

Notice to Court Users re: Access to Ontario Court of Justice Proceedings during the COVID-19 Pandemic (March 28, 2020)

As part of the collective efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to protect the health and safety of court users, justice system participants and members of the public, the Ontario Court of Justice is limiting access to courthouses.

Pursuant to a direction of the Chief Justice published on March 28, 2020, people should not attend Ontario Court of Justice courthouses unless they fall in one of the exceptions described below.

Urgent criminal and family matters: As of March 28, 2020, all urgent criminal and all urgent family proceedings will be conducted by telephone and/or video conferencing, unless otherwise ordered by a judicial official. Attendance in courtrooms for those matters will be restricted to the judicial official and essential court staff, unless a judicial official orders otherwise.

Urgent and/or essential criminal intake court: For urgent and/or essential criminal intake court functions, attendance in courtrooms will be controlled.

Filing urgent documents: Court documents for urgent matters can now be filed by email. See Notice to the Legal Profession and the Public regarding the process of emailing urgent documents at the Ontario Court of Justice (attached).

For further details about the scheduling of proceedings in the Ontario Court of Justice, including *Provincial Offences Act* matters, please refer to the [Ontario Court of Justice website](#).

Media: A separate notice has been sent to the media advising how accredited media can request access to court proceedings by remote attendance.

Remote attendance by counsel and/or litigants and in-custody accused:

- All court appearances by in-custody accused persons will be done remotely rather than in person, unless a judicial official orders otherwise.
- Counsel and/or litigants will participate in hearings by remote means unless a judicial official directs otherwise.
- If you have questions about scheduling a remote appearance, please contact the relevant Trial Coordinator's office. Contact information for Trial Coordinators is provided in the attached document, which is not for public distribution or posting.

Requests from persons for access to court proceedings:

- As noted, a separate notice has been sent to the media advising how accredited media can request access to court proceedings by remote attendance.
- Justice system stakeholders may receive requests from persons with an interest in a particular proceeding asking to attend or participate in the proceeding remotely. Counsel who receive such a request should contact the Trial Coordinator's Office. Contact information for Trial Coordinators' Offices is provided in the attached document, which is not for public distribution or posting. The Trial Coordinator's Office will confirm with the judiciary if the requesting party can be provided with access to the remote proceedings and, if so, make the necessary arrangements.
- Counsel should advise any non-party participants that, other than announcing their presence at the start of the hearing, or unless asked or invited to participate by the presiding judicial official, their phone must be on mute during the proceedings.

** These procedures are subject to change.