

Attorney General
 McMurtry-Scott Building
 720 Bay Street
 11th Floor
 Toronto ON M7A 2S9
 Tel: 416-326-4000
 Fax: 416-326-4007

Procureur général
 Édifice McMurtry-Scott
 720, rue Bay
 11^e étage
 Toronto ON M7A 2S9
 Tél.: 416-326-4000
 Téléc.: 416-326-4007



Ontario

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June 18, 2021

Dear Heads of Council, Municipal Chief Administrative Officers and Clerks:

I am pleased to be writing you today to provide an update on modernization initiatives and court recovery in Ontario's *Provincial Offence Act* (POA) courts.

Summonses

O. Reg. 475/21 was filed on June 16, 2021 to permit provincial offences officers to serve Part III summonses on individuals within the province by registered mail, courier, or email. It also permits service on a recipient's licensed lawyer or paralegal (if any), with advance consent.

Section 39 of the POA provides that these methods of service will also be available to any person serving a witness summons.

This change will permit new efficiencies going forward and will help minimize health risks associated with in-person contact during the pandemic. The regulation can be viewed [online](#).

Proclamation of POA Clerk Amendments

Bill 177, the *Stronger, Fairer Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2017*, and Bill 229, *Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020*, introduced amendments to the POA aimed at modernizing and streamlining POA court processes.

Effective November 1, 2021, the following amendments will come into force:

- Clerks of the court will grant, but not deny, an extension of time to pay a fine. If the clerk is not satisfied that the application should be granted, the clerk must forward the application to a justice of the peace to make the determination whether to grant or deny the request for an extension.
- Clerks of the court will review the POA ticket and, if the ticket is not defective as determined by regulation, enter a conviction and impose a set fine where a defendant has failed to respond to the ticket and is deemed not to dispute. The Attorney General has made a regulation prescribing the characteristics that make a certificate of offence defective. The regulation can be viewed [online](#).

These amendments will significantly assist municipalities in recovering from the disruption of court operations created by the pandemic by freeing up judicial time and allowing municipal court staff to more quickly address the backlog of cases.

More details about these amendments are described in the appendix.

Updated POA Forms

The *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020*, also amended the POA to further enable the enhanced use of remote appearances in POA proceedings.

Effective November 1, 2021, updated POA forms, including Offence Notices, Certificates of Offence, Part I Summons, Notice of Trial and Early Resolution Meeting Notices, will come into effect to reflect the availability of remote appearance methods for POA proceedings. In addition, Offence Notices will also advise the defendant that a clerk may enter a conviction against them, and that the defendant may apply to a justice for a review of their conviction.

Updated POA forms are posted on the [Ontario Court Forms website](#).

POA Court Recovery

The Recovery Division and Court Services Division, acting on behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General, continue to work closely with the Ontario Court of Justice (OCJ) on advancing virtual court appearances and the eventual resumption of in-person proceedings, when appropriate. The ministry continues to meet regularly with the OCJ, providing updates and guidance on POA recovery.

The collaborative partnership between justice partners and the ministry has been, and will continue to be, a fundamental principle of our success as we work together to build the most modern, efficient, and effective justice system attainable.

If you have any questions, or if you would like more information on these initiatives, please contact Ms. Wendy Chen, Manager of my ministry's POA Unit, by telephone at (437) 244-8733 or by email at JUS.G.MAG.POASupport@ontario.ca.

Thank you for your commitment to the administration of justice and supporting access to justice services for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Downey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Doug" and last name "Downey" clearly distinguishable.

Doug Downey
Attorney General

Enclosure

c: Ms. Wendy Chen, Manager POA Unit, Court Services Division,
Ministry of the Attorney General

APPENDIX “A”

Proclamation of POA Clerk Amendments

Currently, a defendant who is issued a ticket and fails to exercise an option on the back of the ticket (i.e., plead guilty by paying the fine, request an early resolution meeting with a prosecutor, where available, plead guilty with submissions as to penalty, or request a trial) within 15 days of being served with the ticket is deemed not to dispute the charge. A judicial official then reviews the ticket, and if it is “complete and regular on its face”, a conviction is entered and the set fine is imposed, which becomes due after 15 days. Should a defendant require more time to pay the fine, they may make an application to a justice for an extension of time to pay.

Beginning November 1, 2021, clerks of the court, rather than justices of the peace, will have new responsibilities:

Extension of Time to Pay Applications

- Clerks of the court will grant, but not deny, an extension of time to pay a fine. If the clerk is not satisfied that the application should be granted, the clerk must forward the application to a justice of the peace to make the determination whether to grant or deny the request for an extension.
- To support this amendment, consequential amendments were made to provisions in both the *Municipal Act, 2001* and the *City of Toronto Act, 2006* that authorize the treasurer or an agent to give notice to a defendant of any part of a fine that remains unpaid for the contravention of a municipal business license by-law for the purposes of collecting the unpaid fine.

Deemed not to Dispute Proceedings

- Clerks of the court will review the POA ticket and, if the ticket is not defective as determined by regulation, enter a conviction and impose a set fine where a defendant has failed to respond to the ticket and is deemed not to dispute.
- The Attorney General has made a regulation prescribing the characteristics that make a certificate of offence defective. The regulation can be viewed [online](#).
- Should the clerk of the court enter a conviction, the amendments give the defendant 15 days after becoming aware of the conviction to make an application to a justice to strike out the conviction. A justice would be required to strike the conviction if the justice is satisfied that the charging document is defective under the regulation or otherwise not complete or regular on its face.