



COVID-19: SUPREME COURT (GENERAL DIVISION) EXPANDING THE SERVICES AVAILABLE UNDER AN ESSENTIAL SERVICES MODEL

Thursday, May 13, 2021 (Halifax, NS) – The Supreme Court of Nova Scotia (General Division) is preparing to expand the services available to counsel and the public under the current essential services model.

In a [Notice](#) issued on April 28, 2021, Chief Justice Deborah K. Smith directed that all Supreme Court (General Division) locations in the province adopt an essential services model to help reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Under an essential services model, in-person proceedings are limited to those matters deemed urgent or essential by a judge. Any non-urgent matters in the Supreme Court (General Division) requiring in-person attendance are being adjourned and rescheduled.

That directive will remain in place in all locations until further notice. However, effective Tuesday, May 25, 2021, any non-urgent Supreme Court (General Division) matters, including probate and bankruptcy matters, that can be held virtually by telephone or videoconferencing will be allowed to proceed across the province. As well, Chambers, Appearance Day, Special Time Chambers, and Crownside for criminal cases will resume hearing non-urgent matters via telephone or videoconferencing.

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

Filing Documents

Effective Monday, May 17, 2021, the Supreme Court (General Division) will return to its normal processes for filing court documents related to both urgent and non-urgent matters. That means the Supreme Court (General Division) will no longer accept electronic filings; counsel and parties will be expected to file paper copies of documents. Filings will be done via drop boxes at the main entrances of the courthouses.

Please note that counsel are not required to file original paper copies of any documents that were filed electronically since April 28, 2021, with the exception of sworn documents, such as affidavits. Starting Monday, May 17, 2021, counsel will have 30 business days to submit original paper copies of sworn documents that were filed.

The suspension of filing deadlines as outlined in the [April 28, 2021, Notice](#) remains in effect to help reduce the number of people who have to visit a courthouse in person.

Counsel and self-represented individuals who want to file at this time are permitted to do so, but are encouraged to stagger their non-urgent filings, whenever possible, and avoid filing large volumes of paper at once.

As well, due to reduced staff in the courthouses, counsel should expect some delays in processing this paperwork. All documents will be date-stamped the day that they are delivered to the Court. Date-stamped copies will be provided to counsel in due course (not the date that they were filed).

The Chief Justice will be monitoring the evolving situation with COVID-19 in Nova Scotia. Services in the Supreme Court (General Division) will continue to be expanded where it is safe to do so, and if physical distancing and other public health advice can be followed.

For more information on the various Supreme Court directives related to COVID-19, visit https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

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