



COVID-19: UPDATE ON MASKING IN NOVA SCOTIA COURTHOUSES

Thursday, May 27, 2021

Further to the [July 3, 2020](#), and [Nov. 19, 2020](#), updates on masking in courthouses, the All Courts Recovery Committee is now strongly recommending that disposable medical masks be worn at all times in courtrooms, including when an individual is speaking. This recommendation applies to judicial settlement conferences and any other in-person court proceeding held in a boardroom, jury room, or other enclosed space inside a Nova Scotia courthouse.

The All Courts Recovery Committee is also recommending that disposable medical masks, like the ones illustrated below, be required in courtrooms, rather than reusable cloth masks.



Disposable medical masks are regulated by Health Canada and should offer a standardized level of protection, which is even more important with the existence of variants. These masks are also less bulky, provide a better fit around the nose, and it is often easier to hear someone who is speaking when they are wearing one.

Effective immediately, sheriffs will provide a disposable medical mask to all witnesses, parties and defendants involved in an in-person court proceeding. Counsel are expected to bring their own disposable medical mask. However, for those who may not have one, a supply will be available at the front doors of the courthouses.

The All Courts Recovery Committee acknowledges that masks can create challenges in court proceedings, most significantly the ability to see and observe the face of a witness and the ability to hear all court participants clearly. Further challenges can arise if there is also Lexan in place in the courtroom.

With that in mind, presiding judges will continue to have discretion on the use of masks during court proceedings. If masking is not practical in a specific situation, the judge may direct that only the witness be permitted to remove their mask for the duration of their testimony.

These recommendations follow the recent increase in COVID-19 cases and the presence of variants in Nova Scotia, community spread in some areas of the province, and changes to public health directives. These recommendations are a temporary measure meant to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus and help Nova Scotians transition through the third wave of the pandemic.

It is important to emphasize that masks are not a substitute for physical distancing and other public health directives. They are part of a multi-layered approach, including Lexan barriers, enhanced surface cleaning and good hand hygiene. The full Recovery Plan outlining the safety guidelines and protocols implemented at the Nova Scotia Courts, is available online [here](#).

-30-

Media Contact:

Jennifer Stairs
Communications Director
Nova Scotia Judiciary
902-221-5257
stairsjl@courts.ns.ca