

## **Message re COVID-19 (Updated January 4, 2022)**

The Ontario Court of Justice has continued to provide meaningful access to justice during the COVID-19 pandemic while making the health and safety of all court users a top priority. In doing so, the Court has relied on, and benefited from, the expert advice of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

In light of the recent increase in COVID-19 cases, the Court stresses the importance of limiting in-person attendance at courthouses. The Court is committed to facilitating the conduct of proceedings by remote technology (video or phone) wherever possible and urges all judicial officials, parties and counsel to use remote proceedings unless an in-person appearance is required to ensure meaningful access to justice.

The Court has encouraged all judicial officials, when exercising their authority, to be flexible and to respect why an individual may not be able to attend a court hearing in person, and to consider all reasonable alternatives to conducting a proceeding in person. Similarly, the Court encourages counsel and parties to be accommodating when requests for virtual hearings or other arrangements are made by opposing counsel or parties.

Based on expert advice from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Court will continue to accommodate in-person appearances where they are required to ensure meaningful access to justice. In consultation with public health officials, the Ministry of the Attorney General has implemented a broad range of health and safety measures at all courthouses open to the public. For information about the health and safety measures implemented at Ontario's courthouses, please see the Ministry of the Attorney General's webpage, "[COVID-19: Going to Court](#)". **It remains of critical importance that all persons attending courthouses vigilantly comply with the public health and safety protections in place at each court facility.**

Some courthouses may need to implement additional measures or scheduling changes to address local personnel shortages or other pressures presented by the pandemic in their area. Where such operational changes are required, priority will be given to criminal proceedings involving in-custody accused and other urgent criminal, family and regulatory matters.

If you are unsure whether your case is being held by video or telephone or in person, please contact your lawyer or, if you do not have a lawyer, [contact the courthouse](#) where your case is being heard.

Court operations are subject to change as the pandemic continues to evolve. Please continue to check the Ontario Court of Justice website (<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/>) for any updates.

All participants should review [the Court's remote proceeding guidelines](#) prior to attending any virtual court proceeding.

**For more detailed information about Ontario Court of Justice notices, directives and policies in response to COVID-19, see [COVID-19 Notices and Information](#).**