



COVID-19: PROVINCIAL COURT INTRODUCES PILOT PROJECT FOR FAXING NEW CRIMINAL INFORMATIONS IN HALIFAX & DARTMOUTH

Monday, Jan. 25, 2021

The Provincial Court is launching a pilot project that permits law enforcement agencies to securely submit Informations to the Halifax and Dartmouth Provincial Courts by fax.

Before the pandemic, police had to visit a courthouse in person to have an Information sworn. In March, when COVID-19 forced courthouses to limit public access, the Provincial Court developed a process for electronic filing. Law enforcement agencies could fax Informations to the Justice of the Peace Centre for matters in the Halifax Regional Municipality, or to the Court Administration Office for courthouses elsewhere in the province. This helped reduce in-person contact for court staff and officers.

This was meant to be a temporary solution in an emergency situation. The process has since been reviewed and the revised process outlined below will be piloted at the Halifax and Dartmouth Provincial Courts.

Effective Feb. 1, 2021, all new Informations to be laid in Halifax and Dartmouth (including release documents to be confirmed) will be received by fax in the Court Administration Office in Dartmouth, pursuant to Sec. 508.1(1) of the Criminal Code. When submitting these documents, law enforcement agencies are expected to use the new fillable PDF [fax cover sheet](#). The fax number for the Court Administration Office is included in the cover sheet.

The exception will be for any daily Cells matters. Informations for Cells will continue to be received by fax through the Justice of the Peace Centre and exempt from the pilot project.

Under the new process, law enforcement agencies will no longer need to courier copies of the faxed documents to the Halifax or Dartmouth courthouses. Law enforcement agencies and the Public Prosecution offices for the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada will receive a scanned copy of the original Information (with included confirmed release documents) from the Court Administration Office after it has been entered in the JEIN system.

The pilot project will run until July 31, 2021. At that time, the judiciary, staff and stakeholders will evaluate its success and consider expansion to other Provincial Courts in the province.

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

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COVID-19: FURTHER EXTENSION OF FINE PAYMENTS

Thursday, Feb. 25, 2021

To help reduce in-person contact and ensure physical distancing, public access to courthouses across Nova Scotia continues to be limited to those people who work in the building, who are involved in a court proceeding or those who have an appointment and have passed the mandatory health screening.

If you have a new or outstanding summary offence ticket(s), the Provincial Court has extended payment deadlines a further 90 days from the original due date on the ticket. This directive was first issued in March 2020 and has been extended several times since — each time an additional 90 days — to help reduce the number of people who need to visit a courthouse in person during the pandemic.

Individuals who want to pay a summary offence ticket or other court fine now can do so [online](#). A debit card or credit card and the ticket number are needed to complete an online payment. Court Administration may help find the ticket number if you do not have it.

If you do not have online access, individuals may make an appointment through Court Administration to access front counter services during the pandemic. Email addresses for the Courts are available online [here](#) or you can call the Provincial Court Contact Information Line at 1-877-445-4012.

For more information on the COVID-19 directives issued by the Provincial Court, please visit https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

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1-877-445-4012



COVID-19: PROVINCIAL COURT SUSPENDS IN-PERSON PROCEEDINGS IN HALIFAX AND DARTMOUTH

Friday, April 23 2021 (Halifax, NS) – In response to rising case numbers and new health restrictions imposed yesterday in the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Chief Judge of the Provincial and Family Courts is suspending all in-person court proceedings in HRM for a four-week period, starting Monday, April 26, 2021.

This directive applies to the Provincial Courts in Halifax and Dartmouth only. In-person proceedings in Provincial Courts outside HRM will proceed as scheduled, unless the presiding judge orders otherwise. The suspension will be re-evaluated at the end of the four-week period.

“Our Bench has been in touch with public health officials about the developments in the Halifax region this week,” said Chief Judge Pamela Williams. “We agree this step is a necessary precaution to ensure the safety of everyone working in or appearing before these Courts. We appreciate this is a difficult and stressful situation, but with patience and cooperation, we will get through it together.”

In-person appearances in Halifax and Dartmouth that were scheduled between April 26 and May 21 will be adjourned and rescheduled. Court staff will be in touch with counsel who have matters scheduled during that period with further information.

Self-Represented Individuals

If you are not in custody and you have a criminal court appearance in the Provincial Court in Halifax or Dartmouth between April 26 and May 21, you should not come to the courthouse. The Court will adjourn your matter without you needing to be present. Court staff will be in touch with you about rescheduling. You will be required to attend court in person on the new date you are provided.

Individuals who do not have a lawyer are encouraged to contact duty counsel at Nova Scotia Legal Aid. You can apply online using the Legal Aid [Adjournment Request](#) form or call 902-420-7800.

For more information on the COVID-19 directives issued by the Provincial Court, please visit https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

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COVID-19: PROVINCIAL COURT EXTENDS THE SUSPENSION OF IN-PERSON PROCEEDINGS ACROSS THE PROVINCE

Updated: Friday, May 21, 2021

Further to the directives issued on April 26 and May 12, 2021, the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia is extending the suspension of in-person court proceedings in all areas of the province until at least June 11, 2021. This directive will be re-evaluated as the number of COVID-19 cases in the province and public health restrictions change.

Please note that during the ongoing suspension, Provincial Court judges in certain locations may require in-person attendance of local counsel for contested bail hearings. Counsel involved in contested proceedings should check with the judge presiding in that jurisdiction for direction.

All other in-person appearances in the Provincial Courts that are currently scheduled through to June 11, 2021, will be adjourned and rescheduled. Court staff will be in touch with counsel regarding rescheduling.

This directive does not affect scheduled or new Provincial Court matters that can be done remotely by telephone, videoconferencing or a combination of the two technologies. Those matters will proceed, unless the presiding judge orders otherwise.

Self-Represented Individuals

If you are not in custody and you have a court appearance by telephone or video, unless the Court contacts you directly, your matter will go ahead, and you are expected to participate. If you are unsure of the status of your matter, please [contact the courthouse](#) where your matter is scheduled to be heard.

If you are not in custody and you have an in-person appearance in the Provincial Court between now and June 11, 2021, you should not come to the courthouse. Instead, you should [contact the courthouse](#) where your matter is scheduled to be heard or contact duty counsel at Nova Scotia Legal Aid to assist with adjourning your matter. You can apply online using the Legal Aid [Adjournment Request](#) form or call 902-420-7800.

You will be required to attend court in person on the new date you are provided.

For more information on the COVID-19 measures in the Provincial Court and the Youth Justice Court, please refer to the [Consolidated Directive](#).

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COVID-19: PROVINCIAL COURT WILL ALLOW IN-PERSON PROCEEDINGS STARTING JUNE 14

Monday, June 7, 2021

Effective Monday, June 14, 2021, the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia will allow in-person proceedings, provided they can be held in accordance with Public Health directives. That means preliminary inquiries and trials scheduled on June 14 or later will be able to go ahead, unless otherwise ordered by the presiding judge.

All participants attending court in person are expected to wear a mask at all times, including in the courtroom and when speaking. As per the [May 27, 2021 Update on Masking](#), the All Courts Recovery Committee is now strongly recommending individuals wear disposable medical masks, rather than reusable cloth masks.

Sheriffs will provide a disposable medical mask to all witnesses, defendants and other participants involved in an in-person court proceeding. Counsel are expected to bring their own disposable medical mask. However, for those who may not have one, a supply will be available at the front doors of the courthouses.

In an effort to hear more matters and help address the backlog of court proceedings, the Provincial Court will continue to deal with many matters, including bail hearings, by telephone or Microsoft Teams, even after the suspension of in-person proceedings is lifted.

For summary offence matters in Night Court in Sydney and Halifax, Presiding Justices of the Peace are hearing matters by telephone and video on Microsoft Teams, including trials if all participants consent to proceed virtually. Night Court matters that require in-person attendance will resume on June 14, 2021.

The Provincial Court appreciates that counsel and parties may have family obligations that make it difficult to participate in a virtual court proceeding. Counsel are nevertheless encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to move their matters forward. We must all be flexible when it comes to technical difficulties or other challenges that participants may experience during virtual court proceedings.

For more information on the COVID-19 measures in the Provincial Court and the Youth Justice Court, please refer to the [Consolidated Directive](#).

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Statement from Chief Judge regarding the Vaccination Status of Provincial Court Judges

Thursday, Nov. 25, 2021

The following statement was originally issued by The Hon. Pamela S. Williams, Chief Judge of the Provincial and Family Courts of Nova Scotia, on Wednesday, Nov. 24, 2021:

“I welcome the opportunity to clarify the position of the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia regarding the vaccination status of our judges.

The public should be assured that all Provincial Court judges presiding in courtrooms, both now and in the future, are fully vaccinated. While some members of our Bench may not be sitting due to medical leave at present, any judge returning to sit in the Provincial Court will be fully vaccinated.

This policy also applies to all Presiding Justices of the Peace (PJPs).

Since the early days of the pandemic, the Provincial Court has worked tirelessly alongside government to create workable solutions aimed at keeping our courts open, while reducing the spread of the COVID-19 virus in our communities.”

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COVID-19: PROVINCIAL COURT SUSPENDS IN-PERSON PROCEEDINGS

Friday, Dec. 31, 2021

In light of record-breaking COVID-19 case numbers in the province and the threat of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, the Provincial Court of Nova Scotia is suspending most in-person proceedings and will be operating virtually via Microsoft Teams or telephone effective Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022, until Friday, Jan. 14, 2022. **Trials for individuals in custody will be heard in person, as operational requirements allow.**

This directive also applies to Youth Justice Court, Night Court and Wellness Court Programs in the Provincial Court. The situation will be reassessed prior to Jan. 14 to determine whether it is safe to resume in-person proceedings.

Counsel and other court participants are reminded that mandatory masking and physical distancing measures are in effect for any trial that proceeds in-person. Strict adherence to personal protective equipment (PPE) is essential to help reduce the spread of the virus.

To be clear, this directive does not affect scheduled or new Provincial Court and Youth Justice Court matters that can be done remotely by telephone, videoconferencing or a combination of the two technologies. Those matters will proceed, provided there is sufficient staff and equipment to do so and unless the presiding judge orders otherwise. Counsel are expected to appear virtually, either with or on behalf of their client.

All other In-person proceedings that cannot be held virtually will be adjourned and rescheduled at the time of the virtual appearance.

The resolution of non-urgent matters remains a priority for the Provincial Court and the Youth Justice Court. Counsel are encouraged to continue reviewing their matters to see what can be resolved without an in-person hearing. The full process to request the resolution of a non-urgent matter is outlined in [here](#).

Provincial Court Sitings in Eskasoni First Nation

Until further notice, all Provincial Court sittings in Eskasoni First Nation, in accordance with the above protocols, will be heard at the Sydney courthouse.

Self-Represented Individuals

If you are not in custody and you have a court appearance by telephone or video in the Provincial Court, unless the Court contacts you directly, your matter will go ahead, and you are expected to participate. If you are unsure of the status of your matter, please [contact the courthouse](#) where your matter is scheduled to be heard.

If you are not in custody and you have an upcoming in-person appearance in the Provincial Court, you should not come to the courthouse. Instead, you should [contact the courthouse](#) where your matter is scheduled to be heard or contact duty counsel at Nova Scotia Legal Aid to assist with adjourning your matter. You can apply online using the Legal Aid [Adjournment Request](#) form or call 902-420-7800.

You will be required to attend court in person on the new date you are provided.

Bail Hearings

All bail hearings will proceed virtually by video on Microsoft Teams, whenever possible.

Please note that during the suspension of in-person proceedings, Provincial Court judges in certain locations may require in-person attendance of local counsel for contested bail hearings. Counsel involved in contested proceedings should check with the judge presiding in that jurisdiction for direction.

For more information on the COVID-19 measures in the Provincial Court and the Youth Justice Court, please refer to the [Consolidated Directive](#).

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