



NOTICE TO PROFESSION

Re: Scheduling Pre-trial Applications and *Voir Dires* in Criminal Cases

This notice relates to criminal proceedings in the Supreme Court where the trial is expected to require 3 weeks of court time or less.

Background

Increasingly, counsel seek to schedule a series of non-consecutive blocks of court time, often measured in days, for the hearing of pre-trial applications and *voir dires*, and sometimes for trials.

The Court's overall workload does not allow for this approach to scheduling. The Court must hear a wide variety of cases of differing lengths in thirty different court locations around the province. If judicial sitting time is routinely fragmented by series of non-consecutive short blocks, no judges will be available to hear lengthy matters, or to travel to hear cases in court locations with no resident judge.

Direction

With the exceptions noted below, pre-trial applications and *voir dires* for shorter criminal cases are to be scheduled for hearing within a single period.

The single period for the hearing of pre-trial applications and *voir dires* should generally be at least 4 weeks in advance of the start of the trial. However, where the pre-trial applications or *voir dires* are unopposed or will occupy 2 days of court time or less, they should be scheduled in the week before the start of the trial.

The assigned case management or trial judge may at any time make directions revising the schedule for the proceedings.

Exceptions

1. For some cases, separate non-consecutive blocks may be necessary or unavoidable. For example:
 - (a) Pre-trial applications for some sexual offence cases may need to proceed in stages with steps taken by the parties or others between the stages.
 - (b) Lengthy applications or *voir dire*s, each requiring 2 weeks or more, may need to be scheduled in separate blocks for various reasons.
2. Also, short blocks may be scheduled where the judge assigned to the case directs or agrees to the proposed schedule, and Supreme Court Scheduling confirms that the necessary courtroom and staffing resources are available for the suggested dates.

Counsel wishing to schedule a series of short blocks in other circumstances for applications or *voir dire*s in cases to which this Notice applies should arrange a case management conference with the assigned judge to seek approval for the proposed schedule. If no judge has been assigned, counsel should submit a letter to the Associate Chief Justice through Supreme Court Scheduling setting out the reasons they are asking to schedule non-consecutive blocks, the proposed dates for the blocks, the position of opposing counsel, and any other information relevant to the proposed schedule.

The Court thanks the parties for their cooperation.

Dated April 22, 2026 at Vancouver, British Columbia

Associate Chief Justice Heather J. Holmes
Supreme Court of British Columbia