

COVID-19 Safety Guidance for Parliamentary Interns

August 2021

Context

The Parliamentary Internship Programme (PIP) is a unique work-study initiative that each year gives ten outstanding recent university graduates the chance to spend 10 months in Ottawa working at Parliament.

The PIP was created following a unanimous House of Commons motion adopted in 1969. As [originally recommended](#) by the Standing Committee on Procedure and Operation, the PIP is jointly operated by the House of Commons and the [Canadian Political Science Association](#) (CPSA), a charitable organization registered in Ontario dedicated to promoting the study of government and politics in Canada. Under this arrangement the House of Commons facilitates the Interns' placements with Members of Parliament (MPs), and the [Members By-Law](#) provides Interns with several of the same supports afforded to MPs' staff. The CPSA in turn manages the PIP's day-to-day operations, maintains the Programme's academic standards, and raises funds for the Interns' stipend. The PIP is funded by external sponsors, who also host interns for placements when Parliament is dissolved for elections.

Despite spending most of their time working for MPs (or Programme sponsors during elections), Parliamentary Interns are legally considered as CPSA employees throughout the duration of the Programme. Consequently, Parliamentary Interns are subject to the protection of Ontario's [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (OHSA) and the **CPSA has a legal duty to ensure that the Parliamentary Interns enjoy a safe work environment.**

Objective

Given the Programme's structure, ensuring the Interns' workplace safety requires collaboration from the PIP's various stakeholders, including the Interns, MPs, Programme Sponsors, and the CPSA as represented by the Programme Director. This document sets out the responsibilities for these actors to ensure that Parliamentary Interns remain safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responsibilities for Parliamentary Interns

Regardless of their personal vaccine status, Interns should continue to follow relevant [municipal](#), [provincial](#), [federal](#), [parliamentary](#), and organizational COVID-19 protocols and [precautions](#) when undertaking PIP activities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- **Symptom monitoring and self isolation** – Interns are expected to monitor themselves for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19. Interns exhibiting symptoms should [seek testing](#) and then isolate themselves until the test results are returned.
- **Notification and contact tracing** – Interns testing positive for COVID-19 should immediately notify the Programme Director and follow the House of Commons reporting



[protocol for Members and their staff](#). Interns are also encouraged to download the Government of Canada [COVID-19 Alert App](#).

- **Physical distancing** – Interns should maintain a [distance of 2 metres](#) from other individuals, especially when indoors, and ensure the use of face covering as described below in any circumstances where physical distancing is not possible, such as in corridors, etc. Interns should also minimize unnecessary contact with others where possible, for instance by holding virtual meetings and staggering the use of office space.
- **Face covering** – Unless otherwise permitted specified by a municipal, provincial, or House of Commons policy, Interns should wear [non-medical masks](#) or other face coverings at all times when indoors, unless seated at a workstation at least two metres away from all other persons. Interns are also encouraged to wear masks outside in common areas, especially where social distancing is not possible.
- **Hand hygiene** – Interns should practice good hand hygiene by regularly washing and sanitizing their hands, particularly after touching common surfaces.

Interns who fail to comply with these measures may be removed from their parliamentary placements and potentially from continued participation in the Programme.

Responsibilities for host Members of Parliament or Programme Sponsors

Given that Interns spend the majority of their time completing placements with MPs or Programme sponsors, Interns' health and safety in the workplace is a shared responsibility between host MPs and Sponsors, their staff, and the Interns themselves. MPs, Programme sponsors, and their staff can contribute to a safer work environment by:

- Implementing measures to reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission within their offices, including spacing work stations to ensure physical distancing and following the [Board of Internal Economy's decision concerning the use of masks](#) in the House of Commons precinct and MP offices.
- Notifying the Intern of any municipal or provincial COVID-19 guidelines or protocols that may apply to their workplace, including local measure that would be relevant during visits to the host MP's constituency.
- Notifying the Intern if the host MP or Sponsor has reason to expect the Intern may have been exposed to COVID-19 due to contact with someone in the placement environment.
- Notifying the PIP Director should an Intern fail to comply with COVID-19 protocols.

Parliamentary Interns may be removed from their placements should the work environment include conditions that could be harmful to their health or safety.

Responsibilities for the PIP Director

To ensure that the Parliamentary Interns continue to enjoy a safe working environment during the COVID-19 pandemic, the PIP Director will:

- Remain in close contact with the Programme's House of Commons Liaison regarding any changes in the COVID-19 protocols in place at the House of Commons.



- Inform Interns and MPs and Sponsors about any new COVID-19 protocols issued either by governments or the Board of Internal Economy that may impact Interns' placements.
- Work with the Parliamentary Interns, host MPs, and Programme Sponsors to ensure that Interns are safely accommodated during their placements.
- Respond to any questions from Interns, MPs, or Sponsors regarding COVID-19 measures.
- Modify this guidance as necessary in light of future developments.

Please contact the PIP Director, Dr. Paul Thomas, at 613-315-1155 or paul.thomas@pip-ppsp.org should you have any questions or concerns.