



COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS IN THE NOVA SCOTIA COURTS WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT DURING PHASE 3 OF REOPENING PLAN

Friday, March 18, 2022

The Province of Nova Scotia will enter [Phase 3](#) of its reopening plan on Monday, March 21, 2022, a move that will see most COVID-19 restrictions lifted entirely in many public places.

Given the unique position of the Courts, where individuals who attend are often compelled to do so, and where vulnerable segments of the population are often involved, it is important to continue to provide a safe place for matters to proceed. Although the provincial government is eliminating gathering limits, physical distancing and mask requirements in most settings, Public Health is still encouraging people to voluntarily continue these practices to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

With that in mind, the All Courts COVID-19 Recovery Committee is recommending that the Courts' current COVID-19 restrictions remain in place for the foreseeable future, with some expanded capacity for in-person attendance.

As per the [May 27, 2021, Notice](#), masking will continue to be required in all public areas of courthouses. Masking inside courtrooms is strongly encouraged but will be at the discretion of the presiding judge.

Public access to courthouses will continue to be limited to those people who:

- work in the building;
- are directly involved with a court proceeding;
- have an appointment; or
- have approval from a judge to view a court proceeding in person.

Effective March 21, 2022, physical distancing requirements in courthouses and courtrooms will be reduced to one metre. However, due to space and other considerations, some judges may choose to continue enforcing two-metre physical distancing in their courtrooms.

Although reduced physical distancing will enable more people to attend court in person, individuals who are not essential to the proceedings must still apply to the Court in advance for approval to attend. This is to ensure physical distancing requirements can be met and courtroom capacity limits are not exceeded. That process is outlined [here](#).

To help maintain the open courts principle, members of the media are permitted to attend court in person, provided there is space available in the courtroom. If members of the media are interested in covering a hearing in person, they should contact the Judiciary's Communications Director to determine if there is space available. Alternatively, the Court will arrange for media to participate remotely by telephone or video.

Hand sanitizing stations and sanitizing wipes in courtrooms will continue to be available. Enhanced cleaning measures will also continue until further notice for all high-touch surfaces in courthouses.

Virtual court has been an important part of the Courts' COVID-19 Recovery Plan. Remote appearances by telephone or videoconferencing have allowed the Courts to hear more matters during the pandemic and continue to be helpful options. As such, the Courts will continue to deal with matters by telephone or Microsoft Teams, where appropriate.

These restrictions are temporary measures to help reduce the spread of COVID19. The All Courts COVID-19 Recovery Committee will regularly assess the situation to determine when these restrictions can be further eased or lifted entirely.

For more information about COVID-10 directives for each level of Court, please visit https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

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