

COVID-19

Action committee offers guidance on resuming court operations in remote, Indigenous communities

By **Ian Burns**

(November 9, 2020, 9:57 AM EST) -- A committee of justice officials established to guide court operations as they emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic has issued new guidance on the safe restoration on court operations for northern, remote and Indigenous communities.

The report from the Action Committee on Court Operations in Response to COVID-19 identified some of the common challenges and concerns for these communities, suggesting ideas for change, as well as key principles that should be reflected in any future response.



Chief Justice Richard Wagner

"Access to high-quality, impartial and independent justice remains a legitimate objective for all Canadian citizens," said Chief Justice Richard Wagner. "However, for Indigenous communities and those in northern and remote regions, achieving this goal depends, of course, on having additional resources, but also — and above all — on the commitment of all involved to reconciliation while respecting the various roles of the country's democratic institutions."

Justice Minister David Lametti called the guidance an important milestone.

"Coupled with the important work of the action committee, they will help us meet our goal of greater access to justice," he said. "All Canadians must have the confidence that the justice system is there to protect them. This is particularly true for those already facing barriers to access to justice, including Indigenous peoples."

In addition, the action committee published a new tip sheet on courtroom symptom appearance and related situations. This document outlines emergency measures that may be required to ensure the safety of persons present in a courtroom if COVID-19 symptoms appear, despite the implementation and strict enforcement of controls at the entrance to the courts.

The committee, which was set up in May, is mandated to ensure that Canada's chief justices, provincial and territorial ministers of justice and other officials responsible for the administration of justice are supported by the best available public health information, practices, and resources as they work to adapt and restore court operations in response to COVID-19.

If you have any information, story ideas or news tips for The Lawyer's Daily please contact Ian Burns at Ian.Burns@lexisnexis.ca or call 905-415-5906.

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