



THE LAW COURTS
800 SMITHE STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C.
V6Z 2E1

Notice to the Media and the Public Regarding Access to Supreme Court Proceedings

COVID-19 Notice No. 43
Date: February 17, 2021

This notice replaces:

- **COVID-19 Notice No. 37 – Notice to Media Regarding Access to Supreme Court Proceedings**

The Supreme Court of British Columbia recognizes the critical importance of the open court principle, including in the exceptional circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in-person hearings at courthouses around the province have been curtailed. [COVID-19 Notice No. 27 – In Court Measures During the Pandemic](#) and the Ministry of Attorney General's information about [Court Recovery Operations](#) set out the public health and safety measures in place at courthouses and guidelines for attendance.

Seating at media tables and in the gallery for media and the public has been reduced to allow for appropriate physical distancing. Some hearings are proceeding by telephone or by remote video conferencing using Microsoft Teams (see [COVID-19 Notice No. 35 – Expansion of Court Operations – Remote Video Conference Hearings](#)).

Accredited media and members of the public should be aware of the options below for attending court proceedings during this exceptional time. For the purpose of this Notice, unaccredited members of the media are considered members of the public.

Hearing lists

Accredited media and members of the public can look at the daily hearing lists for each Supreme Court location, which are posted on the website [here](#). Accredited media are emailed daily hearing lists for all locations across the province every morning and receive sentencing hearing lists every two weeks.

In-person attendance

Accredited media and members of the public may attend a hearing in person in a courtroom if the space can accommodate adequate and appropriate physical distancing. Anyone attending court in person must follow the procedures in [COVID-19 Notice No. 27](#), referred to above, and the directions of the Sheriffs.

Remote attendance

If accredited media or members of the public wish to attend a particular proceeding on the daily hearing list by telephone, they should send a request by email to The Honourable Bruce Cohen, Superior Courts Communications Officer, at SCJCommunicationsOfficer@bccourts.ca as soon as possible in advance of the proceeding. Telephone participation in a court proceeding may be subject to limits on the number of callers that can be connected through a single dial-in number.

As of July 7, 2020, the Supreme Court began Remote Video Conference (RVC) hearings using Microsoft Teams. Attendance at RVC hearings by media and the public is by telephone only. Please see [COVID-19 Notice No. 35 – Expansion of Court Operations – Remote Video Conference Hearings](#) for information on how to request telephone access to an RVC hearing.

In the event that accredited media or members of the public are granted access to a proceeding by telephone, the following conditions apply:

- the caller must dial in to the proceeding by not later than 5 minutes prior to the time of commencement of the proceeding;
- the caller must not share the dial in details with any person other than those authorized by the Court to dial in to the proceeding;
- the caller's audio must be placed on mute at all times during the proceeding;
- the [Policy on the Use of Electronic Devices in Courtrooms](#) applies to the caller's participation in the proceeding, meaning audio recording is prohibited (except for accredited media as a means of verifying their notes);
- if the caller does not dial in by the set time, the caller will not be connected to the proceeding; and
- if the caller's line becomes disconnected, the court will not disrupt the proceeding to connect the caller.

THE FOREGOING IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. ANY UPDATED DIRECTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON THE COURT'S WEBSITE.

Dated February 17, 2021, at Vancouver, British Columbia

By Direction of Chief Justice Christopher E. Hinkson
Supreme Court of British Columbia