



# COVID-19 & THE PRACTICE OF LAW

## WEEKLY UPDATE

Fola.ca

### SECTOR CHECK IN LOG #70 September 29 2021 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, Department staff, and the Recovery Secretariat

#### Issues discussed:

##### 1. COURTS

- ❖ **COURT HOLIDAY:** All Courts (and Court Counters) will be closed on September 30<sup>th</sup> in recognition of Truth and Reconciliation Day. Bail Courts will remain open. [Click here](#) for the Notice.
- ❖ **SCJ SMALL CLAIMS COURT WORKING GROUP:** Some time has passed since a call for comments on the functionality of the Small Claims Court in Covid times last went out and, while there have been lots of changes since, we continue to move forward with that process. FOLA is requesting that practitioners as well as Deputy Judges take a moment to consider and comment on what works well and also what could use improvement in our Small Claims Court so that constructive feedback can continue to flow to the Small Claims Court Working Group. As before, please send comments to Jane Robertson (FOLA Treasurer) at [jajadiver@bellnet.ca](mailto:jajadiver@bellnet.ca).
- ❖ The SCJ wanted to remind Family Lawyers about a Notice dated September 13<sup>th</sup> that clarifies some restrictions to materials filed (among other things). You can view that notice [here](#).
- ❖ As an FYI, the OCJ is planning to be using CaseLines for Domestic Family Matters by the end of the year with broader rollout to follow. Expect a formal notice within two weeks.
- ❖ The Court of Appeal for Ontario has amended its [Consolidated COVID-19 Practice Direction](#) to remove the information about scheduling urgent matters in July and August 2021 and to specify that only lawyers licensed by the Law Society of Ontario to practise law in Ontario may act and sign as a witness for a surety's signature and for an out-of-custody appellant's signature on Appendix A of the Court of Appeal for Ontario's "all-in-one" release order. The amendments to the Consolidated COVID-19 Practice Direction can be found at Appendix A of the [Practice Direction](#).
- ❖ **COURT ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY:** The Ontario Courts Accessibility Committee (OCAC) is conducting a survey for court users with disabilities to gather information on the current state of accessibility in Ontario courts. The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE), a longstanding member of the committee, is hosting the survey. This survey is targeted at persons who have experience attending court either as a person with a disability themselves, or supporting a person with a disability (e.g., as counsel, mental health worker, support person, etc.). Aggregated survey results will be shared with the OCAC to inform future discussions and projects. **The surveys will remain open to responses until September 30th, 2021.**

Here are the links to the survey:

English version: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OCACSurveyEN>

French version: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OCACSondageFR>

If you have any questions about the survey or how the data will be used, please contact ACE's general email address: [genace@lao.on.ca](mailto:genace@lao.on.ca).

About the OCAC: The OCAC is a stakeholder committee established in 2007 as one of the recommendations from the report "Making Ontario's Courts Fully Accessible to Persons with Disabilities". The committee provides advice to the courts on accessibility for people with disabilities. The OCAC includes representatives from the judiciary, legal community, disability organizations and the Ministry of the Attorney General executives.

## 2. MAG

- ❖ **JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS**: The Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee (JAAC) is welcoming applications for OCJ positions in North Bay and Sudbury. Deadline is October 13<sup>th</sup>. There is also an opening for an OCJ position in Elliot Lake (bilingual). That deadline is for October 26<sup>th</sup>. [Click here](#) for more information.
- ❖ **VACCINES**: MAG is working on a vaccination guidance document. We hope to have that shortly.

## 3. RECOVERY SECRETARIAT

- ❖ **COURTHOUSE HEALTH AND SAFETY**: The Recovery Secretariat has issued a [placemat](#) that outlines all of the health and safety measures that remain in place within Ontario's courthouses. Expect updates to this document over the coming months, as provincial health and safety guidance may continue to evolve, including about vaccination requirements.  
REMINDER: Below are the online screening tools  
**For courthouses:** [English](#) [French](#)  
**For all other workplaces:** [English](#) [French](#)
- ❖ **REMINDER**: Questions about Courthouse operations during COVID-19 can be directed to Samantha Poisson at [MAGrecoverysecretariat@ontario.ca](mailto:MAGrecoverysecretariat@ontario.ca).

## 4. LSO

- ❖ **APPOINTMENTS**: The Law Society of Ontario is currently seeking applications from qualified lawyers and paralegals for the [Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee](#) for the following regions:
  - Northwest region: Deadline October 1
  - West region: Deadline October 1Learn more and apply [here](#).
- ❖ The LSO is currently working on their vaccination protocol for staff and visitors. In the meantime, you can view their most recent COVID/Vaccine notice [here](#).
- ❖ **REMINDER**: The next Convocation will be held on October 1<sup>st</sup>. You can access the public materials [here](#). This will also be the link to use if you'd like to watch online.

## 5. LAO

- ❖ Legal Aid Ontario will be closed on September 30<sup>th</sup> for Truth and Reconciliation Day.
- ❖ While not official yet, LAO plans to return to normal (pre-COVID) billing procedures. Expect a notice by end of October.

## 6. FOLA

### SUBMISSIONS & CONSULTATIONS:

- ❖ **LSO COMPETENCE TASK FORCE**: FOLA will be preparing a Submission in response to the LSO's Call for Comment on the [Competence Task Force's Report: Renewing the Law Society's Continuing Competence Framework](#). If you would like to provide FOLA with comments for consideration for

inclusion in our Submission, please do so prior to October 20th by emailing Katie at [katie.robinette@fola.ca](mailto:katie.robinette@fola.ca). If you would like to respond directly to the LSO, you may respond to some or all of the questions through their [Call for Comment portal](#) until Nov. 30, 2021.

- ❖ **JOB POSTINGS:** The Advocacy Centre for the Elderly (ACE) is seeking a Staff Lawyer – Junior Institutional Advocate. Deadline for applications is October 13<sup>th</sup>. The Law Commission of Ontario (LCO) seeks a full-time Policy Counsel for a one-year contract that may be extended. Deadline for applications is October 12<sup>th</sup>. Learn more about both positions [here](#).
- ❖ **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY LAW ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER:** You can access the latest edition of Northumberland County’s newsletter [here](#).
- ❖ **REMINDER: MENTAL HEALTH SPEAKER:** You may remember that Beth Beattie (who spoke at FOLA’s May 2021 Plenary and who the LSO featured during their Mental Health for Legal Professionals Summit) has emailed FOLA to offer her services to any of our Law Associations who might like her to speak to your members. She noted that 68% of all attendees from the LSO’s Mental Health Summit were from outside the GTA and many were sole practitioners or came from small firms – meaning that your members are likely interested in learning more. If you would like to invite Beth to speak to your organization, please email Katie ([katie.robinette@fola.ca](mailto:katie.robinette@fola.ca)) with proposed times/dates and indicate the name of your Law Association and she will pass that information on to Beth.
- ❖ **EVENT!** Develop the edge you need to drive new levels of success for your practice at the Clio Cloud Conference, happening virtually October 26-29, 2021. With over 100 learning-intensive sessions to choose from, you’ll be sure to walk away with actionable strategies to level up your practice – and your career. Use the code **FOLA-BAR-MEMBER** at checkout to secure your \$79 pass today – and save \$120 off the regular price. Register [here](#).
- ❖ **SAVE THE DATE - FOLA’S FALL 2021 PLENARY!** FOLA’s Fall Plenary will be held via Zoom on November 18<sup>th</sup>. Our theme is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Legal Profession. Have a look at our Draft Agenda on our [Plenary Page](#). Updates are ongoing so be sure to keep visiting!
- ❖ **AWARDS!** The deadline for submitting nominations for FOLA’s 2021 Awards is September 30<sup>th</sup> (tomorrow!!). We know you have members and staff who are worthy so please do take 2 seconds to fill out a nomination form [here](#).

## QUESTIONS/CONCERNS?

Law Association members are welcome to send any issues/concerns related to the practice of law caused by the COVID-19 epidemic to FOLA at [katie.robinette@fola.ca](mailto:katie.robinette@fola.ca) and we will continue to address them in as timely a manner as possible. Please also note that FOLA cannot assist in issues related to a specific case and the Courts will NOT provide clarification on any Notice to the Profession.