



COVID-19 & THE PRACTICE OF LAW

WEEKLY UPDATE

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COVID-19 - WEEKLY CHECK IN LOG #9

May 13, 2020

Summary

Invited participants: Sector calls

OBA, FOLA, LSO, LAO, the Advocates' Society, & OTLA

Superior Court of Justices in Ontario, Court of Appeal for Ontario, & Ontario Court of Justice

MAG - Political and Department staff

Issues discussed:

1. Courts

- ❖ The Ontario Court of Appeal continues to conduct non-urgent matters
- ❖ The OCA is tweaking the process for media and public access to request that 48 hours notice is given, they will also be posting a reminder that there is to be no copying, recording, or rebroadcasting of matters.
- ❖ The SCJ will be issuing a Notice to the Profession later today or tomorrow that announces some changes that will be effective starting Tuesday May 19th. This Notice will consolidate and replace earlier updates to make it easier to understand. It will also contain regional and divisional updates.
- ❖ This SCJ Notice will include Trial Coordinator email addresses as well as generic Court Services email addresses and will lay out guidelines for sending documents over the next 6 weeks. The 6 weeks covers the interim between May 19th and during a procurement process for an e-Filing platform.
- ❖ Once the platform is in place, the SCJ will review their ability to hear additional matters
- ❖ The OCJ reminded us of the Notices they sent over the weekend regarding Criminal and Family Law (which can be found [here](#)).
- ❖ The OCJ mentioned that a new Family Law Notice will be going out later today or tomorrow. This Notice will consolidate and replace past Notices from March and May.
- ❖ The Courts continue to work with all working groups (FAST Action, e-Task Force, and others) and are in the process of drafting e-Filing conventions for once the e-Filing platform is rolled out.

2. Family & Criminal OCJ Matters

- ❖ As a reminder, FOLA is now meeting once a week with representatives from Family and Criminal Bar Associations (or those respective divisions within larger organizations). Over the past week, each Association solicited their members for feedback on our suggestions on non-urgent matters that should be flagged for consideration as the Courts consider expansion of services and what Justices and court staff may need to help them accommodate such matters remotely (ie: training, equipment, etc).
- ❖ Equipment needs included ensuring justices have access to a second screen (to allow them to view participants and documents simultaneously), outfitting court vehicles with audio/video equipment to enable those in custody to appear remotely while not bringing them into the Courts but allowing the Courts to overcome the barriers associated with communications between Courts and Institutions, etc).

- ❖ It was recommended that our group work to prepare recommendation documents (one for Family, one for Criminal) to jointly submit to the Courts and MAG. However, report leads have not been assigned yet and suggestions are still welcome. You can direct those to Katie at Katie.Robinette@fola.ca.

REMINDER:

Law Association members are welcome to send any issues/concerns related to the practice of law caused by the COVID-19 epidemic to FOLA and we will continue to address them in as timely a manner as is humanly possible. Please note that prior to submitting a question, you are requested to visit the [Ontario government's website](#), the [Courts' websites](#), and the [Law Society's FAQ](#) page. These websites are all updated daily. You may find your question/issue/concern has already been addressed. Links to all above sites can also be found on FOLA's [COVID-19](#) page.

If you have any questions/concerns related to court and ministry issues as a result of COVID-19, please send them to Katie Robinette at katie.robinette@fola.ca. No phone calls please. And please also note that FOLA cannot assist in issues related to a specific case.