



COVID-19: SUPREME COURT (GENERAL DIVISION) EXPANDS ESSENTIAL SERVICES MODEL ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA

Wednesday, April 28, 2021 (Halifax, NS) – In response to the rising COVID-19 cases and additional public health restrictions announced across Nova Scotia this week, the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia (General Division) is expanding its essential services model to all locations in the province, effective Thursday, April 29, 2021.

Under an essential services model, Supreme Court (General Division) proceedings that have not yet commenced will be limited to those deemed urgent or essential by a judge.

Non-urgent matters, including non-urgent probate and bankruptcy matters, will not proceed at this time. These matters will be adjourned and rescheduled.

To help reduce the number of people appearing in-person, judges will consider whether alternative measures, such as telephone or videoconferencing, may be used for urgent and essential matters. Counsel are reminded that mandatory masking and physical distancing measures will be in effect for any court matter that proceeds in-person.

Weekly Crownside Sittings (Halifax)

Crownside will continue to be held weekly by telephone or videoconferencing to deal with first appearances following committal from Provincial Court, criminal matters requiring rescheduling, criminal matters already scheduled, and any other matter deemed by the Crownside judge to be urgent or essential.

Supreme Court (Family Division)

Until further notice, in-person proceedings in the Supreme Court (Family Division) are suspended indefinitely. Any matters requiring in-person attendance will be adjourned and rescheduled. Otherwise, the Supreme Court (Family Division) in all locations will operate as outlined in [Notice # 12](#), dated April 23, 2021, on the Courts' COVID-19 updates page.

Filing Documents

Until further notice, unless a judge directs otherwise, counsel and self-represented individuals should not file documents in the Supreme Court (General Division) unless they are related to an urgent or essential matter. The Supreme Court (General Division) will no longer accept hard copies of documents at courthouses. Instead, counsel and self-represented individuals should email or fax their documents along with a cover letter outlining why they feel the matter is considered urgent or essential.

A list of email addresses and fax numbers for all Supreme Court locations is available at https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

Individuals who need to file documents but do not have access to a computer or fax machine should contact the courthouse for further directions.

Please note that counsel are not required to subsequently file original paper copies of most types of electronic documents. Original paper copies are required only for sworn documents, such as affidavits. Counsel will receive further direction from the Court on this when the Supreme Court (General Division) returns to a safe services model.

These measures further reduce the number of people who need to visit the courthouses in person and help protect the health and well-being of the employees and judges still working at the courthouses.

Suspension of Filing Deadlines

Unless a judge indicates otherwise, filing deadlines outlined in the Civil Procedure Rules or directed by a judge for civil matters in the Supreme Court (General Division) are suspended across the province until further notice.

This directive includes, but is not limited to, filing a Notice of Defence in an Action, a Notice of Contest in an Application, and a Notice of Judicial Review or Notice of Appeal under Civil Procedure Rule 7 (with the exception of Small Claims Court Appeals, the timing of which is statutory based).

This directive does not apply to criminal matters (with the exception of summary conviction appeals), proceedings in the Supreme Court (Family Division), or proceedings in the Court of Appeal. It also does not affect filing deadlines established by legislation, such as the deadlines contained in the *Limitations of Action Act* or the *Probate Act*.

These are temporary measures to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Nova Scotia. They will be regularly evaluated, and new directives will be issued as the situation with the pandemic evolves. For more information on the various Supreme Court directives related to COVID-19, please visit https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

Media Contact:

Jennifer Stairs
Communications Director
Nova Scotia Judiciary
902-221-5257
stairsjl@courts.ns.ca