



Provincial Court of British Columbia

Imagine you were arrested on Monday in a small northern BC community where a judge only held court on Thursdays. Until 2020, if the police did not agree to your release and you wanted a bail hearing before a judge, you would be held in custody and taken to Prince George for the hearing. If released on bail, you'd be in Prince George, possibly with no way to get home.

If you'd been arrested on a Thursday, you'd have a bail hearing in the local court and be released in your own community. But the judge would have had to interrupt the trials scheduled for that day to conduct your hearing. The resulting loss of court time might prevent a scheduled trial from finishing. Adjourning that trial would cause the litigants and their witnesses inconvenience and expense.

Virtual bail hearings have changed all that. Judges, lawyers and accused persons now attend many weekday bail hearings remotely. The accused person can participate from a video room. Their lawyer can be in their office or at home and the judge may be in a courthouse anywhere in BC.

Virtual bail hearings:

- Keep accused people in their own communities when they are released on bail
- Reduce the number of overnight stays in police cells
- Reduce travel time and costs for sheriffs, prisoners, and lawyers
- Reduce the number of bail hearings that interrupt trials and cause them to be adjourned to another day

- Increase accused people's access to duty counsel and other resources

- Enable the Court to work more efficiently, since one judge can preside in bail hearings from several court registries during a day

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