



Saskatchewan Law Courts **Twitter and Other Text-Based Forms of Media Communication** **from Saskatchewan Courtrooms** *Interim Protocol*

Protocol

This protocol addresses the media's use of personal electronic devices for live text-based forms of communication in Saskatchewan courtrooms including internet enabled laptops and tablets, mobile email and social media, such as Twitter. Notwithstanding this protocol, individual presiding judges have ultimate authority over how matters are conducted in their courtrooms. If this protocol conflicts with the instructions of a presiding judge, the presiding judge's instructions will prevail.

This protocol applies to recognized media attending Court of Appeal, Court of Queen's Bench and Provincial Court courtrooms throughout the Province of Saskatchewan. Tweeting and other forms of live text-based communications will not be permitted by any person in any courtroom unless they display the required accreditation.

It is premised on the following principles:

- The judge is responsible for ensuring that proceedings are conducted consistently with the proper administration of justice and avoiding interference by any manner with its proceedings.
- The principle of open justice is necessary for the proper administration of justice. Fair and accurate reporting of court proceedings is consistent with that principle.

Application

Mobile phones, and other electronic and wireless devices have been permitted in Saskatchewan courthouses, however, they must be turned off in courtrooms.

This protocol allows media who have been accredited by the Court Services Division of the Ministry of Justice to activate and use in silent mode, a mobile phone, small laptop or similar piece of equipment to perform live text-based communications from court, unless the presiding judge gives instructions otherwise. It is assumed that this will assist media to produce fair and accurate reports of court proceedings. Authorized media representatives will display card identification so that their status is apparent to court personnel, including security staff.

This protocol does not affect any publication bans or other court rulings that may apply in a particular case. Media representatives must ensure that they are aware of and abide by any court orders or legal restrictions that limit publication of court proceedings.

In determining whether to permit live text-based forms of communication in their courtroom, judges will consider whether the application might interfere with the proper administration of justice. The judge may determine that the use of live text-based communication will be limited or prohibited if, for example, the number of mobile electronic devices in use at any given time

might interfere with the court's recording equipment, or cause a distraction in the proceedings.

Unacceptable Use

Anyone who in the opinion of the presiding judge, court staff or court security engages in unacceptable use of a mobile phone or other electronic and wireless devices may be instructed to turn off their device and/or to leave the courtroom. Any person who is noncompliant with the protocol may be cited for contempt of court and may have their Ministry-issued media identification rescinded.