



COVID-19: PREVENTATIVE MEASURES IN THE NOVA SCOTIA SUPREME COURT

Monday, March 16, 2020 (Halifax, NS) – The Nova Scotia Supreme Court has put additional measures in place to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and protect the health of Nova Scotians working in and visiting courthouses across the province.

Nova Scotia is now reporting three presumptive cases of the virus. Following that announcement earlier today the Premier directed that anyone who has travelled outside of Canada must self-isolate for a period of 14 days upon their return to Nova Scotia.

With that in mind, counsel or members of the public who have travelled internationally within the last two weeks, or are experiencing symptoms of the coronavirus, should not visit a courthouse. Individuals who are due in court who have travelled recently or are experiencing symptoms should contact their lawyer or the Court to seek instructions from the presiding judge in their case.

Until further notice, all civil weddings at the courthouses are cancelled. Individuals looking to get married outside a courthouse can find a list of Justices of the Peace who perform wedding ceremonies on the [Department of Justice website](#).

General and Special Time Chambers matters in the Supreme Court (including the Family Division) will be conducted by telephone, unless cross-examination of a witness is required. The Supreme Court is also considering what other matters may be dealt with via alternative arrangements, such as video- and tele-conferencing. Safe distancing will be practised in cases that go ahead in person.

Communal water jugs and disposable cups will no longer be provided in the courtrooms. Instead, counsel and their clients will be allowed to bring their own individual water bottles, which they must take with them or dispose of at the end of the proceedings. The province is also increasing cleaning protocols inside courtrooms, as well as secure and common areas of courthouses.

On Friday, following the Chief Medical Officer's advice to avoid gatherings of more than 150 people, Chief Justice Deborah K. Smith directed that all upcoming jury trials in the Supreme Court be postponed for a period of 60 days. This applies to all jury trials that have not yet commenced in court. The situation will be re-evaluated after the 60-day period.

Members of the public who have received a jury summons requiring them to come to court for jury duty within the next 60 days, and who are not presently sitting on a case, are officially released from that summons.

Jurors presently participating in a jury trial, are required to report to court as usual. Anyone exhibiting signs of fever, cough or flu-like symptoms should contact the Court immediately to seek further instructions from the judge presiding over their case.

For more information on COVID-19 and tips for reducing the spread of this virus and other respiratory illnesses, please visit www.novascotia.ca/coronavirus/.

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Media Contact:

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