



## **COVID-19: BEST PRACTICES FOR VIRTUAL COURT**

**Friday, May 22, 2020**

Virtual court options will be an important part of the Nova Scotia Supreme Court's pandemic recovery plan in the coming months. Counsel interested in learning more about virtual court hearings are encouraged to review [Best Practices for Remote Hearings](#), developed by the E-Hearings Task Force in Ontario.

The E-Hearings Task Force was established by the Ontario Bar Association, The Advocates' Society, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations and the Ontario Trial Lawyers' Association, in cooperation with the Ontario Superior Court of Justice. The focus was to work with the Superior Court to assist the Bench and Bar in implementing remote hearings in that province.

Although the Nova Scotia Supreme Court has not adopted this Best Practices document, it is offered as a useful resource to learn more about how remote hearings can work. It covers a range of issues, including civility and cooperation with opposing counsel and parties, pre-hearing preparation, issues to discuss with the judge in advance, how to prepare clients and witnesses, document management, and court etiquette.

In time, as the Judiciary gains more experience with virtual court, the Supreme Court hopes to develop its own best practices document for remote hearings in Nova Scotia.

Right now, virtual court hearings and settlement conferences are available only for eligible civil matters at the Law Courts in Halifax. As training and setup continues, the Court expects to expand this service to the Supreme Court (Family Division), as well as the General Division in the districts.

Counsel who have a matter that meets the eligibility criteria listed in the [May 7, 2020, directive](#), and that they feel would be appropriate for a virtual court hearing, should contact their local scheduler to request that the matter proceed virtually.

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### **Media Contact:**

Jennifer Stairs  
Communications Director

Nova Scotia Judiciary  
902-221-5257  
[stairsjl@courts.ns.ca](mailto:stairsjl@courts.ns.ca)