

B**TUESDAY**
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Mold plagues home of Housing Council

BUILDING CLOSED: Only two of 19 employees not sickened by spores; two students relocated**By MARTHA ELLEN**
TIMES STAFF WRITER

CANTON — Mold in the St. Lawrence County Housing Council home on Main Street is driving agency employees out.

Only two of the agency's 19 employees have not experienced recent physical ailments related to mold when working in the office, so the council shut its doors Wednesday afternoon. Initial tests taken last week show parts of 19 Main St. have astronomical spore counts.

"We've been told to stay out of the building entirely," said David R. Weissbard, council

spokesman. "We have to wait for a detailed report which we expect by the end of the week. We just don't know the magnitude of the problem."

The council uses two floors of the building, which it owns. Two SUNY Canton students who rent an apartment in the building were moved to a room on campus, Mr. Weissbard said.

Staff members spent Thursday and Friday working from home. Some employees now are working in rented quarters at 49 Main St., while others are at the headquarters of one of the

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council's partners, the Association for Neighborhood Rehabilitation, in Ogdensburg. Employees are picking up telephone messages remotely and the council is trying to transfer its telephone number to its rented Main Street office.

Some employees have been able to access computer files remotely to continue working on ongoing projects.

Executive Director Joseph D. DeMart, whose office has some of the highest spore counts, was the first to sicken. Other employees also variously experienced respiratory and digestive problems, fevers, shortness of breath and

headaches, Mr. Weissbard said.

A cause for the high spore count has not been determined yet, but the council's insurance adjusters are expected soon.

"We will probably be out for a time while the building is remediated," Mr. Weissbard said.

Canton Code Enforcement Officer Russell B. Lawrence IV said he did not know of other downtown buildings experiencing the same problems, either because of recent heavy rains or some other reason.

"If they're voluntarily complying with what needs to be done, then that's fine," he said. "As long as they're taking corrective measures, they don't have to involve me."