



Arrestment – Your First Court Appearance

Individuals who are charged with criminal offences are given court dates. Your first court date is your **First Appearance**. You **must attend court** at the scheduled time and date or else you may be charged with a further criminal offence of **Failing to Appear**. Mark your calendar!

When you attend for your First Appearance, your name will be called and you should approach the Dock (the bench where the accused person sits). The Judge or the Clerk of the Court will read out the charges against you, and in some cases they will read out the “election address”. For more information about elections please see, **Pleas and Elections**.

Accused persons with lawyers get to go first, so it is helpful to see a lawyer before your arrestment date. Lawyers may also be able to waive the reading of the charges, which can help protect your privacy.

Once the charges have been read in court, the Judge will ask you whether you need time to discuss your charges with a lawyer before entering a plea: Guilty or Not Guilty. **There can be very serious consequences to entering a Guilty plea. Nova Scotia Legal Aid strongly recommends that you obtain some form of legal advice before entering your plea.** If you require advice, or you are not sure what to do, please speak with Legal Aid **Duty**

Counsel. They can provide you with **summary legal advice**, assist you with adjournments, or put you in touch with a **local Legal Aid Office** for an **intake appointment** to receive **full-service adult criminal law representation**.

If you need time to speak with a lawyer, the Judge should grant you an adjournment. It is helpful for you to bring your intake dates and any scheduling correspondence from Legal Aid to Court so that the Judge understands why you are asking for your adjournment. The Judge will schedule your next court date for Election and/or Plea.

Disclaimer: This site contains general legal information for residents of Nova Scotia, Canada. It is not intended to be used as legal advice for a specific legal problem.