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New courthouse opens in Fort Vermilion

The Alberta government is improving access to justice for Fort Vermilion and area residents by opening a new courthouse with modern technology and increased space.

The new facility will house the Provincial Court of Alberta as its Fort Vermilion circuit court location. It is a much-needed upgrade to the community's previous modular building, which was nearly 30 years old and had reached the end of its useful lifespan.

In addition to having more courtroom space, the new courthouse has improved security features, closed-circuit television and an area that can be used for Indigenous smudging ceremonies.

"We are committed to improving access to justice for all Albertans. The new courthouse in Fort Vermilion addresses a long-standing need for an improved court facility for residents and surrounding Indigenous communities."

- Kathleen Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General

"It is my hope that this courthouse will serve as a focal point for the Provincial Court to better connect with and serve the northern and Indigenous communities."

- Terrence J. Matchett, Chief Judge, Provincial Court of Alberta

"The new Fort Vermilion courthouse will benefit residents of the Peace River district for years to come, and it is another investment by our government to make life better for those who live in northern Alberta communities."

- Debbie Jabbour, MLA, Peace River

“We are impressed with this new facility in Fort Vermilion. It demonstrates the Government of Alberta’s commitment to improving safety and security for northern communities and we applaud the government’s efforts to address service deficiencies in this time of fiscal restraint. We see this facility as an opportunity for Albertans to evaluate our approach to the administration of justice and addressing the over-representation of First Nations in the criminal justice system.”

- Rupert Meneen, Chief, Tallcree Tribal Government

“The investment of the new court house to better serve the residents of Fort Vermilion and neighbouring communities is much appreciated. The modern features, as well as adding the cultural element, show that our government recognizes the importance of new and improved ways to serve the justice system and the importance of preserving cultural practice.”

- Cameron Cardinal, councillor, Fort Vermilion

Since the new courthouse is a Provincial Court of Alberta circuit court location, criminal and youth hearings are held in Fort Vermilion two days per month, with judges, Crown prosecutors and court staff travelling to the community from larger urban centres. In addition to Fort Vermilion, the court serves the communities of Fox Lake, Tallcree First Nation, Dene Tha’ First Nation, Beaver First Nation and the Little Red River Cree Nation.

Quick facts

- The new building is part of a multi-year, \$70-million courthouse renewal project to upgrade 16 court facilities across the province, including in First Nation communities.
- The new courthouse cost about \$5 million.
- It is almost four times as large as the old one: 604 square metres compared to 160 square metres.
- In the 2016-17 fiscal year, there were 394 cases and 1,041 charges commenced in Fort Vermilion. Over the same time period, there were 178 trials scheduled and 107 trials heard.

Multimedia

Photos

Media inquiries

è **Veronica Jubinville**

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Press Secretary, Justice and Solicitor General