

Ministry of the Attorney
General

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Justice Participants of the John Sopinka Courthouse

(Note: Please share this memo with relevant staff, justice participants and stakeholders)

FROM: Jennifer Wilder, Manager of Court Operations

DATE: May 12, 2021

RE: 05102021-011 - Health Information Update – John Sopinka Courthouse

I am writing to provide health information regarding the John Sopinka Courthouse, 45 Main Street East, Hamilton, Ontario. Today I was informed that an OPS person who works in the building tested positive for COVID-19.

This person was:

- Last physically present in the courthouse on May 4, 2021,
- Underwent a COVID-19 test on May 9, 2021,
- Received a confirmed positive result Covid-19 diagnosis on May 12, 2021.

This person was tested because they were deemed a High-Risk Exposure (HRE) resulting from an exposure to a probable/confirmed positive case outside of the workplace.

This person was not physically present in the courthouse during the period of communicability, regarded by the Ministry of Health as the 48 hours preceding either the day of:

- a. The onset of symptoms compatible with COVID-19
- b. In the case of a non-symptomatic person the day the COVID-19 test sample was collected.

The person has confirmed that they adhered to infection control protocols while in the building, including physical distancing and wearing a source control face covering. They are currently self-isolating as per standard public health procedure and following the direction of medical professionals.

At this time, the Ministry has completed a Preliminary Workplace Exposure Risk Assessment (PWERA) to identify any other persons/individuals in the courthouse that potentially experienced a high-risk exposure to the confirmed positive case. A High-Risk Exposure occurs when a Person/Individual:

- who was living in the same household with a probable/confirmed positive case while the case was infectious and not self-isolating
- having direct contact with infectious body fluids of a probable/confirmed positive case (e.g., coughed on or sneezed on)
- having direct physical contact with the probable/confirmed positive case (e.g. hugging, kissing, hand-shaking) that is more than a transient interaction (i.e. brushing by someone, handing paper etc.)
- having had close interaction* (less than 6ft or 2m) with a probable/confirmed positive case while not consistently wearing PPE (both a surgical/procedural mask and eye protection)

Unless

- ✓ the *Person* was consistently wearing a surgical procedural mask without eye protection

AND

- ✓ was continuously separated from the probable/confirmed positive case by an impermeable barrier (i.e. plexiglass, wall) which would then reduce this interaction to a low-risk event.

*N.B. Interaction means more than a brief, transient encounter (i.e. does not include passing someone in a hallway)

The [Ministry of Health Guidance](#) informs us that Persons/Individuals experiencing a High-Risk Exposure to a probable/confirmed positive case are to self-isolate for 14 days and be tested for COVID-19.

All others not meeting the above criteria are considered Low-Risk Exposures that only require continued self-monitoring for symptoms compatible with COVID-19. If you begin to experience [symptoms compatible with COVID-19](#), you should self-isolate, consult with your health care provider and/or take the Ministry of Health [on-line self-assessment](#) for further information.

As a result of the PWERA process, no potential high-risk exposures related to this case were identified to the Ministry.

For clarity, if you are deemed a potential or confirmed High-Risk Exposure either by way of the preliminary workplace exposure risk assessment process or through a contact tracing process

undertaken by Public Health, you will be notified by the ministry or public health and provided with instructions. If you are not contacted, then you are at low-risk of having been exposed to COVID-19 in this case.

In responding to this case, as in all cases of COVID-19, the ministry is relying upon the expertise and guidance of public health officials.

Management has made efforts to contact Hamilton Public Health to discuss the specific circumstances of this case. Unfortunately, Hamilton Public Health was unavailable for immediate consultation. Management will continue efforts to consult Hamilton Public Health to confirm if any additional precautions are required and will act upon any recommendations made.

Hamilton Public Health will take necessary steps to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and will proceed based on the specific circumstances of each individual case. Hamilton Public Health will conduct any further contact tracing they deem appropriate. The Ministry will provide all necessary assistance to Public Health in this regard if required.

Enhanced cleaning of the building has been in effect since March 2020.

Management will continue to monitor this situation and will provide updates should further information that may impact the health and safety of building occupants become available.

As you know, MAG's policies, including physical distancing, hand hygiene, PPE and source control face coverings, are in place to reduce the possibility of virus transmission in the workplace. I urge you to continue to be proactive at all times in following the precautions in place in the building. When followed, the suite of overlapping preventative measures within our courthouse are robust and effective at mitigating the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

I understand that this situation may cause you concern. Your health and safety is of the highest priority for us. We are in ongoing discussions with Public Health and will continue to follow their guidance around best practices to ensure your safety.

As a reminder, coronaviruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses. These include:

- stay at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others,
- wear face coverings or PPE, as indicated,
- wash your hands often with soap and water,
- use hand sanitizer as needed,
- sneeze and cough into your sleeve,
- avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth,
- avoid contact with people who are sick, and

- stay home if you are sick.

If you are in an at-risk group as identified by the Ministry of Health¹, it is recommended that you talk with a doctor about your situation, reduce your time outside your home, wear a source control face covering or surgical/procedure mask, and keep a distance from others as much as possible and to discuss any concerns with your manager.

If you have other questions or concerns, please speak with your manager. You can also find more general information on Ontario's COVID-19 website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov#section-6>

Thank you for your understanding.

Jennifer Wilder,
Manager of Court Operations

¹ Ministry of Health considers people in the following groups as “at risk” because there is a risk of severe illness if they get COVID-19:

- people older than 70
- people with an existing health condition
- people with a compromised immune system