



COVID-19 & THE PRACTICE OF LAW

WEEKLY UPDATE

Fola.ca

COVID-19 - WEEKLY CALL CHECK IN LOG #7

April 29, 2020

Summary

Invited participants on 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 Courts are drafting an update regarding media access and hearing lists. At present, members of the public and the media must submit a request to the Registrar's office. This process is unlikely to change.
- ❖ Weekly Court hearings for the OCJ can be found [here](#).
- ❖ FOLA was told that the SCJ has heard about 1000 cases (motions, conferences, pre-trials) since the shutdown.
- ❖ The Courts reminded us about the work they are doing with MAG on the FAST Action Groups. There are 4 groups: Bankruptcy, Criminal, Family, and Civil - each group meets daily within MAG and regularly with the Courts. Each group has 6 people from the government's e-Task Force.
- ❖ Priorities for the FAST Action Groups include: 1) Identifying a Document Sharing Platform to be used by lawyers, self reps, and Judges; 2) Assessments of Video Conferencing Platforms with the goal to make a recommendation for Ontario-wide Court adoption; and 3) How to best instruct Court staff so that they can support virtual hearings. The Document Sharing Platform has been determined to be the most pressing need with a decision anticipated in the first week of May.
- ❖ Once these systems are in place, further expansion of Court operations to occur.
- ❖ Regarding bankruptcy hearings, we were reminded of the [Notice to the Profession](#) sent out on April 2 noting that the Bankruptcy Court scheduling office will continue virtual operations during the suspension of the court's regular operations and requests. However non-urgent matters have been adjourned to after June 1st.
- ❖ Staff in each Court are monitoring what other jurisdictions are doing (ie: virtual jury trials in Texas) and are interested to learn any recommendations from the Bar. Law Association members with any suggestions are welcome to email Katie at katie.robinette@folo.ca. Please include a URL to reference more information.

2. LAO

- ❖ Legal Aid Ontario is working with the OCJ to assist with backlog of matters
- ❖ They are continuing to explore ways to further assist and work with the private bar

NOTE: 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 issue 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.