

COVID-19 Proposed Protocols for the NPAFC Secretariat Office

Original Date: June 30, 2020

Date of Revision: March 11, 2022

The following are the protocols for the NPAFC Secretariat to consider in order to implement workplace guidelines based on the *BC's Restart: A plan to bring us back together*, a careful, four-step plan to bring BC back together. On May 25, 2021, BC gradually began to restart important social connections, businesses and activities. The Step 3 of the BC's Restart plan took effect on July 1, 2021 (announced by the Ministry of Health of BC on June 29, 2021). However, due to the spread of new variants with a huge case number increase in the province, the Restart plan was paused until further notice.

In February 2022, the Ministry of Health of BC announced easing restrictions on indoor or outdoor gatherings and events. There are now no capacity restrictions. However, please be reminded that the proof of vaccination is still required at all indoor settings until April 8, 2022.

On March 10, 2022, the Ministry of Health of BC announced that wearing masks in public indoor settings is **not** required (i.e., wearing a mask is now a personal choice), which is to take effect on March 11, 2022. However, masks are still encouraged on public transits. The Ministry of Health of BC also stated that individual businesses and event organizers can choose to continue requiring masks on their premises.

Effective March 11, 2022, the NPAFC Secretariat office will remove the mask mandate and now wearing a mask in the office will become “optional”. Regardless of your choice, please keep in mind to respect the choices of others. Protective equipment (i.e., masks and vinyl gloves) and hand-hygiene facilities (i.e., hand sanitizers, hand soap, etc.) will continue to be available in the office for staff and office visitor use at any time.

As stated by Ministry of Health of BC and WorkSafeBC in June 2021, workplaces will transition from a COVID-19 Safety Plan to a Communicable Disease Plan. As an employer, the Secretariat will implement a four-step process to develop a Communicable Disease Plan for our employees, following the guidelines provided by WorkSafeBC:

1. Understand the risk
2. Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk
3. Communicate measures, practices, and policies
4. Monitor your workplace and update your plan as necessary

General Duties of the NPAFC Secretariat:

The NPAFC Secretariat will ensure the health and safety of all workers working for the Secretariat, and any other workers present at a workplace at which that the Secretariat's work is being carried out, and comply with the Operational Health and Safety provisions, the regulations, and any applicable orders.

The NPAFC Secretariat will remedy any workplace conditions that are hazardous to the health or safety of all workers, ensure that all workers are made aware of all known or reasonably foreseeable health or safety hazards to which they are likely to be exposed by their work, establish occupational health and safety policies and programs in accordance with the regulations, provide and maintain in good condition protective equipment and hand-hygiene facilities as required by regulation and ensure that these are used by all workers.

The NPAFC Secretariat will provide all workers the information, instruction, and supervision necessary to ensure the health and safety of all workers in carrying out their work and to ensure their health and safety at the workplace.

The NPAFC Secretariat will provide all workers a clean working environment through routine cleaning that are appropriate and ensure the building ventilation system is in good operating condition as designed, and that preventative maintenance is conducted.

The NPAFC Secretariat will support all workers in receiving vaccinations for COVID-19 and other vaccine-preventable illnesses and will consider any workers who cannot be vaccinated due to medical condition and/or any other reasons. The NPAFC Secretariat will be mindful of privacy and human rights laws.

CORE WORKPLACE GUIDELINES

These protocols were updated according to the Ministry of Health of BC's latest announcements on province-wide restrictions, and the WorkSafeBC's guidelines for employers.

1. First Level Protection

The Secretariat continues to encourage most of the staff working from home to reduce contact intensity and number of contacts in the workplace.

Most staff are requested to work from home if physical presence in the office is not required to do tasks. Meetings will continue to be held virtually using Microsoft Teams or Zoom.

The Secretariat provides technical opportunity to staff to do most of tasks remotely. When there is no such opportunity, tasks may be rescheduled.

Occupancy limit for the entire office is five (5) people at a time. There will no longer be any occupancy limits for common areas (copy room, storage, kitchen, and the reception area).

As stated by the Ministry of Health of BC on March 10, 2022, wearing masks in public indoor settings is not required. The mask mandate order in the Secretariat office is lifted, effective March 11, 2022. Wearing a mask is now a personal choice. Some people in the office may choose to wear masks and should be respected.

There will be no limitation on the number of visitors to the office. Even though there is no mask mandate, visitors and staff are encouraged to maintain physical distance. Beverages can be offered to visitors, only if requested.

Deliveries are to be dropped off in the reception area and accepted in contactless manner. Staff can choose to wear masks when interacting with the delivery personnel. Staff is encouraged to wash hands after handling deliveries and mail.

2. Second Level Protection

A partition was installed to separate the Administrative Assistant (AA) workstation from high traffic common reception area, and the window in the wall between the AA and the Administrative Officer (AO) spaces is to be kept closed.

3. Third Level Protection

The Secretariat is to make sure that rules and guidelines are communicated clearly to avoid any misunderstanding or misinterpretation by employees.

Guidelines to actively promote and monitor personal self care actions

Staff are expected to respect the following guidelines for Personal Self Care and for Managing Social interaction. Staff should raise any concern about any activity or interaction immediately.

There should continue to be no hand shaking and body contact. All staff should continue to practice good hygiene (i.e., frequent hand washing with hand-hygiene facilities and supplies made available); maintain reasonable physical distance; if you have any symptoms of a cold, flu, or COVID-19, including fever or chill, coughing, diarrhea, you must inform the employer and stay home; if you are at greater risk you will need to inform the employer.

Guidelines to actively promote and implement core measures for managing social interaction in congregated social areas (kitchens, staff rooms, canteens, shared public spaces)

- a) *Entrance to building, elevator and office main door:* the building management, IMPEX, has **removed** COVID-19 protocols throughout the building, effective March 11, 2022.
- b) *Common areas:* masks are optional inside the building (including its common areas such as restrooms and the elevators) and will be optional inside the Secretariat office's common areas (i.e., boardroom, copy room, storage room, kitchen, reception area, etc.).
- c) *Offices:* no limitation on the number of people in the offices. However, social distancing is encouraged.
- d) *Kitchen:* no limitation on the number of people in the kitchen. It is encouraged to wipe down surfaces/appliances after each use. Staff are encouraged to use individual use dishes and utensils. Disposable paper towels are to be used to wipe hands and surfaces (it is not recommended to use cloth towels).
- e) *Meetings:* all meetings will continue to be held virtually.
- f) *Bathroom:* masks will be optional in common areas including bathrooms. Some staff possess individual washroom keys, and common washroom keys will be available as well.
- g) *Workstations:* Employees who had their workstations located in the copy room are requested to be working from home. No individuals are allowed to be sitting and working at the workstations during this time.
- h) *Boardroom:* the boardroom may be used as a temporary workstation office, if necessary. If it is being used as a workstation, it should not be used for meetings. The boardroom should only serve one (1) purpose. If the boardroom is used for meetings, people are encouraged to keep social distance (2m apart). All staff meetings and meetings with partners should continue to be held virtually.
- i) *Protective equipment:* Secretariat will continue to provide cleaning/disinfection supplies with disposable gloves and masks.

- j) *Circulation of mail and magazines:* this practice among all staff (except to the Executive Director) is to be temporarily stopped. Mail, magazines, and important financial documents are circulated only to key staff. Such staff is encouraged to wash hands after handling circulated materials.

Guideline to ensure that individuals who have the symptoms of a cold, flu, or COVID-19, including any coughing or sneezing, do not come into the workplace

Staff are required to stay home if they have ANY cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms. If they come to work, they will be asked to return home. Any surfaces they contacted will be disinfected.

Guideline to use flexible working hours to avoid exposure in public transit during rush hours

Public transit is used by the majority of the staff to get to and from the office each day. During rush hours, public transit is crowded, and the physical distancing measure cannot be adhered to. This increases staff exposure and risks of bringing the disease into the office. If possible, staff should maintain physical distancing recommendations during their commute by avoiding taking public transits during these peak hours. This could be achieved by staff taking advantage of flexible working time (Memo #A16-01) which allows working 7.5 hours between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. The hours should be agreed upon with their supervisor. Masks are recognized to offer protection when social distancing is not possible.

4. Fourth Level Protection

Staff are recommended to use masks when social distancing cannot be adhered to. Employer will continue to provide disposable masks for use in the office.

Continue Implementation of effective cleaning and hygiene practices

Moderate to low levels of cleaning of high-touch areas in workplace throughout the day and availability of hand sanitizers stands at entrances or around the workplace.

- a) Employer will continue to provide sanitizer and sanitizing materials in the office.
- b) Staff is recommended to wipe down surfaces after each personal use, including surfaces and appliances in the kitchen, photocopier, mailing machine, answering machine, alarm panel, stamps, stapler, hole puncher, etc.
- c) Staff is recommended to continue washing their hands frequently.

Other considerations:

- 1. Process for modifying the guidelines:** Employer monitors orders, guidance and notices issued by Provincial Health Officer and WorkSafeBC, the situation in the workplace and updates safety plan as necessary. Any concerns or ideas for modification of the protocols can be raised at our weekly staff meeting. Private concerns can be raised with your supervisor or with the Executive Director.
- 2. Returning to the office:** Currently, the government recommends that people can return to working in the office. However, due to the current workstation setup, the Secretariat requests most staff to continue working from home to minimize the risk of exposure and keep the person-to-person contact low. Staff will continue to work remotely with an option to return at their discretion, with permission and approval from their supervisor. Return to work should be organized by such a manner to maintain the social distancing recommendations.
- 3. Sick leave policy:** Standard sick leave policies apply to illness resulting from COVID-19.

Period of Validity

This protocol will be revised after receiving new recommendations/guidelines/policies from the relevant authorities including the Office of Protocol, Government of B.C., WorkSafeBC, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Staff will be informed on any change by the Executive Director or his designates.

Useful links:

WorkSafeBC: COVID-19 and Communicable Disease

<https://www.worksafebc.com/en/covid-19>

BC Centre for Disease Control: COVID-19

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19>

Government of BC Orders, Notices & Guidance

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/current-health-topics/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

BC's Response to COVID-19

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/response>

Government of Canada COVID-19 Information

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>