



Conduct, Decorum and Expectations in Virtual Court Proceedings

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Counsel, parties, members of the media, and others who may participate in virtual court hearings in Nova Scotia are expected to conduct themselves as though they were physically appearing in a courtroom. All manner of decorum, formalities and court practice must be adhered to, including proper business attire.

Below is a checklist of considerations that counsel, parties and other court participants should review prior to taking part in a fully virtual hearing or a hearing with remote aspects:

- Participation in virtual court hearings requires a commitment to technology. Counsel and the parties involved must have the ability to effectively connect to a video/audio conference in a consistent and reliable manner.
- The required technology to participate by video includes Microsoft Teams for your desktop or the mobile app, a web camera for video display, audio and a microphone.
- A reliable headset with a microphone is strongly recommended. This provides a better audio experience and reduces background noise for others when you are speaking. Earphones also work well. The internal microphone and speakers on your computer should not be used as an echo is created for all participants.
- To help avoid Internet interruptions or failure, participants are encouraged to have a hard-wired connection to your network. Wi-Fi connections will work but are not recommended. Counsel must also have their own Internet network to connect. Another option is to connect an ethernet cable to a Wi-Fi modem.
- Devices such as Google Home, Alexa, Echo, SIRI or other internet-enabled device – i.e. “smart speakers” should be turned off during your participation in the hearing. Minimize or stop unnecessary computer processes running in the background, such as scans or updates.

- While the Court will offer a dry run (tech check) prior to the hearing, you are encouraged to engage support from an independent IT expert who can provide you with help and advice. Court staff are not responsible to troubleshoot connectivity issues for counsel and parties. ***On the day of the hearing, it is important to use the same equipment and to set up in the same location as you used during the tech check with the Court.***
- Counsel and the parties are encouraged to regularly test the technology required for video conferencing, especially after installing additional hardware or software to your device. Participants are encouraged to connect to the virtual session at least 10 minutes early to allow time to troubleshoot any unexpected issues.
- Ensure you are set up in quiet, private area with appropriate lighting. Avoid setting up your device in front of a window, as you will appear in shadow.
- When appearing by video, your screen name should be your given name and surname. If your profile includes a photo, ensure the photo is professional and appropriate for court, as others in the hearing will be able to see that if your camera is disabled or not working.
- Counsel and parties are not permitted to record video or audio of any virtual court hearings or virtual judicial settlement conferences. A judge may require a participant to complete an undertaking not to record audio or video.
- Counsel is expected to wear proper court attire, just as is required in a regular in-person court hearing. For Court of Appeal attire requirements, please see the Court of Appeal Practice Directive.

For additional resources and information to help you prepare for virtual court proceedings, please visit the Virtual Court section of the Courts of Nova Scotia website: https://www.courts.ns.ca/Virtual_Court.htm.