

## **Simplified Criminal Front-End Process Set To Take Effect in Provincial Court of BC on December 1, 2013**

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On December 1, 2013, the first phase of changes being made to scheduling practices in the Provincial Court of British Columbia is set to come into effect. The phase is a component of the Provincial Court Scheduling Project, a judicially-led initiative which aims to more effectively manage case flow and make better use of resources.

The key objective of the Provincial Court Scheduling Project is to improve access to justice through more effective, efficient and equitable use of judicial resources. This will be achieved through the development and implementation of new scheduling practices that will make better use of judicial resources by:

- Moving administrative (criminal case) appearances out of the courtroom (where appropriate and feasible);
- Improving the scheduling of criminal, family and civil trials in the Provincial Court through the use of an assignment court in larger courthouses;
- Creating a technology platform that allows for the integrated scheduling of trials;
- Increasing the gathering of reliable case scheduling data that can be used to better enable the Court to analyze its processes and to evaluate and respond to the changing needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century public;
- Developing a new Rota and scheduling software program that will facilitate the new Court scheduling system; and
- Enhancing and expanding the use of video technology.

December 1, 2013 will see the implementation of a simplified criminal front-end process. This new process is set to make the best use of judicial resources by:

- Reducing the number of required court appearances;
- Allowing for differentiated processing to suit each case;
- Enabling judges to focus on adjudicative tasks; and
- Having judicial Case Managers deal with non-adjudicative and uncontested appearances.



On December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 changes to the Criminal Caseflow Management (CCFM) Rules will take effect rescinding the requirement for Arraignment and Trial Confirmation Hearings and the filing of associated reports.

Through the new simplified criminal front-end model, Judicial Case Managers, as assigned by the Chief Judge, will preside over the majority of administrative appearances.

Additional phases of the Provincial Court Scheduling Project are:

- **Delayed Assignment**, one of the underlying principles of the scheduling model, is set to begin on January 1, 2014. It will apply to all divisions: criminal, youth, family and small claims. Delaying the scheduling of cases to judges and judges to courtrooms will enable the Court to make more effective, efficient and equitable use of judicial resources. With this process, Court time will be available for matters that actually proceed to trial.
- **Enhanced Use of Technology** will build on the existing practice of employing judicial resources via video technology to locations that require assistance. New Provincial Court Scheduling Software (PCSS), which is expected to go live in late summer/fall 2014, will support this initiative.