

Ministry of the Attorney General / Ministère du Procureur général

Court Services Division
Office of the Assistant Deputy
Attorney General

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Our Reference #: A-2020-86

MEMORANDUM TO: Richard Stubbings
Assistant Deputy Minister
Public Safety Division
Ministry of the Solicitor General

FROM: Sheila Bristo
Assistant Deputy Attorney General
Court Services Division

DATE: March 29, 2020

SUBJECT: **Ontario Court of Justice Notice Limiting Access to
Courthouses – Effective March 28, 2020**

The Ontario Court of Justice (OCJ) has updated its COVID-19 Notices (effective March 28, 2020) to limit access to courthouses. This is being done 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.

People are being advised not to attend an OCJ courthouse unless they are there for:

- urgent criminal or family proceedings;
- urgent or essential matters for the criminal intake courts (including urgent Provincial Offences Act intake matters); or
- urgent filing of court documents, if unable to email.

Exceptions will be made for accredited members of the media. All non-urgent matters are being rescheduled.

Urgent criminal and family matters requiring hearings will be held by telephone and/or video conferencing, unless otherwise ordered by a judicial official. (It is expected that most in-custody accused will appear by telephone or video.) Where in-court attendance must occur, arrangements will be made to enable attendance by parties, with appropriate physical distancing measures being enforced.

Courtroom attendance will be restricted to the judicial official, essential court staff, and those attending for urgent matters, with physical distancing measures strictly enforced.

Court documents for urgent matters can now be filed by email, thereby further reducing the need to attend at a courthouse. Exceptions for those unable to 'e-file' by email will be made.

The OCJ has asked for entrance doors to be monitored. Public notices will be posted at the entrance door and near the security screening area to outline the direction in the OCJ's Notice. A copy of the public notice is attached for your reference. It includes a list of urgent matters. The information on the notice may be subject to change. Local court managers will be asked to post a final copy of the notice on Monday morning.

The Chief Justice of the OCJ and the Ministry of the Attorney General are asking police services who are normally assigned at the front entrances, or those officers who may be redirected from the courthouse cells (given most in-custody accused will not appear in person), to draw attention to the notices. We are requesting that police ask if they are attending for urgent matters. If the individual's response is "no", the officer can direct them to the notices where they are asked to leave.

Please share this memorandum with police services. If members of the policing community have any questions about this initiative, they may contact the local manager of court operations.

Thank you once again for your assistance and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheila Bristo". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sheila Bristo
Assistant Deputy Attorney General
Court Services Division

Enclosure – Public Notice (current)