

## THE COURT THANKS YOU



With this being the last newsletter, the Court wishes to thank the various individuals and organizations who have participated in and provided input to the Provincial Court Scheduling Project (PCSP).

This was a major undertaking for the Court in moving to a more effective and efficient scheduling model and without the valuable contributions of many people, the PCSP project would not be the success it is today.

There were too many involved to mention everyone, but, we would like to make special mention of a few who have played major roles in moving the project forward on behalf of the Court namely, the Honourable Associate Chief Judge Nancy Phillips (Project Sponsor), Ms. Dawn North, (Project Lead) Mr. Andrew Clark (Project Manager) and Ms. Sarah Calla (Business Analyst and Subject Matter Expert).

## ASSIGNMENT AND SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS COURT UPDATE

### Implementation:

Assignment and Summary Proceedings Court implementation is now complete in all seven locations in the province (Port Coquitlam, 222 Main, Robson Square, Victoria, Kelowna, Abbotsford and Surrey). Since the launch of the first Assignment Court in Port Coquitlam in July 2014, the Court has made several workflow changes to the scheduling model to make more effective use of resources and to better serve the public. As we continue to hear feedback from stakeholders the Court will adjust and tweak the model as appropriate.

### Thank You:

The Provincial Court would like to thank all of the stakeholders (Provincial Crown, PPSC, LSS, defence bar, family and civil bar, Court Services administration and sheriffs) for participating and collaborating with the Provincial Court Scheduling project in all the countless working group meetings, mockups, information sessions and debrief meetings. With stakeholder input and collective insight for each assignment court launch, the PCSP team was able to prepare each location for a smooth transition to the new scheduling model.

# ASSIGNMENT AND SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS COURT UPDATE

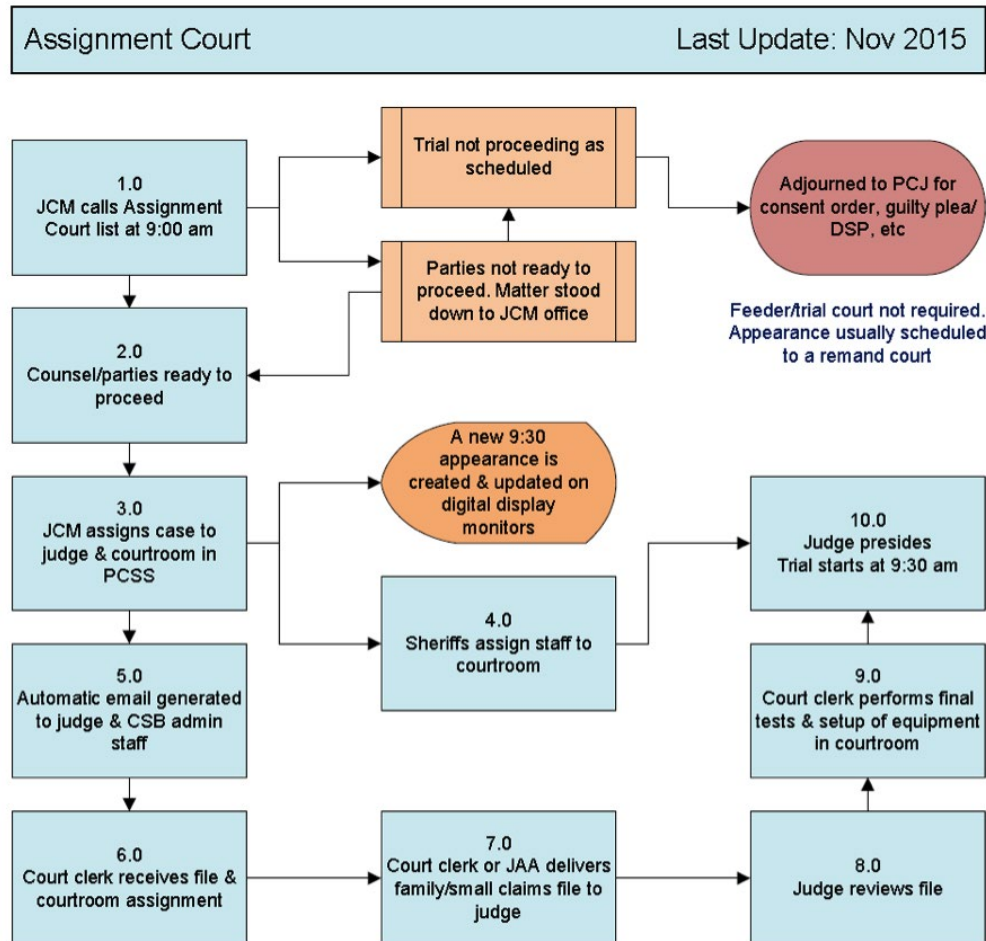
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### Behind the Scenes in Assignment Court:

Now that cases are assigned to judges and courtrooms on the day of trial from assignment court, have you ever wondered how it all works behind the scenes? How does the judge find out his or her assigned case? How does the file get to the proper courtroom? Here's a brief summary of what happens for each case that is assigned:

- JCM starts calling assignment court list promptly at 9 am
- If counsel and parties are ready to proceed:
  - JCM assigns file in PCSS to judge and trial courtroom
  - A new 9:30 appearance is created for the trial courtroom

- Digital display monitors are updated in real-time. Witnesses and/or parties in the lobby or other areas of the courthouse are able to find out which courtroom they are assigned to.
- An automatic email is generated to the judge and court services staff
- Sheriffs assign their staff to the courtroom
- Court clerks receive their file and courtroom assignment
- Court clerks or JAAs deliver civil files to judge for review
- Trial courts commence promptly at 9:30 am or soon thereafter



# ASSIGNMENT AND SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS COURT UPDATE

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There's a lot that happens behind the scenes in a very short window of time. Good communication is critical at each step in the process. Here are 2 key things counsel can do to help trial courts start on time at 9:30 am.

- Communicate in advance to the JCM if your matter is not expected to proceed as scheduled.
- Arrive on time at 9:00 am in assignment court. This is the number one issue that hinders the effectiveness of assignment court.

### Benefits:

While it is still early to draw conclusions, there are some noticeable benefits of assignment court in some locations:

- Improved communication with counsel in advance of the trial date
- Improved communication with Court Services staff
- Many trials are starting on time at 9:30 am. Previously with numerous files on their list, judges would have to spend considerable time at the start of the day canvassing each file, determining which to hear first
- Better distribution of trials being held across divisions (Family, Small Claims and Criminal)

- Ability to schedule next day continuations if necessary (due to judges not being pre-assigned)
- Ability to offer judicial assistance to other locations one or two days before or by video on the day of
- No longer opening courtrooms that are not needed
- Delays have gone down and the Court can offer earlier trial dates
- There seems to be fewer reserved judgments and continuations. Judges usually have one case for trial so they have more time to focus on a file with minimal interruptions.
- More flexibility in judges' schedules all around
- Proceed rates for trials are generally higher. This may be as a result of both the new process and Crown File Ownership in the assignment court locations.
- Significantly fewer cases adjourned due to lack of court time

Summary Proceedings Court has continued to receive positive feedback from all agencies. This has proven to be a very effective court to schedule short hearings or trials in mixed divisions and affords the JCMs a great deal of flexibility to schedule other priority matters when necessary.

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## Delayed Assignment in Non-Assignment Court Locations

Delayed Assignment is one of the underlying principles of the Court's scheduling process. The delayed model of scheduling cases and judges to courtrooms enables the Court to make more effective, efficient and equitable use of judicial resources. Delaying the assignment of trials also ensures that court time is reserved for hearings which actually proceed.

As of January 2, 2014, the Provincial Court began the practice of delaying the assignment of judges to cases and courtrooms in ALL court locations. Delayed Assignment of cases and judges applies

to all divisions of the Provincial Court: Criminal; Youth; Family; and Small Claims. Cases will not be pre-assigned to a judge unless operationally necessary. Regional Administrative Judges will make such assignments. A judge may be assigned in advance where a case is expected to last 8 days or longer. Other cases may be pre-assigned by the Regional Administrative Judge for case-specific reasons including: case complexity; the high-profile or potentially precedent-setting nature of the dispute; high conflict family cases; and where a judge is unable to hear a case because of a conflict.

## Delayed Assignment in Non-Assignment Court Locations - continued

JCMs will not confine trial dockets by division (i.e. courtrooms will be identified only as trial courts and will not be designated as family, civil, or criminal) and trial lists will be mixed. Judges' names will not be assigned to these mixed list courtrooms in advance.

Non-Assignment Court locations will have a varying number of courtrooms where cases are allocated depending on size. Typically, JCMs will start reviewing their lists 1-2 weeks in advance to assess what cases are remaining. JCMs will make enquiries with counsel and lay litigants on whether trials are expected to proceed. After

monitoring, and closer to the date of trial, the JCM will proceed on the basis that every trial left on the list is ready to proceed. The day before trial, the JCM will distribute the work amongst the available courtrooms, and judges will then be assigned to a courtroom and identified in the judicial schedule as such and files may be provided to the judge for review.

On the day of trial, parties/counsel will proceed to their designated courtroom. The sitting judge canvasses the cases to determine readiness to proceed to hearing.

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## PCSP – What's left?

Implementation of the new scheduling process is complete: Simplified Front End was implemented in December 2013; delayed assignment began in January 2014; and Assignment Court was implemented in seven locations between July 2014 and March 2015. The new scheduling software application, PCSS, was developed and implementation completed in the fall of 2015.

The project team is primarily focused on project closure activities and transitioning on-going support of the model and the software to the Court's operational staff. There are a few project tasks remaining, such as provincial implementation of the Consent Arraignment form, that are scheduled for completion near the end of December 2015.

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## Want to Know More about the Court? Check Out Our Website!



**NOTICE:** Effective November 30th, the PCSP SharePoint site will be deactivated and no longer available. For information on the courts scheduling policies and other material related to the Provincial Court, visit our site at <http://www.provinciacourt.bc.ca/>.

If you wish to request information about a particular procedural matter related to the Court, you may wish to contact the specific Court registry at the relevant location. If you have general questions about the Court or judicial administration, you may contact the Office of the Chief Judge at [info@provinciacourt.bc.ca](mailto:info@provinciacourt.bc.ca).