



COURT OF APPEAL OF ALBERTA

May 6, 2020

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Dear Mr. Malik and Mr. Teskey:

The COVID-19 health emergency has presented the three Alberta Courts and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General (the Ministry) with unprecedented challenges in providing justice services to Albertans. Our court system has been tested and our legal community, judges and lawyers alike, have been called on to re-examine some long-standing administration of justice processes.

While the independence of the courts and the province's responsibility for the administration of justice are distinct under Canada's Constitution, both branches of government have a duty to Albertans to work cooperatively to ensure that the rule of law is upheld, public confidence in the administration of justice is maintained and social order is preserved. In this regard, from the time that the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, the Courts have been working with the Ministry to ensure that the justice system continues to function.

We thought it would be helpful to update the Bar on our Courts' responses to COVID-19, highlight some of the challenges we are experiencing, and outline some of the measures we are taking to assure the delivery of justice in this province.

We are committed to taking the steps necessary to ensure that the justice services meet the reasonable expectations of the public we all serve.

As you and your colleagues navigate an increasingly dynamic and rapidly-changing legal environment, we commend you for your continued efforts to provide Albertans with strong legal

representation. We also thank you for your patience and support as we implement, and experiment with, technology that enables our justice system to function during this unprecedented time.

All three Courts have pandemic response plans which guide our activities. Below and in the appendices to this letter, we provide an overview both of the work undertaken to date and currently underway. Further information can be found on each Court's website that can be accessed at <https://www.albertacourts.ca>. In addition, up-to-date information about public health orders and Ministerial Orders is also available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-orders-and-legislation.aspx>.

Government of Alberta

Two substantive orders may be of interest to the Bar. Ministerial Order 27/2020 (JSG) suspends limitation periods as well as periods of time within which steps must be taken in any proceeding or intended proceeding. This covers the period of time from March 17 – June 1, 2020. Ministerial Order 008/2020 (SA) temporarily allows the Land Titles Office to register documents that have been witnessed, sworn, or affirmed by Alberta lawyers using two-way videoconferencing. Additional information is detailed in Appendix 1.

Alberta Court of Appeal

The Alberta Court of Appeal continues to hear all matters. An estimated 90% of scheduled hearings were successfully completed in the month of April. Case materials are able to be sent via email and fax.

Since the Court was well down the road to electronic records and proceedings prior to the pandemic, it was more readily able to integrate videoconference hearings into its operations. However, videoconference hearings have raised procedural, policy and privacy issues. For example, to preserve the integrity of the Court's processes, the Court requires that counsel have their clients complete undertakings not to record the proceedings.

The Court has published a Reference and Etiquette Guide for electronic hearings to aid counsel in their appearances before the Court. This is available on the Court of Appeal's website. A more detailed summary of the work the Court of Appeal has undertaken is set out in Appendix 2.

Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta

Requests for hearing of urgent matters in all areas (Family/Criminal/Civil/Commercial/Surrogate) are submitted via an online fillable application form, reviewed by a triage Justice, then heard by Emergency Duty Justices, often by videoconference or teleconference. Masters are hearing emergency and urgent matters and dealing with desk applications within their jurisdiction. Justices continue to process desk applications in divorce and surrogate actions, and review and sign consent orders. Criminal Pre-trial Conferences (by teleconference) and Judicial Dispute Resolutions (by videoconference) are also being scheduled. Family docket courts will be launched shortly in Edmonton and Calgary to triage family matters.

A more detailed summary of the work the Court of Queen's Bench is undertaking is set out in Appendix 3. The Court requests that all of its users review the Queen's Bench website or the court's Twitter feed (@QB_Alberta) for up-to-date information.

Provincial Court of Alberta

The Provincial Court continues to contend with high volumes and diverse matters. The Court has conducted a number of hearings using remote video/audio conferencing technology and is continuing to roll out this technology across the province for criminal, family and civil matters.

Some criminal, civil and family matters are being administratively adjourned to future appearance dates. The Court is working with counsel to reschedule trials that were missed as a result of the pandemic and has recently released guidelines for remote family and child protection applications. It is working on establishing remote out of custody guilty plea guidelines as well.

Traffic Court remains closed, but Albertans have a variety of options to set trials, adjourn matters, and make payment arrangements. The Court is also accepting applications for fine payment extensions via mail, email, fax, or telephone.

A more detailed summary of the work the Provincial Court has undertaken is set out in Appendix 4.

The Future

Through our efforts across all three Courts, working in cooperation with the Minister of Justice and Ministry staff, we believe our judicial system is well positioned to take advantage of technological innovations emerging from the pandemic. Some have been implemented; others are in process. Working together, we will improve access to Alberta's Courts through technological innovations. To this end, the government has committed to invest \$27 million in the Justice Digital Program.

As we plan for the future, we are mindful of the pressures on our trial courts that will need to be addressed. It is not unreasonable to expect that, in addition to the pressures that already exist in our justice system, there will be increased demands in civil and family matters since the damage caused by the pandemic may well lead to parties seeking recourse in the courts.

Given the urgency and importance of maintaining a functioning justice system, the Courts and the Ministry have had to quickly seek out innovative approaches, including the leveraging of technology, in our common quest to improve the delivery of justice. There is no turning back now. Coming out of this pandemic, it is our hope that the Courts, Ministry, the Bar and other justice stakeholders work together to take the lessons learned in doing so and apply them to build a stronger justice system for all Albertans.

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to update you on our progress as we respond to the COVID-19 health emergency.

Sincerely,



Catherine A. Fraser
Chief Justice of Alberta



Mary T. Moreau
Chief Justice of the
Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta



Terrence J. Matchett
Chief Judge of the
Provincial Court of Alberta

cc: The Honourable Doug Schweitzer
Minister of Justice and Solicitor General

Frank Bosscha, Q.C.
Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Solicitor General

Mary MacDonald
Assistant Deputy Minister
Resolution and Court Administration Services Division

Encls.

Appendix 1

Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General

Ministerial Orders Issued

Ministerial Order 27/2020 (Justice and Solicitor General) suspends limitation periods, as well as periods of time which direct that steps must be taken in any proceeding or intended proceeding. This is in effect from March 17 to June 1, 2020.

Ministerial Order 008/2020 (Service Alberta) temporarily allows the Land Titles Office to register documents that have been witnessed, sworn, or affirmed by Alberta lawyers using two-way videoconferencing.

These, and other, ministerial orders can be viewed at is also available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-orders-and-legislation.aspx>.

Our government has also passed the *Electronic Documents Regulation*, which provides the court with the ability to accept and act upon certain electronic documents in all of its matters.

Work Underway

We are aware that further work is required to address the requirements under the *Guarantees Acknowledgment Act* and in matters involving surrogate court. The ministry is working to mitigate these requirements to be more responsive to the restrictions arising from our current state of operations.

Technology

Working with the Courts, efforts are being made to upgrade the technology used for teleconferences, video hearings and working remotely.



Alberta Court of Appeal COVID-19 Activity Summary

Overview

The Court of Appeal has been operating at full hearing capacity during this crisis period.

However, rather than hearing matters in person, the Court has heard, and continues to hear, all appeals and applications virtually, that is by electronic means (videoconference or audioconference) or, if the parties so choose, in writing only.

New case and motions filings have continued uninterrupted and the Court is able to accept all correspondence and case materials by email or fax.

Prior to the pandemic, the Court had implemented internally an electronic court information management system. This Court of Appeal Management System (CAMS) gives the Court’s registry, case management offices, judicial staff and judges full electronic access to appeal books, court records and case materials.

As a result, the Court was in an advantageous position to respond to the challenges the pandemic imposed and was able to move quickly and efficiently to (1) have support staff, clerks and judges work from home; (2) hold hearings by videoconference and audioconference; and (3) permit materials to be filed by email and communicate electronically with counsel and parties on upcoming matters.

February 26 to March 9	Internal Planning - Chief Justice instructs internal work to begin on reviewing and updating emergency measures
March 9	Research on education, prevention, containment and preparation continues
March 12	Emergency measures directives are in place. Workplace safety initiatives, including social distancing and limiting gatherings (e.g. holding meetings by telephone), are implemented internally
March 13	Emergency Response Team begins planning to adjust Court of Appeal hearings and filing processes

<p>March 16</p>	<p>Notice to the Public and Legal Profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court of Appeal is proceeding with all applications and hearings in modified format • In person attendance at the Court of Appeal is now limited • Filing deadlines remain intact and preferred method of filing and communication with the Court is via email • Effective March 23: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Single judge duty: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heard by telephone – personal attendance not permitted ▪ Parties may consent to hearings in writing only or to adjournments ○ Three-Judge Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Heard by video or telephone – personal attendance not permitted ▪ Exception for s 688 criminal matters, if applicable ▪ Parties may consent to hearings in writing or to adjournment <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restricted building operations at Court of Appeal Calgary location. Trans Canada Energy building remains open, but with limited operational staff
<p>March 17 - 20</p>	<p>Registry communicates with individual counsel/parties on upcoming matters</p>
<p>March 23</p>	<p>Notice to the Public and Legal Profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court of Appeal is continuing to hear all appeals, applications and motions in modified format • Members of public are not to visit the courthouse • Procedural time limits are extended • Email filing and email correspondence to registry are approved • Civil filing fees can be paid on-line • Availability of drop off filing through drop boxes is confirmed • Bail check-ins are modified • JDRs are suspended until July • In-person Bar Admissions are not to be scheduled until July – if currently scheduled, to be by telephone <hr/> <p>Closure of Edmonton Law Courts west entrance</p>

<p>March 26</p>	<p>Tri-Court Announcement to the Public and Legal Profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to courthouses is restricted. Members of the public not permitted to enter a courthouse except in specific circumstances <p>First information session for lawyers in Edmonton for on-line appeal hearings for the following week</p>
<p>March 27</p>	<p>Updated/Replacement Ministerial Order re Fee Waivers is issued</p>
<p>March 30</p>	<p>Ministerial Order issued suspending all time limits in Alberta legislation (including Rules of Court) from March 17 to June 1, 2020</p>
<p>Week of March 30</p>	<p>Edmonton Sittings – Court of Appeal hears first on-line appeal using WebEx platform</p>
<p>March 31</p>	<p>On-line hearing training session held for lawyers with appeals the week of April 6 in Calgary</p>
<p>April 1</p>	<p>Notice to the Public and Legal Profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of remote commissioning of affidavits for Court of Appeal
<p>Week of April 6</p>	<p>Calgary Sittings – Appeals heard using WebEx platform</p>
<p>April 7</p>	<p>Piloting and testing of on-line hearing platform (WebEx):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piloting of on-line hearings continues • On-line hearing quick reference cards and Reference and Etiquette Guide for Electronic Hearings for Counsel/Self-Represented Parties are prepared and circulated
<p>April 8</p>	<p>Notice to the Public and Legal Profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirms clients’ attendance at electronic hearings • Outlines requirement for execution of no recording Undertaking by non-lawyers
<p>April 8 - 9</p>	<p>Chief Justice communicates with legal professional associations and invites creation of working group to be consulted by the Court on policies and procedures for public e-filing portal</p> <p>Temporary plexiglass shields installed at registry counter in Edmonton</p>
<p>April 15</p>	<p>Communication with Canadian Bar Association (Alberta Branch) regarding Court of Appeal operations during pandemic</p>
<p>April 23</p>	<p>Work resumes on CAMS and target date of August 31, 2020 is set for public launch of e-filing portal</p>

Week of April 27	Edmonton Sittings – Appeals Heard using WebEx platform
Week of May 4	Calgary Sittings – Appeals Heard using WebEx platform

On the Go:

The Court is addressing improvements to on-line hearings. In particular, the WebEx platform is continually being adjusted and fine-tuned to accommodate more connections from multiple locations and greater flexibility for hearing appeals.

Work is presently ongoing to permit members of the public interested in viewing Court of Appeal videoconferencing proceedings to do so in a manner that properly balances open court proceedings with legitimate privacy concerns.

The CAMS project has re-started. With a target date of August 31, 2020 for the launch of the public e-filing portal, drafting of related policies and procedures continues. This includes consulting with a working group from the Bar and developing training materials for use by the Bar and public.

Information sharing with other appellate courts across Canada is on-going.

The Court continues to engage with the Bar and public about the pandemic’s impact on its proceedings. The Chief Justice has agreed to participate in a virtual “fireside chat” with the profession on May 21, 2020 sponsored by the Advocates’ Society.

APPENDIX 3



COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH OF ALBERTA PANDEMIC- RELATED ACTIVITIES

Announcements and Orders to Date:

March 13, 2020:

Suspension of all jury trials and jury selections to May 31st, 2020; implementation of social distancing measures in all courtrooms.

March 15, 2020:

Master Order #1:

- Suspended sittings except emergency/urgent matters until March 27th.
- Collapsed all 12 judicial centres into 4 hubs: Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer and Lethbridge.
- 5 Emergency Duty Justices were assigned to Rosters in Calgary and Edmonton, with 1 Emergency Duty Justice on a rotating basis in Red Deer and Lethbridge.

March 20, 2020:

Master Order #2:

- Continued suspension of court matters except emergency/urgent matters to May 1, 2020.
- Adjourned civil matters indefinitely and criminal matters to specific arraignment dates.
- Allowed for criminal appearances by CCTV
- Suspended Rules of Court deadlines such as filing responding pleadings.
- Attached a list setting out types of emergency/urgent matters in all areas of law that the Court is prepared to hear.

March 23, 2020:

Alberta Courts Joint Announcement urged the public not to come to courthouses except those persons necessary to court proceedings.

March 25, 2020:

The Court announced a process for the remote commissioning (by video) of Affidavits in civil and family proceedings.

March 26, 2020:

Online, fillable forms made available to parties seeking to make emergency/urgent applications.

March 27, 2020:

Alberta Courts Joint Announcement to further restrict access to courthouses and to encourage counsel to make use of expanded email and fax filing.

March 30, 2020:

The Court permits Consent Orders to be submitted via email for signature by a Master or Justice without the requirement of proof of urgency.

March 31, 2020:

The Court posted an announcement encouraging out of court resolution and setting out process for court enforcement of urgent arbitration awards.

April 2, 2020:

The first videoconference sentencing proceeding, with media attending remotely.

April 14, 2020

The Court posted an Undertaking and Agreement for Non-Lawyers participating in videoconference or audioconference hearings not to rebroadcast the proceeding. The Court posted a Notice to Profession announcing temporary modifications to filing requirements under the Surrogate Rules in Respect of Applications for Grants.

April 17, 2020

First videoconference docket court hearing: Queen's Bench Criminal Appearance Court in Edmonton.

April 21, 2020

Master Order #3:

- Continued suspension of court matters except emergency/urgent matters to May 31, 2020.
- Suspended all jury trials and jury selections to September 8, 2020.

May 5, 2020

The Court announced the launch of a Summary Disposition Court in Edmonton and Calgary with Webex hearings being scheduled for every Monday and Wednesday starting May 11th. Summary Dispositions will be heard in Red Deer and Lethbridge during duty weeks. Requests for a Summary Disposition Hearing must be made by completing an online request form.

Work Underway:**EXPANSION OF VIDEOCONFERENCE/TELECONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:**

The Court is continuing to expand the use of the Webex platform to conduct more, and a wider variety, of hearings by way of videoconference, with Justices attending both from the courthouse and from remote locations.

CRIMINAL PRE-TRIAL CONFERENCES (PTCs):

PTCs are not required to be conducted on the record and may therefore be conducted remotely. The Court is taking a targeted approach to adjourned criminal trials which, it is hoped, will result in early resolution or simplification of trial issues. Criminal PTCs have been scheduled to be heard by a roster of Justices throughout the month of May 2020.

JUDICIAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION (JDR):

In relation to JDRs and civil trials canceled between March 16, 2020 and May 1, 2020, the Court is contacting counsel to determine if the parties wish to pursue a JDR. The non-binding civil and family JDRs previously scheduled for between May 1 and May 31, 2020 are being rescheduled for hearing by Webex videoconference as of May 4, 2020.

FAMILY EARLY INTERVENTION CASE CONFERENCES (EICC)

A roster of Justices will conduct EICCs: early hearings in family cases aimed at resolving as many issues between the parties as early as possible. The scheduling of EICCs by remote hearing is expected to commence on May 11, 2020.

MASTERS CHAMBERS

The Court has finalized a protocol to simplify the process for the electronic submission of Without Notice applications. Procedures are also being finalized to hear with-notice applications, applications on the basis of written submissions only, and Special applications.

FAMILY DOCKET COURTS

The Court is establishing a Docket Court in family proceedings in Edmonton and Calgary to deal with the backlog of matters that have been adjourned or canceled during the pandemic period and to triage matters into ADR, JDR, EICC's, remote special applications, etc.

NEW DESK PROCEDURES IN FAMILY CASES

The Court is finalizing a Notice to Profession setting out a new desk procedure for Notices to Disclose in family cases and a desk procedure for other relatively simple family chambers matters.

SUMMARY DISPOSITION COURTS

A roster of Justices in Edmonton and Calgary and duty Justices in Red Deer and Lethbridge will hear criminal matters scheduled for Summary Disposition starting on May 11th.

COMMERCIAL LISTS

The Court is hearing all emergency/urgent commercial matters and expects to expand the matters it will be hearing by teleconference and videoconference.

SURROGATE MATTERS

Desk applications are now being processed remotely from all judicial centres in the province.



The Provincial Court of Alberta COVID-19 Activity Summary

March 13	Temporary Suspension of Criminal Rules – Implementation of the new Criminal Rules is postponed until further notice (PA) ¹
March 14	Traffic First Appearances Centres Temporarily closed (PA)
March 16	Pandemic Planning for the scheduling of matters. First issue of measures taken in Criminal, Civil, Family and Traffic Courts (PA)
March 17	Traffic Court Pandemic Scheduling Updated - Traffic Courts closed (PA)
March 17	Remote Judge PCJ Groves conducts 3-day hearing through virtual appearance
March 20	Notice to Corrections – Direction for the Transportation of Individuals in Custody - the Court does not require any individuals who are in custody to be transported to courthouses unless they are attending a trial.
March 20	Notice to Law Society Regarding Lawyers in Courthouses – urging lawyers to not come into the courthouse if they feel ill, have travelled, are in self isolation or have come into contact with the virus in any way.
March 23	Update to March 16 Pandemic Planning for the Scheduling of Matters. COVID-10 Court Information Page created (PA)
March 24	Notice adopting Pandemic Plan as Rule of Court - the Provincial Court of Alberta confirms that the pandemic plan is endorsed and promulgated as a Rule of Court (PA)
March 23	Tri Court Announcement with Appendices for each court (posted on QB site for all three Courts). Urging the public not to come to court houses except those persons necessary to court proceedings
March 23	Holy books and eagle feathers are removed from courtrooms
March 24	Closure of West End Door of Courthouse (PA)
March 26	Closure of Case Management Offices (PA)

¹ PA – Public Announcement on [Provincial Court External Website](#)

March 26	Court re-scheduling of past and present matters, and Court scheduling of future matters for the Southern Region
March 27	Tri Court Announcement regarding restricted access to the courthouses. Members of the general public will not be permitted to enter a courthouse except in specific listed circumstances. (PA)
March 27	Information for Sheriffs - Tri Court Announcement re filing and courthouse access
March 27	CMO Closure Calgary
March 27	MO 27/2020 regarding the extension of Limitation Periods
March 31	Electronic Documents Regulation - The Regulation sets out broad requirements that must be met for Provincial Court to accept and deal with electronic documents.
April 1	Traffic Tickets During COVID info
April 2	The COVID-19 Court Information Page is updated with the following (PA): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil Master Order - issued to acknowledge the need for the Court to alter its operations, policies, and procedures in the Civil division during this time. • Edmonton Criminal Scheduling March 27 and April 8 • Calgary Criminal Scheduling April 1 • Edmonton Criminal Practice Notices: 265, 268, 356 Remote Courts • Edmonton PTC Notice • Calgary Criminal Practice Notices: 305, 505, 508 Remote Courts • Calgary Youth Criminal Practice Notices: 303 Remote Courts
April 3	Webex Docket Court Pilot - Commencing Friday, April 3, 2020, Edmonton Provincial Court Criminal Courtroom #356 (Required Appearance Court) will be utilizing the WebEx platform for connecting participants to the court proceedings
April 3	Webex Virtual Courtroom proceedings Courtroom #356 pilot
April 3	COVID-19 and Bar Admission Ceremonies – Limiting Attendance (PA)
April 6	Warrant Protocol – Addresses how warrants and other judicial authorizations will be handled during the pandemic (PA)
April 6	Notice to self-represented litigants in Family Law Matters (PA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting access to the court houses throughout the province to only those who have urgent matters • Requiring self-represented individuals seeking to file an application to meet with a Family Court Counsellor • Adjourning Casflow Management program files
April 6	Notice to LSA regarding Family Law Applications - <i>Family Law Act</i> filings will be accepted only if a Judge makes a preliminary determination that leave is granted for a hearing to determine if a matter is urgent.
April 9	COVID-19 Criminal Fine Payment Extension Process - Applications for extension of time to pay for payment on criminal fines will be accepted by the Provincial Court via mail, email, fax or telephone (PA)

April 9	Calgary 1005 Remote Court Practice Notice
April 14	Medicine Hat and Lethbridge Remote Court Practice Notes
April 14	Webex roll-out in docket court room 306 in Calgary
April 14-15	Webex roll-out in remaining docket court rooms in Edmonton — 265 (April 14) and 268(April 15).
April 16	Pandemic Plan updated and posted - slight modification to Stage 3 of the Plan, to contemplate adding some non-essential services back into our operations if and when circumstances permit.
April 20	Webex roll-out in Red Deer court room 101
April 21	Remote Judge PCJ Hawkes virtually presiding over two day matter in Calgary 1007
April 22	Remote Applications Guidelines Family and Child Protection - the Court will develop protocols that permit the Court to remotely hear Family and Child Protection applications that would not otherwise have been considered “urgent”. The Guidelines establish the framework for these protocols. (PA)
April 22	Digital Judicial Authorization Rule and Protocol (initially applicable to Edmonton) (PA) Chief and Council have approved the implementation of a Rule and process, to be used in Edmonton, outlining the means for receiving, reviewing, and approving or denying applications for warrants or orders under the Criminal Code, or other statute incorporating the provisions of Part XV of the Criminal Code.
April 23	Remote Out of Custody Applications Including Guilty Plea - the Court will develop protocols that permit the Court to remotely hear Applications including out of custody guilty pleas. The Guidelines establish the framework for the protocols. (PA)
April 23	Remote appearances expanded to allow counsel to appear remotely, by telephone, for Regional matters arising from court proceedings in Hanna, Strathmore, Siksika and Drumheller
April 23	CBA Webinar, presented by the Chief Judge and other members of the Chief and Counsel, to advise members of the Bar of the work the Provincial Court has been doing to keep courts functioning, and to answer questions. It covered topics including an overview of our Covid-19 response to date, challenges we anticipate for resumption of our business, and our plans to address the accruing backlog of cases.
April 24	Telephone Applications for Emergency Protection Orders - To allow applications for Emergency Protection Orders to be made by telecommunication through the Provincial Hearing Office during the COVID-19M pandemic when there is no Provincial Court Judge available to hear the application. Legal Aid Alberta’s articling students, under the supervision of its EPOP Lawyers, will be available to provide legal advice and representation to claimants during certain hours of operation. (PA)
April 24	Redesign of COVID-19 external page to make information more easily accessible
April 24	Southern Remote Out of Custody Applications Protocol posted

April 27	Updated Bar Admission announcement - Until further notice attendees are limited to the Applicant and their Principal (PA)
April 27	Remote Judge PCJ Groves delivering docket virtually for two weeks
April 27	Northern Remote Out of Custody Applications Protocol posted on website
April 27	Northern Practice Note Remote Family and CFEA applications posted on website
April 28	Southern Practice Note Remote Family and CFEA applications and forms posted on website
April 28	The Court answers questions from the Bar - CBA Webinar. The Court participated in a webinar with members of the Bar, to advise them of the work we have been doing to keep our courts functioning, and to answer questions. The questions and answers have been posted on the external website. (PA)
April 28	Canadian Lawyer Q&A – the Court received a request from Canadian Lawyer magazine to answer a list of questions regarding our response to the pandemic. The questions covered much of the same ground as the CBA webinar and were not posted for this reason.
April 29	Edmonton Remote Out of Custody Applications Protocol posted on website
April 30	Edmonton Pilot of Virtual Judicial Authorizations using secure transmission from Edmonton Area Law Enforcement Agencies. The Remote Warrant Pilot Project commenced this week in Edmonton. As of Thursday, April 30, 23 applications had been completed and it is expected that the volume will increase as familiarity with the new process increases. The Court is monitoring the project closely and remain in close contact with our LEAs to identify any issues.
April 30	Edmonton Region Remote Out of Custody Applications Protocol posted on website
May 1	Central Remote Out of Custody Applications Protocol posted on website
May 4	Remote Judge PCJ Deck from Red Deer presiding virtually over 3 day matter in Calgary 1007

On the go:

Electronic Filing and Drop Box Protocol

The Court is working with RCAS on a protocol for filing of documents in a way to minimize exposure to the clerks. The protocol will allow more matters to be filed by way of the use of drop boxes. Some boxes are already in place. As soon as this protocol is finalized, it will be posted on the website and the judicial education page, as well as communicated by placement of signs.

In addition to the work identifying what parameters will be put in place for the acceptance of electronic documents, the Court has now also struck a sub-committee of the Chief and Council Technology Committee to identify situations where electronic forms could better facilitate our work in criminal, family and civil cases, as well as in conducting the work done by JPs. They are currently doing an environmental scan of other jurisdictions and have the committee's initial meeting scheduled for next week.

The Court is also conducting an analysis of the feasibility of implementing remote swearing of affidavits in our Court.

Virtual Dockets

Virtual Dockets have been piloted in Edmonton and Calgary and will continue to be implemented throughout the province.

Use of WebEx in Courtrooms

Testing and use of WebEx continues. In Edmonton, 265 and 356 continued to operate and 268 was added. Red Deer began testing it for virtual docket appearances, and testing in Calgary continues. Work is also being done to upgrade phone lines in some of the regional courthouses, to allow for WebEx via teleconference.

Both the Civil and Family and Youth divisions are aiming for the beginning of May to implement WebEx in their courtrooms.

Remote dispositions for out-of-custody matters

The Court has issued Guidelines to provide the framework for developing the protocols in each of the regions. These Guidelines will come into effect in each region when the protocol applicable to the region is published on the website. All regional protocols are now posted on the website.

Remote Family and Child Protection Applications - Guidelines

The Court has issued Guidelines to provide the framework for developing protocols in each region that will permit the Court to remotely hear Family and Child Protection applications that would not otherwise have been considered "urgent". The intention is for the protocols to be in place early in May, 2020. Southern and Northern protocols have been posted on the website.

Business Resumption Planning

Most, if not all of the regions and divisions have had initial meetings both with stakeholders and within the Court to plan ahead for resumption. Part of the discussions have included how to maintain the use of the technology that the Court has been introducing, and possibly use it to assist in reducing the backlog of cases that is accumulating.

Discussions continue on how to maintain the use of the technology introduced in recent weeks, and possibly use it to assist in reducing the backlog of cases that is accumulating. The Court and RCAS are collaborating to identify what could become "Covid adapted" courtrooms in every location and area. Once identified, they will need to address what kinds of adaptations, such as plexiglass dividers, would be needed, how to keep them OH&S compliant, and how they would work in a courtroom setting.