



To: Convocation
From: Diana Miles
Date: April 23, 2020
Re: LSO COVID-19 Response Actions

The Law Society has taken significant and timely actions to respond to the COVID-19 crisis over the past weeks. Despite the unprecedented challenges presented by this pandemic, we have managed not only to nimbly address new issues, but also to maintain Law Society operations in support of the professions and the public.

The attached chart highlights Law Society activities since March 16, 2020, when the organization went to virtual operations. It lists numerous actions taken by our team in response to COVID-19 challenges. Substantial work has also been completed to ensure continuous operations throughout the Law Society's divisions.



LSO COVID-19 Response Actions

Action	Reference and Rationale(s)
<p>1. COVID-19 Response Page</p> <p>Developing and regularly updating a dedicated page on the LSO website to communicate timely information to the professions and the public. Work is now in progress to expand and improve this page.</p> <p>Weekly bulletin emails have also been sent to licensees during this period to ensure that they have timely access to all updates. Messaging has also been communicated by ERC through the LSO's social media platforms and in stakeholder emails.</p>	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19</p> <p>To provide the most current and pertinent information to the professions and the public regarding critical issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>2. FAQs Page</p> <p>Developing and regularly updating an extensive resource of FAQs related to COVID-19 issues, across four general categories: LSO business operations, practice management, bookkeeping obligations, and licensing process issues.</p> <p>Responsive guidance has been prepared on a variety of topics, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual commissioning and notarizing • Client identification and verification • Client communications • Limitation periods • Executing wills and powers of attorney • Managing practice interruptions • Cybersecurity risks • Retainer agreements • Contingency fee agreements • Health and safety requirements <p>A centralized repository of other justice sector organizations' COVID-19-related</p>	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19</p> <p>To provide the most current and pertinent guidance to legal professionals regarding critical issues for licensees and licensing candidates.</p>



Action	Reference and Rationale(s)
<p>responses and resources has also been created to assist licensees with practice issues.</p>	
<p>3. Revised Directions on Virtual Commissioning and Notarizing, and Client Identification and Verification</p> <p>Communicating the LSO's temporary interpretation of the relevant commissioning and notarizing legislation so as not to require physical in-person presence for the execution of legal documents, until further notice; permitting licensees to verify client identity by videoconference using precautions; and providing best practices and supporting resources when using alternative remote/virtual means of communication to identify and verify clients and execute documents.</p>	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19#can-a-lawyer-or-paralegal-use-virtual-commissioning-in-the-context-of-covid-19--5</p> <p>To facilitate continued critical legal work in communities during the period of office closures and social distancing policies.</p>
<p>4. Financial/Filing Relief Measures for Licensees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permitting licensees to file their 2019 Annual Reports up to 60 days late without penalty • Permitting licensees who have not yet paid their annual fees, which were payable March 2, until at least June 1 without penalty • Deferring bank account withdrawals from licensees on the pre-authorized monthly payment plan for 60 days 	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19#is-there-any-change-to-the-due-date-for-2019-annual-report-filing--5</p> <p>To accommodate licensees who are facing financial strain due to COVID-19, and/or who may have difficulty accessing the information they need to complete their Annual Report filing due to office closures and social distancing practices.</p>
<p>5. Targeted CPD Resources and Supporting Completion by Alternative Means</p> <p>LSO CPD has been developing programs (live and on-demand) and releasing previously developed learning modules, at no charge, to assist licensees during the pandemic.</p> <p>The LSO has rapidly developed, organized,</p>	<p>https://store.lso.ca/</p> <p>To assist licensees who are facing novel and challenging practice issues as a result of COVID-19, to alleviate financial pressures at this time, and to support social distancing practices.</p>



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<p>and promoted programming on real estate, estates, family law, and paralegal practice issues. The real estate program, made available on March 27, has had over 3400 registrants to date. The estates program, made available on April 9, has had over 2300 registrants to date.</p> <p>Learning modules on the following topics were released free of charge to all licensees on March 31, and have had over 7800 registrations to date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business continuity • practising virtually • home-based practice • mindfulness • cybersecurity • and other topics <p>CPD is revising its calendar to prioritize online delivery of core programming until the end of June. The six-hour cap on archived learning, teaching, and professional writing is being removed for this year to provide greater flexibility to licensees in this situation.</p>	
<p>6. Resolution of Critical Licensing Process Issues and Disruptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staggering licensing process fees deadlines • Modifying monthly payment plans to increase options for candidates, and waiving applicable administrative fees • Rescheduling lawyer licensing examination sittings and working towards alternative delivery formats • Widely utilizing an administrative call process to replace cancelled Call to the Bar ceremonies 	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19</p> <p>To support continued operations of licensing process components as fully as possible, while also ensuring all health and safety duties are met and allowing licensing candidates and supervising lawyers to plan ahead.</p>



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting articling, LPP/PPD and IPC (Lakehead) policies to permit remote supervision and delegation • Extending flexibility of process for abridging articling placement terms on compassionate grounds • Moving the Professional Conduct and Practice in Ontario course for candidates exempted from experiential training to an online format • Developing dedicated FAQs resources and targeted communications to provide timely and pertinent information regarding key licensing process issues and events • Liaising regularly with law school deans, employers and licensing candidates to monitor emerging issues and concerns 	
<p>7. Supporting Online Delivery of Paralegal Education Programs</p> <p>Temporarily permitting accredited paralegal colleges to deliver curriculum online, and to permit remote supervision in paralegal field placements.</p> <p>Providing additional supports to assist paralegal colleges in facilitating field placements while courts and tribunals have reduced operations.</p>	<p>To reduce disruptions to accredited paralegal education programs.</p>
<p>8. Emergency Hotline for Self-Represented Family Law Litigants</p> <p>Working with the courts and justice sector partners, launching an interim emergency family law telephone referral service to provide assistance to self-represented litigants who are trying to determine whether their family court matter meets the criteria to be heard by the court on an “urgent” basis, and, if so, how to proceed in making their request.</p>	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19#i-m-a-self-represented-litigant-srl-can-i-get-advice-to-help-me-determine-whether-or-not-my-famil-5</p> <p>To assist the public in one of the most critical areas of unmet legal needs at this challenging time.</p>



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<p>The referral line was established in just four business days. Call volumes have been steady to date and are expected to increase. From March 25 – April 16, a total of 348 people have been provided a total of 697 referrals to lawyers on the roster.</p>	
<p>9. Access to Will Drafting Legal Services for Doctors</p> <p>Working with the OMA, OBA and other justice sector partners to ensure that healthcare workers wishing to create or update wills have access to legal information and services.</p>	<p>To alleviate unprecedented challenges for healthcare workers and provide access to pertinent legal information.</p>
<p>10. Encouraging Remote Business Models During Continued Operation of Legal Offices</p> <p>Providing a joint statement from the Treasurer and CEO encouraging continued legal office operations through remote and virtual business models wherever feasible.</p>	<p>https://lso.ca/news-events/news/corporate-statement-re-covid-19</p> <p>To encourage legal offices, which have been classified as essential workplaces, to adapt and support the continued administration of justice while also supporting broader efforts to facilitate social distancing and to reduce the spread of COVID-19.</p>
<p>11. Support for Electronic Submission of Forms</p> <p>Transitioning submission of LSO forms (such as complaints forms, licence-related applications, and annual report filings) to electronic means wherever possible, and providing notices of these changes on the LSO website.</p>	<p>To support the maintenance of full LSO operations despite public health requirements.</p>
<p>12. Promotion of Licensee Supportive Resources such as PMH, MAP and government financial aid</p> <p>Through all communications channels, promoting key licensee supports such as the Practice Management Helpline and the Member Assistance Program. Summarizing and communicating information about</p>	<p>To support licensees who are facing unprecedented practical and personal challenges due to COVID-19.</p>



Action	Reference and Rationale(s)
government assistance available to licensees, licensing candidates and law students.	
<p>13. Coordination with Justice Sector Partners</p> <p>Participating in frequent conference calls with other justice sector partners, such as the courts, MAG, and the OBA, to identify and coordinate pressing issues.</p>	To ensure that key challenges are on the radar of all justice sector partners and to identify responsibilities and actions as early as possible.
<p>14. Enhanced Communications and Media Monitoring</p> <p>Frequently communicating updates and resources to the professions, stakeholders, and the public regarding COVID-19 responses and issues; monitoring and responding to emails and social media inquiries more frequently and with increased coverage.</p>	To provide the most current and pertinent information to the professions and the public regarding critical issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
<p>15. Maintaining LSO Operations by Facilitating Remote Work</p> <p>Transitioning all LSO employees to work at home beginning March 16. This has involved significant and rapid work to manage technological needs and infrastructure support to provide productivity supports.</p> <p>The Law Society Tribunal has also transitioned to virtual proceedings and other remote activities in order to maintain operations.</p>	To carry out the LSO's corporate responsibilities to support health and safety through proactive and timely social distancing, while also fully maintaining operations at a critical time for licensees and the public.