

PUBLICATION

Access to Justice: Alberta Court Closure Update

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April 29, 2020

The Alberta justice system has been very quick to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic with new and updated practices and procedures coming out almost weekly.

In mid-March civil and family matters were postponed indefinitely, announced by the Honourable Chief Justice Moreau of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in a Master Order relating to Court's response to the virus.

Most recently, all civil and family matters scheduled for hearing between March 16, 2020 and May 30, 2020 are postponed indefinitely, announced by Chief Justice Moreau in Master Order #3 relating to the Court's response to the virus. This includes:

- Suspending filing deadlines under the *Alberta Rules of Court* until May 31, 2020 (except for those Rules applicable statements of claim and originating applications, and other commencement documents)
- Setting out the procedure for the hearing of emergency applications (such as child protection, injunctions, and emergency guardianship and trusteeship, among other deemed emergencies)

The Provincial Court of Alberta has released a similar notice that suspends in-person family, civil, criminal, provincial offence, and traffic court appearances, with exceptions for urgent criminal, family, or child protection matters.

On March 30, 2020, the Justice Minister and Solicitor General of the Province of Alberta released Ministerial Order 27/2020 that suspends limitations prescribed in various legislation between March 17, 2020 to June 1, 2020. Notably, *Builder's Lien Act* and *Land Titles Act* are not included in this list of legislation. In a similar vein, on April 9, 2020, the Minister of Service Alberta modified and suspended further legislation.

To facilitate social distancing, the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta released notices to the legal community in regards to video-conference execution of affidavits and applications for grants of probate or administration, and the Canadian Bar Association has released a best practice guide for conducting questioning by way of video-conference. Court reporters are available to attend questionings by video-conference.

As these Orders, notices, and directions are changing often, we encourage you to visit the Court websites for the most up-to-date information:

Provincial Court of Alberta

Alberta Court of Queen's Bench

Alberta Court of Appeal