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## PROVINCE ANNOUNCES NEW REGULATIONS TO SUPPORT REMOTE WITNESSING AND COMMISSIONING OPTIONS

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New Regulations Help to Modernize Justice System, Enhance Access to Justice: Friesen

New regulations that establish processes for remote witnessing and commissioning are now in effect, Justice Minister Cameron Friesen announced today.

“Remote or virtual witnessing and commissioning distancing options contribute to justice system modernization initiatives and enhance access to justice for people who might otherwise face barriers,” said Friesen. “These regulations set out the processes to carry out specific legal services safely and in compliance with the current public health measures.”

Until spring 2020, most legal documents could only be executed in the physical presence of another person who was authorized to act as a witness. The COVID-19 pandemic created challenges in safely witnessing and commissioning legal documents in person.

Temporary orders under the Emergency Measures Act addressed these challenges in the short term, but the minister noted that over time it became clear that more permanent remote or virtual witnessing and commissioning options were needed. The new regulations also ensure the province is well-positioned for future pandemic scenarios, the minister said.

Bill 42, the Remote Witnessing and Commissioning Act, which became law in December 2020, amended the six statutes included in the temporary order and enabled alternatives to physical attendance on a permanent rather than temporary basis.

The new regulations establish processes for the use of videoconferencing as an alternative to in-person attendance when witnessing and commissioning certain legal documents. They include:

- Remote Commissioning Regulation under the Manitoba Evidence Act,
- Remote Witnessing Regulation under the Powers of Attorney Act,
- Remote Witnessing Regulation under the Wills Act,
- Remote Witnessing Regulation under the Homesteads Act,
- Remote Witnessing Regulation under the Real Property Act, and Remote Witnessing Regulation under the Health Care Directives Act.

The new regulations will contribute to justice system modernization initiatives and enhance access to justice for people who might otherwise face barriers, such as the requirement to travel to another community when making oaths, affirmations or statutory declarations, executing a will or a land titles instrument, signing a power of attorney or acknowledging a signature on a health-care directive.

For more information:

- Public information, contact Manitoba Government Inquiry: 1-866-626-4862 or 204-945-3744.
- Media requests for general information, contact Communications Services Manitoba: 204-945-3765.  
Media requests for ministerial comment, contact Communications and Stakeholder Relations: 204-290-5374.