



## SOUTH REGION

### DRUG TREATMENT COURT AND RE-OPENING OF CIRCUIT COURTS

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#### **Drug Treatment Court – Lethbridge**

We are announcing the commencement of a new Drug Treatment Court (DTC) in Lethbridge on **November 18, 2020**. DTC will sit on the **first and third Wednesday of each month in Courtroom #7 at 2 pm**. We invite the Bar to put forward candidates to participate in this court. Participant numbers are limited and there may be placement on a waiting list. Participants may face charges under the Criminal Code or the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, or both. The Crown will screen for entry into the program. Details regarding eligibility will be distributed at a later date but in the meantime, contact whichever Crown has conduct of the prosecution.

It is anticipated that a Drug Treatment Court will commence in **Medicine Hat** in January 2021. A formal announcement is forthcoming.

#### **Re-opening of Circuit Courts in the South Region - Remote Dockets and In-Person Trials**

**Effective January 4, 2021** circuit courts in Cardston, Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod, Taber and Brooks will re-open in accordance with pre-Covid scheduling.

#### **Procedures/Guidelines:**

1. **Docket:** Judges, Clerks, Sheriffs, Crowns and Duty Counsel will attend in person. Defence counsel may attend in person or remotely as they choose and as is appropriate to the nature of their application or the stage of proceedings. The accused and others will continue to be discouraged from attending court in person. Self-represented accused will continue to be directed to contact Duty Counsel in advance for assistance and agency appearance.
2. **Trials:** The expectation is that all court participants will attend in person unless otherwise directed by the court.
3. As we re-open the circuit courts, we ask for your patience as we deal with challenges unique to the circuit points. Unlike the base points where there are two clerks to operate Webex during docket court, on circuit there will be a single clerk whose primary focus must be maintenance of the court record and to ensure proper process. They will be less able to respond to counsel and others who make inquiries of them by way of the Webex “chat” option. Please keep your “chat” inquiries to a minimum and understand that the clerks may not be able to respond quickly or at all depending on their variable workloads.

4. **Adjournment applications:** If you require adjournments, it may be to your advantage and that of the court if you request Duty Counsel to speak to it on your behalf. Fewer lawyers appearing by way of Webex will shorten docket time and avoid expending yours unnecessarily.
5. **In-Person Trials / Hearings:** Please be aware that due to Covid-19 precautions and limited space available on circuit, you may encounter limitations on your ability to speak with your clients/witnesses privately at the courthouse.

**We request that you abide by the following guidelines and inform your clients/witnesses in advance:**

- Not to attend within the courthouse earlier than the scheduled court time unless counsel directs them otherwise
- To wait outside the courthouse until contacted by counsel to come in (where possible and reasonable)
- In the courthouse everyone must be masked and maintain social distance
- In the courtroom there is a maximum number of court participants allowed to be present. People other than necessary court participants may be required to leave
- In the courtroom social distancing will be encouraged and where this is possible, the presiding judge may determine that masking is not necessary
- Disposable masks will be available at the courthouse upon entry
- Hand sanitizers will be available upon entry at the courthouse and should be used

**No one should attend court if they:**

- Have symptoms associated with Covid-19;
- Have been advised to self-isolate by public health officials, their doctor or the Alberta Health Services website; or
- Are self-isolating as a result of travel or contact with individuals who have tested positive for, or are suspected of, having COVID-19

If you are uncertain, make inquiries of the Clerk of the Court for judicial direction.

**Self-represented Accused:** Please share this information with them as you are able to do so. Your assistance in this regard is greatly appreciated.

Sylvia L. Oishi  
Assistant Chief Judge, Southern Region  
Provincial Court of Alberta