



## **COVID-19: Measures Applicable to the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia**

**Monday, March 16, 2020**

Measures are being put in place to limit the number of individuals inside courtrooms, by encouraging appearances by counsel whenever possible, staggering appearances, rescheduling matters and making use of video technology.

Starting Tuesday, March 17, access to Provincial Courts will be restricted to only those persons who are necessary to the proceedings before the Court. This will include counsel, litigants, accused individuals, witnesses, support workers, and members of the media. The general public will not be permitted in the Provincial Court. Media access is provided to honor the open court principle.

Counsel should advise their clients not to attend court unless their presence is necessary. Whenever possible, first appearances and matters set for election and plea should be handled by counsel. Designations of counsel will still be required for indictable matters. Counsel may appear in person, or via telephone or video, for these matters, provided arrangements are made for remote appearances in advance.

Arrangements may be made with court staff for telephone pre-trial conferences and focus hearings.

If seeking a trial adjournment, counsel should file an application with the Provincial Court to enable a judge to determine, in advance of the trial, whether the adjournment will be granted. Adjournment requests related to public safety issues will be considered at this time.

For many matters presently before the Provincial Court, efforts are being made to adjourn the next appearance until after May 31, 2020.

Accused individuals who are representing themselves in court are encouraged to appear by telephone or via duty counsel with Nova Scotia Legal Aid to request an adjournment of their case until after May 31, 2020.

For individuals in custody, video appearance will be the default position, including bail hearings by video, unless the judge directs otherwise. Arrangements should be made with the Court for any matters that can be handled this way.

Summary offence matters in Night Court in Halifax and Sydney will be adjourned until June. Court staff will be in touch about rescheduling. Night Court will continue to hear applications for peace bonds.

Chief Judge Pamela Williams has sent a directive to all law enforcement agencies that all first appearances to be scheduled after May 31, 2020, whenever possible. To help reduce public interactions at Court Administration, law enforcement agencies were also directed to fax or email paperwork to the Justice of the Peace Centre in Dartmouth for matters in the Halifax Regional Municipality, or to Court Administration for the courthouses elsewhere in the province.

Until further notice, the Justice of the Peace Centre will deal with all new uncontested matters involving individuals in custody. For individuals in custody who wish to have a contested hearing on their first appearance, the Provincial Court, at the various court locations, will accommodate hearings by telephone.

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**Court Contact:**

Contact Information for all Provincial Court locations in Nova Scotia is available online at [https://www.courts.ns.ca/Courthouse\\_Locations/Courthouse\\_Locations\\_Map.htm/](https://www.courts.ns.ca/Courthouse_Locations/Courthouse_Locations_Map.htm/).