



**MANITOBA COURT OF APPEAL
MANITOBA COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH
MANITOBA PROVINCIAL COURT**

**NOTICE TO THE PROFESSION
AND
NOTICE TO THE MEDIA**

April 9, 2020

Re: COVID-19

The Manitoba Courts have been meeting with Manitoba Justice, Courts Administration and various stakeholders in the justice system to address the issues arising out of COVID-19. As you are aware, the Courts have been taking measures, which are pro-active and preventative in order to protect the participants in the justice system and to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The Courts recognize the seriousness of the situation and prioritize the health and safety of all court participants, while balancing the need to maintain judicial operations.

On Monday, March 16, 2020, we wrote to you and indicated that access to the courthouses, including circuit court locations in Manitoba, would be restricted to only those persons who are necessary to the proceedings before the courts. This included counsel, litigants, accused, witnesses and victim service workers. In addition, we indicated that the general public would not be allowed in the courthouses, however, in order to honour the open court principle, the press and media would still be allowed to attend. We also requested that no one experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms attend the courthouses.

Although the above has been working generally well, we must continue to take significant steps to flatten the curve and protect the health and safety of those attending or working in the locations where court is held. As a result, we are further limiting attendance to individuals at court proceedings at all courthouses province-wide. Beginning Tuesday, April 14, 2020, no more

than two support persons per accused or victim will be allowed to attend proceedings. The only exception to this would be for a child witness appearing on a matter –a maximum of two support persons would be allowed in this specific instance. We would also like to take this opportunity to remind all counsel of the social distancing recommendations currently in place. Please ensure you are respecting the recommended two metre or six foot limit between yourself and other participants to the proceedings like court clerks and sheriffs.

The Manitoba Courts will continue to actively monitor this situation and will continue to work on contingency planning. We recognize this situation is rapidly changing. Each level of Court will continue to provide information on any changes to its operations by updating the Manitoba Courts Website - <http://www.manitobacourts.mb.ca/> on an ongoing basis.

Lastly, the Manitoba Courts continue to encourage all court stakeholders and individuals required to appear before it to follow precautions that can avoid the spread of infection, including COVID-19. Information can be found here - <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/>

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Chief Justice of Manitoba

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Court of Queen’s Bench

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