Coronavirus – COVID-19
Qs & As for Employees
Updated April 3, 2020

1. What is physical distancing?


Physical distancing includes, but is not limited to:

- maintaining two-meter distance from other people;
- avoiding non-essential trips in the community;
- limiting or cancelling group gatherings;
- teleworking, if possible;
- holding virtual meetings or visits; and
- avoid visiting elderly friends and relatives.

2. What does it mean to self-monitor?

- Go about your day the way you normally would, but avoid crowded places and increase your personal space from others, whenever possible.

- **Monitor yourself** for 14 days for one or more symptoms of COVID-19.

**You should self-monitor if:**

- You have no symptoms AND a history of possible exposure to the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 in the last 14 days.

- You are in close contact with older adults or medically vulnerable people.

- You have been advised to self-monitor for any other reason by your public health authority.

If you develop symptoms, **isolate yourself from others immediately** and contact your public health authority as soon as possible.
3. **What does it mean to self-isolate?**


   - **Stay at home** and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for 14 days or until 24 hours after symptoms have fully resolved, whichever is longer.
   - **Avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community in the event that you become symptomatic.
   - If you develop symptoms, even if mild, stay home, avoid other people and contact your public health authority as soon as possible.

   **Individuals need to self-isolate if:**
   - They have travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days.
   - OR
   - Their public health authority has identified them as a close contact of someone diagnosed with COVID-19.

4. **What does it mean to isolate?**


   - **Stay at home** until your public health authority advises you that you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others.
   - **Avoid contact with other people** to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community.
   - If your symptoms get worse, immediately contact your health care provider or public health authority and follow their instructions.

   **You need to isolate if:**
   - You have been **diagnosed** with COVID-19.
   - OR
   - You are **waiting to hear the results** of a laboratory test for COVID-19.
   - OR
   - You have been **advised by your public health authority to isolate at home** for any other reason.
5. How is close contact defined?

Close contact is defined as living with, taking care of, or spending time with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, who is suspected to have COVID-19, or who has respiratory symptoms (cough, or shortness of breath) or fever that started within 14 days of travel outside of Canada.

6. What should I do if I am sick?

If you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, follow the Protocol for Employees.

7. What leave do I take if I am ill?

If you are ill with COVID-19, please take Other leave with pay. If you are ill with a pre-existing health condition, unrelated to COVID-19, please speak with your manager.

8. I have a pre-existing health condition. Should I come to work?

Consult your healthcare provider for guidance. If you need to be accommodated, speak with your manager.

9. Can I work from home?

Only employees required to maintain adjusted service levels for Members should report to work. Your manager will advise you if you are required to report to work. Employees who do not need to report to work should telework if possible. If you do not have the capacity to telework or are unsure of your status, contact your manager.

10. My child’s school/daycare is closed. Can I stay home to care for them?

Yes. Speak with your manager to discuss possible leave options.

11. A member of my family has tested positive for COVID-19. Am I at risk?

If you have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are experiencing symptoms, follow the Protocol for Employees.

12. What should I do if I have travelled recently?

Self-isolate for 14 days after your return from travel outside of Canada. Monitor your health and follow the guidance of OPH or the CISSS if you have symptoms of COVID-19.
13. What should I do if I have upcoming travel plans?

There are increased health risks for Canadian travellers abroad. Because of these risks, the Government of Canada advises you to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada until further notice. Discuss your travel plans with your manager. Note that all work-related conferences or training sessions have been cancelled.

14. I am currently abroad and am unable to return to Canada. What should I do?

Consult the pandemic COVID-19 travel health notice. Follow the instructions of local authorities and contact Canadian consular services for assistance. Keep your manager apprised of your situation.

15. What is the House of Commons doing to protect its employees?

The Crisis Management Team continues to closely monitor this unprecedented situation.

All efforts are being made to minimize the number of employees who need to report to work in order to comply with physical distancing requirements and the latest recommendations issued by public health authorities. Other preventative measures are in place within the Parliamentary Precinct, including increased cleaning measures.

There is a Protocol for Employees who have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who are experiencing symptoms that could be attributed to COVID-19.

Ongoing communications with employees on preventative measures are also being prioritized.

16. Where are hand-sanitizing stations located? Is the House of Commons planning to add more?

Hand-sanitizing stations are located at all building entrances, at the entrances to committee rooms and multipurpose rooms, as well as in cafeterias and high-traffic areas. The location of hand-sanitizing stations will continue to be evaluated and are being adjusted as required. Washing your hands with soap and water should be your primary method for cleaning your hands.

17. What personal protective equipment should I be using if I’m in the workplace?

There are no personal protective equipment requirements related to COVID-19 for House Administration employees. OHS has consulted with PHAC and OPH; both confirmed that respirators and masks are not required for the general population.
18. What if I am asked to report to work and I am uncomfortable doing so?

As a first step, please speak with your manager. You may also contact Occupational Health and Safety for advice.

19. How can I stay informed during this time?

Contact your manager if you have specific questions or concerns. In addition, regular updates are provided via the following channels of information:

- the OurCommons web portal (www.ourcommons.ca/COVID19)
- the parliamentary information line 991-INFO (4636)
- crisis notifications transmitted by email, desktop pop-up, and text message (To register, go to My HR Self-Service. Click on Your Employment. Click on Employee Information. Fill in or update the Emergency Notification section and save your changes.)

A Protocol for Employees who have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 or who are experiencing symptoms that could be attributed to COVID-19 has also been developed.

20. What happens if an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19?

A Protocol for Managers and a Protocol for Employees have been developed and will be followed if an employee is diagnosed with COVID-19. Managers will contact the individuals who might have been in contact with the employee in question to inform them of the situation. Additionally, working with Ottawa Public Health, we have established a protocol to ensure health and safety in the workplace. This includes sanitation and contact tracing. The employee’s workstation and other common areas will be sanitized. We recognize that this could cause anxiety among employees and encourage you to contact the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) (1-800-663-1142) or Jacqueline Biron and Lise Séguin, Occupational Nurses, of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) if you need support.

21. Are any buildings closed because of COVID-19?

No. However, several buildings have adopted a night/weekend posture where individuals wishing to access these buildings need to scan their House of Commons identification cards outside the building to enter and, in certain buildings, present their ID card to the security guard inside the building to track occupancy. This includes our leased facilities at 131 Queen, 155 Queen, 181 Queen, 235 Queen and 50 O’Connor/99 Bank. If you have difficulty entering a building, use the intercom to speak to a guard at the security post inside.
22. The COVID-19 situation is causing me anxiety. What resources are available to me?

Please reach out to your manager, supervisor or the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) if you need support. EFAP provides confidential and immediate support to promote the well-being of employees and their families and can be reached at 1-800-663-1142. You may also contact Jacqueline Biron and Lise Séguin, Occupational Nurses, of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) for support.

Similarly, you may be interested in this information provided by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat on COVID-19 and mental health at work.

Our EFAP provider has also prepared this guide on how to speak with children about COVID-19.

23. I am not used to teleworking. What can I do to make it easier?

Homewood Health, our EFAP provider, has provided these tips for working from home.

24. I am teleworking and would like to pick up some computer equipment or ergonomic equipment from the office. What do I do?

Requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the service-area head. In order to limit the number of employees on site and any potential exposure to COVID-19, only equipment determined to be essential to the employee’s ability to work remotely will be approved. Speak with your manager to discuss your needs.

25. I am teleworking. Can I go into the office whenever I like?

No. Employees who are teleworking should seek approval from their manager before going into the office.

26. Do I need a letter from the House of Commons to show to police authorities so that I can travel between Quebec and Ontario? (new)

Employees should travel with their HoC identification card to show proof of employment and personal identification to confirm their place of residence. A letter from the House of Commons, as an employer, is not required at this time. Should this change, more information will be provided to employees on an urgent basis.

27. My access card will expire soon. What should I do?

Due to the changing situation with COVID-19, all expiring access cards will be extended in the system to allow building access until September 30, 2020. A list of the names of those impacted will be provided to the Parliamentary Protective Service for reference. Once normal operations resume, new access cards will be issued. If you have any questions, contact HoCAccreditationCdC@parl.gc.ca.
Protocol for HoC employees

If you have been in close contact with an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, or you are experiencing symptoms that could be attributed to the disease, take the following steps.

1. Follow the guidelines from your local public health authorities. This information is provided on these websites:
   a. Ottawa Public Health: [www.ottawapublichealth.ca](http://www.ottawapublichealth.ca)
   b. CISSS Outaouais: [ciss-ouaouais.gouv.qc.ca](http://ciss-ouaouais.gouv.qc.ca)

2. Contact your manager.

3. Contact Jacqueline Biron, Occupational Nurse and Coordinator for Health and Wellness, at [jacqueline.biron@parl.gc.ca](mailto:jacqueline.biron@parl.gc.ca) or 613-794-7522, and be prepared to share health information as discussed with your manager.

Once you receive your test results (whether negative or positive)

1. Follow the guidelines from your local public health authorities.

2. Inform your manager of the test results.

3. Contact Jacqueline Biron, Occupational Nurse and Coordinator for Health and Wellness, at [jacqueline.biron@parl.gc.ca](mailto:jacqueline.biron@parl.gc.ca) or 613-794-7522.