

# What You Need to Know if You've Been Summoned for Jury Duty in Nova Scotia

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**Serving on a jury is an important responsibility. Being a juror is one of the most direct ways that you can take part in the justice system.**

**This information sheet contains some of the frequently asked questions about being summoned for jury duty.**

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## What is a jury?

A jury is responsible for hearing the evidence in a trial and then rendering a verdict. The presiding judge will provide the jury with instructions on how to apply the law when considering the evidence. A jury consists of twelve people in a criminal trial and seven people in a civil trial. Only the Supreme Court conducts jury trials.

## Who can be a juror?

In Nova Scotia, you can be a juror if you are a Canadian citizen and 18 years of age or older. You cannot serve on a jury if:

- You have been convicted of a crime and been sentenced to two or more years in prison;
- You have attended or are attending a law school;
- You work in the administration of justice (for example, as a police officer or an employee of the provincial or federal Departments of Justice);
- You are a Member of the House of Commons, the Senate, the House of Assembly or the Lieutenant Governor; or
- You are an officer or non-commissioned member of the reserve Armed Forces on active service or an officer and non-commissioned member of the regular Armed Forces and special Armed Forces.

## Why was I picked?

Your name was selected from the provincial Health Registration List. Every year, tens of thousands of names and addresses are randomly selected by a computer program and submitted to the Department of Justice. Only your name and address are provided — no other personal information is shared with the Courts.

## **I have the Jury Summons — now what do I do?**

Keep the top portion of the Jury Summons and the “Important Notice” in a safe place. Bring the top portion of the Jury Summons with you on the morning of jury selection.

Be sure to read everything in the package carefully. It is important that you understand what you need to do and when. Fill out the bottom portion of the “Juror Information Form”, detach and return the bottom portion only to the Jury Coordinator.

Finally, make a note of the date and time that you have to attend Court. Call the Jury Information Line on the date indicated. This will tell you whether the jury selection is going ahead and other important updates regarding the process. It is important that you do this before you travel to Court.

## **I don't know anything about the law or about sitting on a jury!**

That's fine. If you are chosen to sit on a jury, the presiding Judge will give you information about what will happen next and what you need to know.

## **Do I have to serve?**

Remember that serving on a jury is an important responsibility. It is your chance to be directly involved in the justice system. You can be excused from jury duty only if you have a good reason, as determined by the Jury Coordinator or the Judge.

To apply to be excused or deferred to another jury selection, you must fill out the “*Application to be Excused/Deferred from Jury Duty*.” This form is included in the package of documents you received. The Jury Coordinator has the authority to excuse people without them having to appear for other reasons, including financial hardship or illness. The Jury Coordinator can also defer someone to the next jury selection date if it is determined there is a scheduling conflict, such as a planned vacation. If the Jury Coordinator does not excuse or defer someone as requested, then the Judge presiding over the jury selection process may also excuse a prospective juror for other reasons.

The Jury Coordinator will contact you by telephone to let you know if your application has been approved or denied. If you are not excused from jury duty, by law you must attend court.

## **What happens if I do not fill out the forms and return them, or if I do not show up for jury duty without being excused?**

Remember, jury duty is a responsibility that must be taken seriously. If you do not send in the Juror Information Form, or if you do not show up for jury duty without being excused, you may be arrested and fined up to \$1,000.

## **Does my employer have to give me time off to appear for jury duty?**

Yes. You are entitled to unpaid leave to attend for jury duty. Some employers pay their employees regular wages while attending court for jury duty, so you should check with your employer.

## **What are "jury fees"?**

If you are selected to sit on a jury, you will be paid \$40.00 per day and 20 cents per kilometer from your home to the courthouse and back for each day that you sit on a jury. Your parking costs will also be reimbursed. If you are not selected to sit on a jury, but you traveled more than 100 kilometers from your home to the courthouse in response to a jury summons, you will be paid 20 cents per kilometer from your home to the courthouse and back.

## **How can I prepare for jury selection?**

Be sure to read all the information in your jury duty package and call the Jury Information Line on the date indicated. This will tell you whether the jury selection is going ahead and other important updates regarding the process.

On the day of jury selection, you may have to wait to get inside the courthouse or to go through security. Dress appropriately for the weather and remember to bring the top portion of your jury summons and photo ID.

Once you are checked in, it may be some time before your juror number is called. Be prepared for a long wait — consider bringing reading materials or something else to pass the time, as well as water and snacks. Some courthouses will have vending machines on site.

## **I am receiving Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. How will attending jury duty affect my benefits?**

Attending court for jury duty will not affect your EI benefits.

## **I still have questions — who can I ask for more information?**

If you have read all the available information and still have questions about the process, call the Jury Coordinator at the courthouse nearest you. His or her name and phone number is included on the Jury Summons. You can also call the courthouse nearest you.