

COVID-19 Safety Guidance for Parliamentary Interns

October 2022

Context

The Parliamentary Internship Programme (PIP) is a unique work-study initiative that each year allows 10 outstanding recent university graduates to spend 10 months working at Parliament. It 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.

Despite spending most of their time working for MPs, **Parliamentary Interns are legally CPSA employees throughout the duration of the Programme.** Consequently, the Interns are subject to the Ontario [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

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

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 must monitor themselves for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 and utilize rapid antigen tests as appropriate. Interns should follow the [isolation instructions](#) issued by Ottawa Public Health if exhibiting symptoms, have tested positive, or if they are a close contact of someone who is a confirmed or likely COVID-19 case
- **Notification and contact tracing** – Interns testing positive or isolating for COVID-19 should immediately notify the Programme Director and follow the House of Commons reporting [protocol for Members and their staff](#).



- **Face coverings** – While face coverings are no longer required within the House of Commons precinct, they remain compulsory in some settings, such as air travel. Interns must comply with face-mask requirements where present, and are welcome to wear masks during other Programme activities should they wish to do so.
- **Vaccination** – The House of Commons no longer requires those utilizing the parliamentary precinct to be vaccinated against COVID-19, and most countries have lifted their vaccination requirements for incoming travellers. However, such measures may be introduced depending on the severity of subsequent waves of COVID-19. Interns are encouraged to ensure their vaccinations against COVID-19 remain up-to-date to prevent any difficulties with accessing the parliamentary precinct or undertaking travel for the Programme study tours.

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:

- Notifying the Intern of any municipal or provincial COVID-19 guidelines or protocols that may apply to their workplace, including local measures 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.

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 questions from Interns, MPs, or Sponsors regarding COVID-19 measures.
- Modify this guidance as necessary in light of future developments.

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