



Practice Direction

Vancouver Criminal District
Effective May 4, 2009

Criminal Caseflow Management Rules ("CCFM") Arraignment, Trial Confirmation Hearings and Administrative Court Sittings

There are two objectives to this directive. The first is to authorize Judicial Case Managers ("JCMs") by assignment to deal with virtually all administrative and remand matters (including Arraignment and Trial Confirmation Hearings). This will ensure that increased judicial time is available for trials and hearings rather than remands and adjournments.

The second objective is to provide a prompt hearing where there has been a failure, on the part of counsel or an accused, to comply with the Criminal Caseflow Management Rules (CCFM) that require senior judicial attention in order to address issues that lead to backlog in the justice system.

Nothing in this Practice Direction limits or abrogates the authority of a Provincial Court Judge to deal with matters under the CCFM.

For the purpose of this Direction, the Practice Direction of November 25, 2003 regarding Arraignment Hearings is rescinded. I make the following Practice Direction under Rule 3 of the Criminal Caseflow Management Rules:

This Court is implementing two projects at the 222 Main Street Courthouse:

- 1) an addition to the assignment of designated JCMs to hear and deal with Arraignment and Trial Confirmation Hearings;
- 2) specific sittings for the hearing of matters arising from the failure to comply with the CCFM. These sittings will be referred to as "Administrative Court".

The key characteristics of these pilot projects and the assignments of which counsel should be aware are as follows:

Arraignment and Trial Confirmation Hearings before JCMs

1. For the purpose of this Practice Direction, "Administrative Judge" means the Administrative Judge for the Vancouver Criminal District or another Judge assigned by the Administrative Judge.

2. The JCM will: conduct CCFM appearances, take guilty pleas and take elections (except elections from unrepresented persons) with guilty pleas confirmed in front of a Judge; issue publication bans pursuant to s. 517 or s. 486.4 of the Criminal Code, and, where uncontested: release/ remand accused persons; amend Informations; vacate Bench Warrants; vacate trial dates at (or prior to) a Trial Confirmation Hearing.
3. If a guilty plea is entered before the completion of an Arraignment Hearing, the sentencing will either proceed on the date of the plea or, if that cannot occur, be adjourned by the JCM to a specific date that has been jointly requested by both Defence and Crown and is within 30 days of the guilty pleas, before a Judge.
4. The arraignment process must be completed within 60 days of the initial appearance for offences proceeding summarily and within 90 days for offences proceeding by indictment unless a longer completion period is approved by the Administrative Judge.
5. When a warrant is executed following a failure to appear, the timeline to complete the process may be extended at the discretion of the JCM or the Administrative Judge.
6. A Trial Confirmation Hearing must be completed and the trial date confirmed not less than 30 days before the trial unless the trial date has been adjourned before that time or the Administrative Judge has approved an extension of time for completion of the hearing.
7. If a JCM is unable to confirm a scheduled trial date at a Trial Confirmation Hearing, the trial confirmation hearing can be adjourned to another appearance in JCM Court one time on the motion of each Crown and Defence counsel, but it cannot be adjourned to another appearance in JCM Court later than 30 days prior to the trial date.
8. If any of the timelines established under this Practice Direction are exceeded with respect to any information, or if the JCM otherwise deems it appropriate, the matter will be adjourned to Administrative Court.
9. When Trial Confirmation Hearings are adjourned to Administrative Court by the JCM, counsel will be expected to show cause why the trial date should not be struck and reset.
10. All trial adjournment requests after the Trial Confirmation Hearing will be adjourned to Administrative Court by the JCM.
11. No files will be added to a court list without prior approval of a JCM or of a Judge.
12. For any initial appearance, adjournment of an Arraignment Hearing or Trial Confirmation Hearing, a JCM may authorize counsel to appear by telephone, facsimile, email or other telecommunication means provided:
 - a) a request to do so is received in writing by the JCM no later than 12 P.M. of the court sitting day prior to the scheduled appearance date;

- b) the timelines established by this Direction are not exceeded; and
- c) counsel are fully instructed and on the record for the Accused.

Administrative Court:

1. Administrative Court will be presided over by the Administrative Judge as defined earlier in this Practice Direction.
2. In addition to those matters identified earlier in this Practice Direction, and upon request of counsel and/or at the discretion of the JCM, a matter may be adjourned to Administrative Court for direction regarding matters such as Crown disclosure, Defence access to information and other related matters.
3. A JCM may adjourn other matters to Administrative Court with the approval of the Administrative Judge.

The Court's Expectations of Counsel

Arraignment Hearings and Trial Confirmation Hearings

Expectations of the Court:

1. It is expected that counsel will have fully canvassed admissions and trial estimates before appearing before the JCM for an Arraignment Hearing.
2. Arraignment Hearings and Trial Confirmation Hearings are expected to be single events before a JCM and are not expected to be adjourned for further preparation, except in extraordinary circumstances.
3. With regard to arraignment matters referred to Administrative Court, counsel are able to explain why they have been unable to enter pleas, elections or to set trial dates. The presumption will be that matters will stay in Administrative Court until they move on in the process as determined by the Administrative Judge.
4. At all times, the Court and counsel must know who speaks on a file and that such person has the necessary authority to deal with matters before the Court.
5. If a matter is proceeding by way of alternative measures, the Court expects that no more than one adjournment beyond the timelines established in this Practice Direction will be required to complete the alternative measures process.

Administrative Court

Expectations of the Court:

1. Either trial Crown, or a senior Crown counsel fully briefed with respect to all matters regarding the file, will attend Administrative Court as will counsel for the Accused. No agents will be permitted to attend except with the permission of the Administrative Judge.
2. Either the trial Crown or senior Crown counsel fully briefed with respect to all matters regarding the file and Defence counsel will be able to explain why pleas have not been entered, elections made, trial dates set or trial dates confirmed.
3. Cases will have a maximum of four scheduled appearances between the first appearance and the scheduling of a matter for disposition or trial.

Trial Courts

Expectations of the Court:

1. Counsel will be ready to proceed with trials as scheduled at 9:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.
2. Matters will be spoken to in the JCM courts at 9:00 a.m. or at 1:30 p.m. or on the trial court's breaks.
3. Judicial interim release hearings will be scheduled on the trial court's morning breaks.

J. James Threlfall
Associate Chief Judge