlined at: [Ontario.ca/exposed](#) (links from this webpage are provided above with more details about the specific scenarios described). We encourage everyone to use this authoritative resource to determine if you need to isolate, and for how long.

Rapid Antigen Testing

At this time, the ministry is not providing Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) to anyone in the courthouse setting, beyond those MAG staff identified to require them in line with the Ontario Public Service's COVID-19 Safe Workplace Directive.

In light of the new Omicron variant and surging COVID-19 case counts, supply of both PCR and take home rapid tests have become limited. However, the situation is rapidly evolving and we know that the province is attempting to increase its supplies. We will continue to explore opportunities to source RAT tests if supply increases, taking into account prioritization for vulnerable populations and high risk sectors.

We appreciate that information about COVID-19 is abundant and can change quickly – please continue to monitor [Ontario.ca/newsroom](#) for provincial updates. The ministry will continue to align its protocols, including around masking and isolation requirements, with the guidance we receive from the province's leading health and safety authorities.

Thank you for your ongoing patience and commitment to delivering essential justice services throughout the pandemic.

Recovery Secretariat