



COVID-19: SUPREME COURT (GENERAL DIVISION) ADOPTS ESSENTIAL SERVICES MODEL IN HALIFAX

Saturday, April 24, 2021 (Halifax, NS) – Until further notice, The Hon. Deborah K. Smith, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia, is directing that court operations in the Supreme Court (General Division) in Halifax follow an essential services model.

This directive applies only to Supreme Court (General Division) matters at the Law Courts, 1815 Upper Water St., Halifax. Supreme Court (General Division) matters in the rest of the province will proceed as scheduled.

The Supreme Court (Family Division) will continue to operate under a safe services model, as outlined in [Notice # 12](#) on the Courts' COVID-19 updates page.

Under an essential services model, Supreme Court (General Division) proceedings in Halifax that have not yet commenced will be limited to those deemed urgent or essential by a judge. **Unless otherwise ordered by the presiding judge, any trials that are currently underway at the Law Courts or Mellor Avenue in Dartmouth will continue until they conclude.**

To help reduce the number of people appearing in-person, judges will consider whether alternative measures, such as telephone or videoconferencing, may be used to hear urgent and essential matters or matters currently underway. Mandatory masking and physical distancing measures will be in effect for all court matters that proceed in person.

Filing Documents at the Law Courts

Due to significantly reduced Court Administration staff at the Law Courts, counsel and self-represented individuals should not file documents at the Law Courts in Halifax unless they are related to an urgent or essential matter. Documents related to matters not proceeding in the immediate future should be held until the court returns to a safe services model.

Until further notice, counsel and parties filing documents related to urgent or essential matters in Halifax only are encouraged to submit their documents electronically to HalifaxSupremeCourt@courts.ns.ca with a cover letter outlining why they feel the matter is considered urgent or essential. For those unable to file electronically, there will be a drop box for paper documents at the main entrance to the Law Courts.

Please note that counsel are not required to subsequently file original paper copies of most types of electronic documents. Original paper copies are required only for sworn documents, such as affidavits. Counsel will receive further direction from the Court on this when the Law Courts returns to a safe services model.

Suspension of Filing Deadlines at the Law Courts

Unless a judge indicates otherwise, filing deadlines outlined in the Civil Procedure Rules for civil matters in the Supreme Court (General Division) in Halifax only, are suspended until further notice. This will help reduce the number of new filings at the Law Courts, so staff can focus on processing documents related to urgent and essential matters that are proceeding.

This directive includes, but is not limited to, filing a Notice of Defence in an Action, a Notice of Contest in an Application, and a Notice of Judicial Review or Notice of Appeal under Civil Procedure Rule 7.

This directive does not apply to criminal matters, proceedings in the Supreme Court (Family Division), proceedings in the Supreme Court (General Division) outside of Halifax, or proceedings in the Court of Appeal. It also does not affect filing deadlines established by legislation, such as the deadlines contained in the *Limitations of Action Act* or the *Probate Act*.

File Access at the Law Courts

Public access to court files at the Law Courts is temporarily suspended. Appointments for file searches and viewing will resume when the Supreme Court (General Division) returns to a safe services model. Urgent file requests from media should be directed to the Judiciary's [Communications Director](#) to facilitate access electronically, if possible.

These measures are effective immediately and will remain in place until further notice. Chief Justice Smith will re-evaluate the situation in two weeks' time. Court operations at the Law Courts will return to a safe services model as soon as possible.

For information on the various Supreme Court directives related to COVID-19, please visit https://www.courts.ns.ca/News_of_Courts/COVID19_Preventative_Measures.htm.

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