



COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Message from the Chief Justice of Prince Edward Island and Chief Justice
of the Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island

Due to the presence of the 2019 novel coronavirus (Covid-19) on Prince Edward Island, the P.E.I. courts are taking all steps directed by the Public Health Emergency to contain community spread.

The Courts remain accessible. However, in order to protect the health of members of the public and court staff, court services are presently minimized. Only urgent and emergency hearings and document filing can occur. Use of technology is being maximized. In-person attendances are reduced to "as necessary" only. Individuals are requested to use the courts' electronic services and refrain from coming to a courthouse in person except when necessary.

Our public courts are an essential public service. Courts cannot close. As the third branch of government, access by members of the public to an independent and impartial judiciary is vital to our Canadian democracy. This is especially important in the presence of a public health emergency. Therefore, continuity of service is being maintained and is assured. The courts remain open for urgent or essential court matters; however, subject to strict measures to minimize in-person attendances. When a required personal attendance does occur, the social distancing of two meters must be respected.

Minimize in-person contact

All members of the public are expected to follow the directions of the Chief Public Health Office. Any person who is subject to self-isolation or quarantine or is experiencing possible coronavirus/COVID-19 symptoms must not personally attend any courthouse.

Most court proceedings are adjourned

Individuals with matters scheduled before a court should contact their lawyer. If an individual does not have lawyer, contact court staff to seek directions prior to attending court facilities.

All in-person court appearances, other than for urgent or emergency matters, are suspended until further notice.

Urgent matters will continue to be heard, using technology in a manner determined appropriate by the court, including hearings by way of telephone or video appearance.

Filing court documents

On a very limited basis, lawyers and parties may continue to file documents at the courthouses. Personal filing through the courts' drop box system is limited to urgent or necessary documents to meet a required time line, or other documents that reasonably necessitate in-person filing. All other document filing should be by email at scfiling@courts.pe.ca. Further directions are on the Courts' website www.courts.pe.ca or contact the Registrar at (902) 368-6669.

Questions about court appearances

Individuals who have questions about court appearances should first contact their lawyer. If an individual does not have a lawyer, or if further information is required, they should contact the following:

Prince Edward Island Court of Appeal: 902-368-6024

Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island: 902-368-6023

In closing

A public health emergency can test our fundamental institutions. These are early days of this Covid-19 pandemic. We are confident that by diligently adhering to the Chief Public Health Office directives the courts can maintain urgent and essential court services, and we will be able to meet the challenges that will arise.

Chief Justice David H. Jenkins
Prince Edward Island Court of Appeal

Chief Justice Tracey L. Clements
Supreme Court of Prince Edward Island

March 24, 2020