



# PROTOCOL FOR VISITING THE WATERLOO REGION COURTHOUSE

*Courtroom visits allow justice sector representatives to meet with students who are learning about the justice system in their classrooms. Students enjoy an opportunity to ask questions of judges and lawyers and to see the justice system in action.*

## PREPARING YOUR STUDENTS TO VISIT

- **Book your visit through the OJEN website in advance:**  
[ojen.ca/en/courthouse/kitchener-superior-court-of-justice](https://ojen.ca/en/courthouse/kitchener-superior-court-of-justice).
- **Determine the purpose of your visit:** Clarify your objectives and how they connect with the curriculum. Determine particular issues you would like to encourage students to discuss with justice system representatives.
- **Prepare students:** Invite students to brainstorm questions for judges, lawyers, and others they may encounter at the courthouse. Review with students the guidelines below.
- **Control the class:** Kindly ensure your students are orderly and respectful in the courthouse hallway and courtroom environments.

## SUGGESTIONS OF WHEN & WHERE TO ATTEND

- The information board to the right of the entrance area is a good starting place to determine what types of matters are being heard where. It is updated daily.
- **Bail courts - #102 and #103 – 10:00 am start time:** These courtrooms run every day. Students may witness accused persons' first appearances following arrest or bail hearings.
- **Guilty plea courts - #105 every day, and #104 on Thursday and Fridays – 9:30 am start time:** Students may witness guilty pleas, trial judgments, or sentencing submissions and decisions.
- **Trial courts - #200, #400, and #500-level courtrooms – 10:00 am start time:** On any given day, none, some, or all of the courtrooms on the fourth floor may contain short or lengthy trial matters. Superior Court matters including motions and trials are heard on the second and fifth floors.
- **Avoid Mondays** as young people (aged 12 to 17) have regularly have court appearances on Mondays. Young accused persons may be local students. It is illegal to publish (including on social media) information that identifies young accused persons.
- **Avoid #600-level courtrooms** where sensitive family and child protection (closed) hearings take place.
- Sensitive prosecutions (e.g., sexual assaults, matters involving child or teenaged witnesses) may not be suitable for classroom visits.

## **GUIDELINES FOR YOUR VISIT**

- Students must dress appropriately. School dress protocol applies to court as well. Sunglasses must be removed. Only headwear worn for religious or cultural purposes is permissible.
- Expect to encounter perimeter security akin to what you find at an airport. Visitors and their bags are searched to ensure the safety of the public, court staff, lawyers, and the judiciary. Knives, other weapons, and illicit substances will be confiscated.
- Cameras (including on cell phones) may not be used inside the courthouse, even for personal use.

## **COURTROOM DEMEANOR: RESPECT IS KEY!**

- Courtrooms are public (with rare exceptions), but court officers will ask disruptive or disrespectful visitors to leave. Please remind your students to be courteous and respectful at all times.
- Students must obey court staff at all times. Court staff are responsible for order in the courtroom.
- When court is in session, everyone must be quiet, including when entering or exiting the courtroom. Even whispering can be distracting to the lawyers and judge who are working and it may be captured by recording devices.
- Eating, drinking, and chewing gum are not permitted in courtrooms.
- Reading books, magazines, or newspapers in courtrooms is not permitted.
- Cell phones and other electronics must be turned off and put away. Electronic devices may interfere with courtroom recordings.
- When the presiding judicial official enters or leaves, everyone must stand.
- Students may be asked to refrain from taking notes during proceedings where publication bans have been imposed.