

THE HONOURABLE ROBERT J. BAUMAN
CHIEF JUSTICE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



THE LAW COURTS
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COURT OF APPEAL

Message from Chief Justice Bauman regarding efforts to increase capacity to hear matters during the COVID-19 pandemic

Dated 7 April 2020

On March 17th I issued a direction adjourning all matters scheduled to be heard between March 18th and May 1st. This step was a necessary response to the Covid-19 pandemic and ensured that the right people and equipment were available to continue hearing urgent matters safely.

Since March 18th Court of Appeal staff have worked to tailor court processes so that in-person interactions are minimized, and to reschedule those matters that have been adjourned. Additionally, the Court has provided information to media regarding access to proceedings taking place remotely. In taking these steps we have been in constant communication with other courts in British Columbia and across Canada. We have also been in close communication with the Law Society of British Columbia and the Provincial Government.

As a Court, we are aware of the need to provide access to justice during the Covid-19 pandemic and, ultimately, to return to more normal service levels. I issued a direction on [March 30th](#) which invites parties who consent to have their matter heard by teleconference or in writing to contact the registrar to request permission to proceed by alternative means. The Court is also actively discussing the public's needs with government, and pursuing funding for the core technological and other resources that would allow a higher volume of hearings (including hearings for non-urgent matters) to take place. Improving capacity to accept e-filings, and increasing video-conferencing and teleconferencing capabilities are among the Court's top priorities in the near term. The Court is willing to provide innovative solutions and respond flexibly to changing circumstances. Updates on our progress in this regard will be posted to the Court of Appeal website. Please check the [announcements page](#) for the most up to date information.

Finally, as Chief Justice of British Columbia I would like to take this opportunity to personally acknowledge how extraordinarily stressful the Covid-19 pandemic has been for all members of the public and for the legal profession. I know that litigants and lawyers are concerned about the recent changes to court operations. I understand those concerns, and let me assure you that the judiciary is willing to do what is necessary to improve access to justice. I am confident that members of the profession are prepared to do the same. If you are one of the large number of self-represented people with matters before the Court of Appeal, know that, as new processes are implemented we are committed to taking steps that will accommodate your needs as well.

I wish you and your friends and families well during this difficult period. You are not alone. We will continue to meet this challenge together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert J. Bauman'.

Robert J. Bauman
Chief Justice of British Columbia