
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PROVINCIAL COURT JUDGES AND JUSTICES OF THE PEACE OF ALBERTA

The Provincial Court of Alberta has always placed a very high priority on continuing legal education for Judges and Justices of the Peace.

Since its inception in 1956, the Alberta Provincial Judges' Association (APJA), through its Education Committee, has supported Judges' individual responsibility for professional development by organizing semi-annual educational conferences. The Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges (CAPCJ) has provided annual conferences since 1973 and a New Judges program since 1976. Since 1988, the National Judicial Institute (NJI) has offered its educational opportunities to Alberta Provincial Court Judges.

For more than 15 years, Alberta Provincial Court Judges have received a Professional Development Allowance to finance their individual professional educational opportunities, including purchase of books and reference materials.

The Society of Justices of the Peace for Alberta (SJPA) plays a similar role for the Justices of Peace who also receive a Professional Development Allowance since 2012.

Mentorship and shadowing of senior Judges and Justices of the Peace has always played an important role in the professional development of new judiciary. They also receive research support through legal counsel and law librarians.

Judicial education is one of eight key strategic priorities set out in the [2021-2024 Court's Strategic Plan](#). The Court supplements educational programs already in effect and broadens even further the spectrum of educational opportunities for Provincial Court Judges and Justices of the Peace.

The following components constitute the structure of the Court's Professional Development Program:

COURT EDUCATION COMMITTEE AND JUDICIAL EDUCATION MANAGER

The Education Committee of the Provincial Court, established in 2014, is composed of the Deputy Chief Judge, two Assistant Chief Judges, a member of the APJA Education Committee, a member of the SJPA Education Committee and three other Judges. The mandate of the Committee is to support, improve and enhance professional competence of the Court's Judges and Justices of the Peace. A new position of Judicial Education Manager was created in 2014 to assist Judges and

Justices of the Peace in assessing their educational needs and finding resources to meet them. The Judicial Education Manager provides support to the Education Committee as well as any other Court Committees that may deal with education matters.

The Court Education Committee collaborates and works closely with the APJA Education Committee and the SJA Education Committee to help identify goals, topics and resources in the planning and presentation of education programs for the Court.

EDUCATION PLANS

3 YEAR EDUCATION PLAN

The Education Plan establishes four areas of Judicial Education: Substantive Law, Judicial Skills, Social Context and Judicial Development. It formalizes expectations and resources for Judges and Justices of the Peace and encourages the Judiciary to establish learning goals and select appropriate programs annually.

The Education Plan is updated every year.

- [Judicial Education Plan](#)

EDUCATION PLANS FOR NEW JUDGES AND JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

The [Education Plan for New Judges](#) and the [Education Plan for New Justices of the Peace](#) formalize the following practices:

- A Shadowing Program that allows new Judges and Justices of the Peace to accompany senior colleagues and observe their work. The shadowing program is adjusted to the experience and background of each new appointment. A comprehensive list of proceedings that new Judges or Justices of the Peace should shadow is included in the Plans.
- A Mentoring Program for new Judges and Justices of the Peace that provides a forum for discussion, advice and collegiality. A checklist ensures the participants cover all aspects of the teaching-learning relationship.
- Information Management sessions organized during the first few months after appointment on topics such as Privacy and Access, Library information, Security information and computer assistance.
- A requirement to create Individual Education Plans for the first 5 years of tenure. Individual Education Plans for Judges need to include an evidence seminar as well as sessions on Indigenous Justice learning and sexual offences law education if appropriate.
- For Judges, a one-day virtual JYFTY session (Judging in your First Three Years) and at minimum one half-day Boot Camp annually during their first 3 years of tenure. These programs are organized by the Court Education Committee and include annual sessions on

Indigenous learning, sexual assault trials, evidence, cultural dimensions of judging, court management and judicial ethics. They are an opportunity for new judges to hear from more senior members of the Court and focus on the Alberta environment.

- For Judges, a requirement to attend, within their first year on the bench, a New Judges' Education Program provided annually through the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges (CAPCJ) and within the first two years also attend the Newly-Appointed Provincial and Territorial Judges Skills Seminar organized by the National Judicial Institute (NJI). The CAPCJ program's focus is on substantive law whereas the NJI program focuses on judicial skills.

New Judges and Justices of the Peace have access to a broad range of education materials in areas including substantive law, criminal procedure and sentencing, judicial ethics and case management on the Judicial Education Webpage, as well as through the resources of the Alberta Law Libraries.

IN-HOUSE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Judges and Justices of the Peace have the following in-house programs available to them:

- Semi-annual Conferences organized by the APJA and the SPJA and attended by all Judges and Justices of the Peace. The content of these Conferences is determined by the Associations, and has included in the past topics such as Indigenous context, sexual assault, sentencing or diversity.
- An annual JYFTY program and at minimum one half-day Boot Camp annually for new Judges.
- Lunch and Learn programs on diverse topics organized throughout the year by Judges in Calgary and Edmonton and attended remotely by other regions.
- Full day in-house seminars organized by the Court Education Committee in areas of interest such as Judicial Dispute Resolution, Bail or Warrants.

EXTERNAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Provincial and Territorial Courts across the country partner closely with NJI on educational programs, both in person and on-line. Since the inception of the NJI, the Government of Alberta has made an annual grant to NJI to support these programs and the participation of Provincial Court Judges in the programs. To assist Judges in their educational planning, every year NJI provides all Provincial Court Judges across Canada with a Schedule of Judicial Education programs

to be provided by NJI in the next year. Those programs cover three major components of judicial education: substantive law, skills training and social context. Alberta Provincial Court Judges also have ongoing access to the NJI Website, which contains a wealth of educational material.¹

All Provincial Court Judges and Justices of the Peace can participate in the legal education programs offered by the Federation of Law Societies, which include the National Criminal Law Program and the National Family Law Program. Many Judges and Justices of the Peace are also members of the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) and are able to attend programs provided by the CBA. Programs organized by the Legal Education Society of Alberta (LESA) are free for Judges and Justices of the Peace.

Judges can attend the annual meetings and educational sessions of the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges. Judges of the Provincial Court of Alberta have been very active participants in the educational programs and governance of that Association for many years.

Judges and Justices of the Peace can attend the educational programs and seminars put on by the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice (CIAJ).

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

- In-house produced education materials, available on the Judicial Education Webpage:
 - Bench Books (Criminal, Family, Child Protection, Civil and Justices of the Peace);
 - Monthly summaries of all written decisions of the Court, prepared by Judges and legal counsel;
 - A quarterly Education Newsletter, which includes news relating to education issues and suggestions for programs;
 - Materials and video recordings of in-house programs; and
 - A regularly updated Inventory of upcoming Learning Opportunities for Judges (seminars and courses).
- Regular announcements of interesting programs, new law blogs, newsletters or other relevant educational resources, shared through the Education Newsletter, via email or on the education website.
- Summaries of any new federal legislation that impacts the law or practice in provincial courts, prepared by CAPCJ.

¹ NJI programs and materials are not available to Justices of the Peace

- Library assistance, as well as access to several legal databases including Quicklaw, WestlawNext Canada, QPSource Professional, HeinOnline, and vLex Justis.

- Access to the NJI website, which includes:
 - The Judicial Library (collection of papers from Judicial seminars)
 - The NJI Bench Book
 - The NJI education programs
 - NJI Criminal and Family Newsletters
 - Subject Collections
 - Webinars, podcasts and videos

PROFESSIONAL ALLOWANCE AND EDUCATION LEAVE

All Judges and Justices of the Peace are provided with an annual Professional Development Allowance that they can utilize to attend education courses or to purchase reference materials or textbooks.

Funding for the APJA/SJPA conferences, new Judges programs, in-house programs and specific individual education programs is provided through budget allocations to the Court and grant funding provided by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General.

Judges and full time Justices of the Peace are allocated 10 days leave annually for education purposes. Part-time Justices of the Peace also receive 6 days of paid educational leave to attend the semi-annual Conferences and may have other educational opportunities as approved by the Office of the Chief Judge. Additional leave is available for new Judges, Judges in the French program, for Judges to teach, or in response to a specific request.