

AR 40469

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Dear Sirs and Madams:

As the Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Solicitor General, I am pleased to update you on the Ministry of Alberta Justice and Solicitor General's jury selection and trial resumption activities.

Alberta's courts are an essential service and have remained open for matters in all divisions (appeals, family, criminal, child protection, and civil). The decision to transition back to pre-pandemic operations is being done in collaboration with the judiciary and in accordance with the direction of public health officials. Ensuring continued access to the justice system and maintaining the safety of Albertans are among the top priorities of this government. We will continue to follow the advice of the chief medical officer of health and adjust our operations as needed to help prevent the virus from spreading.

As part of the COVID-19 resumption plan, the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta is resuming jury selection and jury trials. To ensure the safety of everyone involved, jury selection and some jury trials will be held in off-site locations. Most courtrooms and deliberation rooms are designed to hold 12 jurors and do not have room to ensure the physical distance of all parties. To ensure proper physical distancing, most jury trials will need to be held off-site.

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The ministry will be using a variety of locations across Alberta. In Edmonton and Calgary, the Alberta Education Provincial Writing Centre and the Calgary Stampede Grandstand will be used. Our preparations for holding selection and trials outside of traditional court locations necessitate the development of additional security protocols, while ensuring reliable IT and technical resources are available for all stakeholders. It also involves hiring additional staff and long-term facility rentals. We are working to resolve these issues and to provide a safe and reliable jury trial experience.

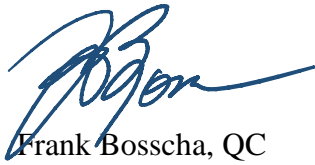
There are about 170 jury trials scheduled for the fall. The court has committed to ensuring the trials move forward and that delays are minimized to the greatest extent possible. We are exploring the option of selecting 14 jurors instead of the usual 12. These alternates will ensure there are jurors to fill in if someone needs to cease participating because they are sick or have been ordered to self-isolate.

If you have questions about specific implementation activities, I invite you to contact:

- Ms. Mary MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister – Resolution and Court Administration Services Division, mary.macdonald@gov.ab.ca; or
- Mr. Todd Nahirnik, Executive Director – Court of Queen’s Bench Administration, todd.nahirnik@gov.ab.ca.

Thank you for your commitment to justice during these trying times. I hope you find this update helpful as Alberta works toward pre-pandemic operations.

Yours truly,



Frank Bosscha, QC
Deputy Minister of Justice
and Deputy Solicitor General

cc: Mary MacDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister,
Resolution and Court Administration Services Division

Todd Nahirnik, Executive Director,
Court of Queen’s Bench Administration