



THE LAW COURTS
800 SMITHE STREET
VANCOUVER, B.C.
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Notice to the Profession, the Public and the Media

COVID-19: GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR MICROSOFT TEAMS VIDEO HEARINGS

COVID-19 Notice No. 47

Date: revised March 31, 2022

I. INTRODUCTION

This notice sets out the general technical and other requirements for anyone participating in a court hearing by Teams Video.

II. STANDARDS FOR HEARINGS BY TEAMS VIDEO

Anyone appearing by Teams Video must supply their own equipment and be prepared to set up and use Teams on their own, following the instructions in this Notice and the Teams guide. The Court cannot set up or troubleshoot the use of Teams Video on computers belonging to parties, counsel or witnesses.

Parties must meet the minimum technical standards set out below.

Parties must submit their documents in advance of the hearing as set out in Part III.

Minimum Technical Standards

In order to participate in a Teams Video hearing, counsel or the parties must ensure that all participants appearing by video, including any witnesses authorized by the Court to testify by Teams, meet the following minimum technical standards without assistance from the Court:

Equipment: All participants must have a working laptop or desktop computer that can run Teams with an operational camera (either an internal camera or an external mounted camera) and a microphone or headset. For an optimal experience, use of a smartphone, iPad, or similar handheld device is not recommended.

Knowledge of Teams: Participants must have working knowledge of Teams Video or must have undergone training on their own prior to the Teams Video hearing. The Court is not able to provide training in the use of the Microsoft Teams platform.

It is recommended that participants install Microsoft Teams on their computers well in advance of the Teams Video hearing, although it is possible also to join using a web browser such as Google Chrome. Participants should ensure that they are familiar with all the functions of Teams Video. The Canadian Bar Association has produced a useful guide to [Using MS Teams in Online Court Proceedings](#) (“Teams guide”). It contains detailed information about how to prepare for and participate in a Teams Video hearing. Parties and counsel should carefully review the Teams guide together with this Notice in advance of their hearing.

Please note that it is not anticipated participants will use the screen sharing function in Microsoft Teams for most hearings at the Supreme Court.

Internet speed: All participants must test their internet connection to guarantee that they have sufficient bandwidth, with a minimum internet speed of 20 MBPS down and 10 MBPS up. Participants should perform a self-test of their internet speed at <http://fast.com> or <http://speedtest.net> before the Teams Video hearing.

For an optimal experience, it is recommended that participants join the Teams Video hearing using a dedicated wired internet connection, meaning that their Ethernet cable should be directly connected to their computer. Wireless internet (“wifi”) does not always provide a stable connection and can lead to issues with audio and video continuity. Wifi may be used if upload and download speeds can be consistently achieved. If wifi is used, the connection should be private and secure (password protected), and the computer should be in close proximity to the router to provide the best signal.

Participants should be aware that they may need higher internet speeds if they intend to use other online programs at the same time as Teams Video (for example, if they are opening documents from a remote site).

Audio: While it is preferable for participants to join a Teams Video hearing using the computer audio option in Microsoft Teams, participants may join using the phone audio option in Teams if the party can still also appear on screen by video. Participants should only resort to dialing in by phone without video if their Teams Video connection fails during the hearing. If a participant is unable to connect by video or loses the video connection, the presider will direct whether the hearing may continue by telephone.

Technical support: Participants must have their own technical support to troubleshoot any problems with audio or video that arise during the hearing.

Self-test: Parties should coordinate between themselves to hold a self-test prior to the day of hearing and reconfirm that their internet speeds and platforms are sufficient on the day of the hearing. It is also recommended that counsel or the parties conduct a test with any witnesses they plan to call who are authorized by the Court to testify by Teams Video.

III. DOCUMENTS

Documents must be filed using existing processes as set out in the *Supreme Court Civil, Family, and Criminal Rules*, practice directions, and any applicable [notices](#) issued by the Court in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unless parties had previously established other document management processes or the Court directs otherwise, parties must deliver hard copies of any documents for use during the hearing to the registry at which the matter will be heard. Documents may not be shared in Teams during the hearing.

IV. INVITATION TO THE HEARING

All participants who are scheduled to attend a Teams Video hearing will receive an email from the Supreme Court.

Court clerks will only admit participants to hearings. If a client or another interested person known to counsel wishes to observe the hearing, counsel should contact the Superior Courts Communications Officer, The Honourable Bruce Cohen, at SCJCommunicationsOfficer@bccourts.ca to discuss arrangements for them to attend by telephone.

Members of the media and public may attend court proceedings in person in a courtroom, including proceedings that are heard by Teams Video, if the proceedings are open to the public. In the event members of the media or public cannot attend in person and wish to attend a particular proceeding by telephone, they should send a request by email to The Honourable Bruce Cohen, Superior Courts Communications Officer, at SCJCommunicationsOfficer@bccourts.ca for consideration by the presiding judge or master as soon as possible in advance of the proceeding. The Court cannot guarantee telephone access for all court proceedings.

V. FORMALITIES AND DECORUM

The Court recognizes that there is a difference between attending by Teams Video and appearing in a courtroom. Some aspects of court decorum are not practical in a virtual situation. The Court also recognizes that those participating may be sharing their workspaces with others, and that there may occasionally be interruptions that are beyond their control. Nonetheless, it is expected that participants do their utmost to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the gravity of a court proceeding. Most court formalities will continue to be respected, including that:

- Parties must provide realistic time estimates and adhere strictly to them.
- Counsel must still abide by the gowning requirements in [Practice Direction 11](#), unless the Court directs otherwise. Other participants are expected to dress in business attire.
- Participants must do their best to minimize disturbances, including with respect to noise.

- Participants may sit throughout the hearing and are not required to stand while addressing the Court. They are also not required to stand or bow when the presider enters or leaves the hearing.
- Participants may not eat and may not drink anything except water while the hearing is ongoing.
- Participants should avoid moving away from the screen/camera or should seek the permission of the judge to do so.

Parties and counsel are encouraged to prepare materials that they intend to use or rely on in advance, either by printing them or displaying them on a separate screen from the one that will be used for the hearing.

The day of the hearing

Parties should follow these directions on the day of the hearing:

- Parties in civil and family matters only are expected to check in at least 30 minutes prior to your scheduled hearing.
- When prompted, enter your first and last name as your screen name in Microsoft Teams.
- Conduct a pre-test to ensure that your microphone, speakers, and video are working.
- After the pre-test, wait until the court clerk calls your matter. The court clerk will moderate the Teams Video hearing and will admit you to the hearing. You must wait until the presider enters the hearing, at which point the court clerk will call the matter and you will be asked to identify yourself verbally. The Teams Video hearing will then proceed much as a regular court hearing.
- If your audio fails or you have another technical issue during the hearing, you should let the court clerk know using the message function in Microsoft Teams, then try to resolve the issue. If the problem persists, you should be prepared to dial in by telephone.

During the hearing – standing down at breaks

Participants should remain connected to the hearing during breaks but should mute their audio and turn off video. At the scheduled end of breaks, participants should turn both audio and video back on, then wait for the court clerk to recall the matter.

Etiquette and decorum

Counsel or parties are expected to introduce themselves for the record as they would during any ordinary court hearing.

Counsel or parties are requested to speak slowly and clearly and to pause regularly to allow for the presider to ask questions.

If counsel or a self-represented party wishes to object, they should signal the presider by turning on their microphone and raising their hand. This should activate their Teams Video window, but if this does not happen, the participant should be prepared to speak to get the presider's attention.

Counsel appearing should use customary forms of address for court:

- Justice/Madam Justice/Mr. Justice _____ to address judges; and
- Your Honour or Master/Registrar _____ to address masters and registrars.

Recording is not permitted

All participants and attendees to Teams Video hearings must read and abide by the Court's [Policy on Use of Electronic Devices in Courtrooms](#) ("Policy"). The Policy prohibits taking photographs (including screenshots), video images, or audio recordings of any court proceeding including Teams Video hearings. Accredited media may make audio recordings for the purpose of verifying notes. Penalties for failure to abide by the Policy may include prosecution for contempt of court.

Visual appearance

As much as possible, parties should choose a location that will not be accessible to others during the Teams Video hearing, with adequate lighting, including on faces, and a background appropriate for a court proceeding that is plain and not distracting.

Participants are encouraged to look into the camera when speaking in order to make "eye contact" with the presider.

Sound

All parties must be on separate computers situated in separate rooms, in order to avoid feedback or other audio problems. Counsel representing one party may share a computer.

As much as possible, participants are encouraged to choose a quiet location with minimum background noise.

Participants must mute their microphones whenever they are not speaking. (See the linked Teams guide for instructions on how to mute your microphone.)

Participants should consider using headphones or earphones for optimal audio quality.

Participants are encouraged to identify the location of their computer microphones and to be mindful of the sounds that could be picked up. Most built-in computer microphones are located next to the keyboard. Participants are discouraged from typing during the

hearing or placing papers directly on top of or close to the microphone while unmuted as the sound can disrupt the audio transmission.

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

Dated March 31, 2022 at Vancouver, British Columbia

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

APPENDIX

CONTACTS FOR HEARINGS AND CONFERENCES BY VIDEO USING MICROSOFT TEAMS

Location	Contact
Abbotsford	Mark Williams Mark.S.Williams@gov.bc.ca 778-752-7445
Campbell River	Robyn Farmer Robyn.Farmer@gov.bc.ca 250-286-7510
Chilliwack	Deb Caswell chilliwacktechnology@gov.bc.ca 604-795-8341
Courtenay	Courtney Stoy Courtney.Stoy@gov.bc.ca 250-331-9969
Cranbrook	Kristin Gregory kristin.gregory@gov.bc.ca 250-420-6573
Dawson Creek	Colin Day Colin.Day@gov.bc.ca 250-784-2278
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