



May 26, 2020

Update on in-person and remote proceedings in B.C. Provincial Court

Open accessible courts are fundamental to our democracy. The rule of law depends on it. However, the public, litigants, court staff, court participants, counsel, judges and the media need to know that when they come to court they will be safe.

As of **June 8, 2020**, the Provincial Court will be resuming in-person proceedings to **hear priority matters** in two courtrooms in each of the following six locations: Surrey, 222 Main Street (Vancouver), Robson Square (Vancouver), Victoria, Prince George, and Kelowna. As of **June 15, 2020** the Provincial Court will be opening one courtroom for in-person appearances in each of the locations listed in **Appendix "A"**. **In-person proceedings will only be available for priority matters that cannot otherwise be accommodated remotely.** For most cases, the processes set out in the current [Notice](#), including the remote proceedings described below, will continue. Information about further stages of courtroom re-openings will be provided on the Court's website.

Government has engaged the services of an experienced professional consultant to provide recommendations regarding proactive measures to minimize transmission of COVID-19 in our courthouses and courtrooms. They are in the process of meeting with stakeholders to make recommendations necessary to keep the public safe when attending court. These recommendations take into account the most recent directions from the Public Health Officer for the Province. Further information about the changes being made to enable physical distancing and reduce the risk of transmission of the virus will be on our website in due course.

Despite COVID-19, the Court has always been open and has heard urgent matters in our family, small claims and criminal divisions as set out in our [Notice](#). We are continuing to hear those matters, as well as the work set out below.

In our *Small Claims Division*, we are now conducting settlement conferences by [telephone](#) on all matters that were scheduled for conferences since March 15, 2020 and were adjourned due to COVID-19. We are also conducting pre-trial conferences on all trial matters that were adjourned with a view to determining if the case can be resolved and, if not, whether admissions can be made, and if the trial can be heard by videoconferencing using [Microsoft Teams](#).

In our *Family Division*, we are recovering and rescheduling all of our case conferences that were adjourned due to COVID-19. They are proceeding by [telephone](#), and if issues cannot be resolved, the judge will canvas whether the hearing can proceed by audio or videoconference and what admissions can be made. [Justice Access Centres](#) are now working virtually and litigants can obtain information from them about referral services, mediation, and assistance in preparing their necessary documents so they are able to have more focussed appearances in court.

In our *Criminal Division*, we continue to conduct our bail hearings remotely. Opening court rooms will not change this process. We are now conducting [pre-trial conferences](#) on all criminal trials that are scheduled for longer than half a day. These proceedings are attended virtually by counsel and the judge using [Microsoft Teams](#). Pre-trial conferences are conducted by judges who proactively engage with the parties to explore resolutions. Counsel are expected to be prepared and able to make decisions. If resolution is not possible, then files will be case managed to restrict the use of court time to what is absolutely necessary to ensure a fair and timely trial, in this time of limited court resources. Remote appearances are already being scheduled to accommodate guilty pleas on criminal matters, where the Crown is not seeking a jail sentence.

In our *Traffic Division*, traffic and ticket matters scheduled from March 18 to June 12, 2020 are adjourned without the disputant having to attend Court and will be rescheduled to a later date. A notice of a new Appearance date will be sent to the disputant by mail to the address on file with the Court.

We are working with Court Services Branch to determine when additional types of new filings will be accepted.

These are challenging times for the people of our Province and we are aware many services are beginning to resume. The Provincial Court is working very hard to balance public safety and the need to provide access to justice to uphold the rule of law. We are doing so through a combination of case conferences to help parties find resolutions to their matters, case management to assist parties to identify the issues that require a trial, and then scheduling hearings either remotely or in person depending on the nature of the issues. We intend to resume some in person hearings as set out above. The Court appreciates the efforts of all court participants to adapt during this period of rapid change.

See the [Message from the Chief Judge \(May 14\)](#) for details on how we are working to expand our use of technology to enable us to hold more remote hearings and case conferences.

Get more details in the [Notice](#), [Practice Direction](#), and [FAQs](#).

APPENDIX "A"

[Abbotsford](#)

32203 South Fraser Way
Abbotsford, BC
V2T 1W6

[Courtenay](#)

420 Cumberland Road
Courtenay, BC
V9N 2C4

[Duncan](#)

238 Government Street
Duncan, BC
V9L 1A5

[Nanaimo](#)

35 Front Street
Nanaimo, BC
V9R 5J1

[North Vancouver](#)

200 East 23rd Street
North Vancouver, BC
V7L 4R4

[Port Coquitlam](#)

2620 Mary Hill Road
Port Coquitlam, BC
V3C 3B2

[Prince Rupert](#)

100 Market Place
Prince Rupert, BC
V8J 1B8

[Rossland](#)

2288 Columbia Avenue
Rossland, BC
V0G 1Y0

[Smithers](#)

3793 Alfred Ave.
Smithers, BC
V0J2N0

[Williams Lake](#)

540 Borland Street
Williams Lake, BC
V2G 1R8

[Campbell River](#)

500 - 13th Avenue
Campbell River, BC
V9W 6P1

[Cranbrook](#)

102 - 11th Avenue South
Cranbrook, BC
V1C 2P3

[Fort St. John](#)

10600 - 100 Street
Fort St John, BC
V1J 4L6

[Nelson](#)

320 Ward Street
Nelson, BC
V1L 1S6

[Penticton](#)

100 Main Street
Penticton, BC
V2A 5A5

[Port Hardy](#)

9300 Trustee Road
Port Hardy, BC
V0N 2P0

[Quesnel](#)

350 Barlow Avenue
Quesnel, BC
V2J 2C2

[Salmon Arm](#)

550 - 2nd Avenue
Salmon Arm, BC
V1E 4S4

[Terrace](#)

3408 Kalum Street
Terrace, BC
V8G 2N6

[Chilliwack](#)

46085 Yale Road
Chilliwack, BC
V2P 2L8

[Dawson Creek](#)

1201 - 103 Avenue
Dawson Creek, BC
V1G 4J2

[Kamloops](#)

455 Columbia Street
Kamloops, BC
V2C 6K4

[New Westminster](#)

651 Carnarvon St.
New Westminster, BC
V3M 1C9

[Port Alberni](#)

2999 - 4th Avenue
Port Alberni, BC
V9Y 8A5

[Powell River](#)

6953 Alberni Street
Powell River, BC
V8A 2B8

[Richmond](#)

7577 Elmbridge Way
Richmond, BC
V6X 4J2

[Sechelt](#)

5480 Shorncliffe Avenue
Sechelt, BC
V0N 3A0

[Vernon](#)

3001 - 27th Street
Vernon, BC
V1T 4W5