



COVID-19: SUPREME COURT (GENERAL DIVISION) EXPANDS VIRTUAL COURT INITIATIVE

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

The Nova Scotia Supreme Court (General Division) is now able to offer virtual court options for more types of non-urgent civil matters, including trials, province wide.

Over the past month, the Supreme Court has continued to expand the services available during the COVID-19 pandemic, where it is safe to do so. Virtual hearings and settlement conferences were first introduced at the Law Courts in Halifax and are now available at all Supreme Court locations across the province.

Further to the [May 7, 2020, directive](#), the Supreme Court has expanded the eligibility criteria for virtual court hearings to permit matters with documentary exhibits and *viva voce* evidence, including cross-examination, as well as civil matters that can be dealt with in three days or less. As well, witnesses who testify remotely in virtual court hearings will now be affirmed.

With these developments, judges and counsel in some Supreme Court (General Division) matters may now agree that it is possible for their trial to proceed virtually.

Counsel who have a matter that meets these expanded eligibility criteria and feel it would be appropriate to proceed virtually should contact their local scheduler. Counsel and parties considering virtual court hearings are also encouraged to review [Best Practices for Remote Hearings](#), developed by the E-Hearings Task Force in Ontario.

Virtual court options will be an important part of the Supreme Court's pandemic recovery plan in the coming months. These remote appearances allow the Court to hear more matters without the need for additional staff working at the courthouse and in instances where courtrooms are too small to proceed in-person while respecting social distancing.

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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