

ALL COURTS RECOVERY COMMITTEE UPDATE REGARDING NON-MEDICAL MASKS (EFFECTIVE JULY 6, 2020)

UPDATED: Aug. 31, 2020

The COVID-19 Courts Recovery Plan is a living document, which will be updated to reflect new evidence and understanding of the spread of COVID-19 and changes to public health recommendations and guidance.

Most recently, on June 26, 2020, the Office of the Chief Medical Officer enhanced the guidance around the use of non-medical masks (NMMs) as a result of Nova Scotia continuing to lift public health restrictions, including the introduction of the Atlantic bubble. Every effort is being made to maintain physical distancing in courthouses, by limiting the number of people inside the building and in courtrooms, reconfiguring all spaces for physical distancing, and facilitating the movement of people by sheriffs. However, we understand there are concerns that as courts continue to expand services, physical distancing may not always be consistently possible in the common areas of our courthouses.

In light of this, the Courts Recovery Committee has decided to update the COVID-19 Court Recovery Plan. Anyone entering a courthouse will be required to wear a non-medical mask (NMM). All court participants are encouraged to bring their own NMM. However, a supply of disposable masks will be available for those who are unable to source their own. NMMs must be worn in all common area spaces, including entry areas/lobby, elevators, waiting areas, interview rooms etc. This does not include courtrooms or secure areas, such as conference rooms used for Judicial Settlement Conferences. NMM will not be mandatory in courtrooms or secure areas, unless directed by the presiding judge. For information on choosing an appropriate mask, please refer to Public Health resources at <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/#Choosing>.

It is important to emphasize that NMMs are not a substitute for physical distancing and other public health practices but are part of a multi-layered approach to reduce the spread of COVID-19. NMMs are not an adequate replacement for required personal protective equipment, as they are not regulated or tested to recognized standards and there is no definitive research demonstrating that a NMM will protect the person wearing it. However, when used correctly, NMMs can limit the spread of respiratory droplets from infected persons. Eliminating the risk of exposure through the use of virtual court processes and by physical distancing for in person proceedings remain the cornerstones of the COVID-19 Court Recovery Plan with NMMs as a complement – not a replacement – for the preventative measures that have been implemented.