

## COVID-19 Notices and Information

### Message from Chief Justice Maisonneuve re COVID-19 (Updated March 18, 2022)

Effective April 4, there will be increased access to in-person proceedings. While the Court can now accommodate more in-person proceedings, it is also committed to continuing the use of video and phone options for some hearings. The interim directions about how criminal, family, and provincial offences matters will be heard can be found here:

[Notices and Info about Criminal Proceedings](#)

[Notices and Info about Family Proceedings](#)

[Notices and Info about Provincial Offences Act Proceedings](#)

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. Participants should review the Court's remote proceeding guidelines prior to attending any virtual court proceeding.

### Latest Announcements

[Latest Announcements About Criminal Proceedings in the OCJ \(Updated April 11, 2022\)](#)

[Latest Announcements About Family Proceedings in the OCJ \(Updated March 18, 2022\)](#)

[Latest Announcements About Provincial Offences Act Proceedings in the OCJ \(January 13, 2022\)](#)

## Latest Announcements About Criminal Proceedings in the OCJ (Updated April 11, 2022)

### Update April 11, 2022: Out of Court Adjournment procedure for Enhanced Designations expanding to Hamilton and Simcoe County

The out-of-court adjournment procedures for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Hamilton on April 4, 2022 and in Simcoe County (Barrie, Bracebridge, Collingwood, Huntsville, Midland and Orillia) on April 11, 2022. In these locations, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see Practice Direction Authorizing Alternate Form of Appearance where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed.

### Update March 31, 2022: New Court Case Search Tool

The "Court Case Search Tool", available through Justice Services Online, allows users (anyone with a Service Ontario ONE-key account) to search for OCJ adult criminal court case information, including future court dates and appearance type, by entering an accused person's name or the Information number. The Tool is available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/search-court-cases-online>

### **Update March 18, 2022: Interim Guidelines re Mode of Appearance for Ontario Court of Justice Criminal Proceedings**

In light of the recent easing of COVID-19 public health measures, including lifting capacity limits in public spaces such as courthouses, the Ontario Court of Justice has issued interim guidelines for modes of appearance in criminal proceedings, which will come into effect April 4, 2022. See Notice to the Public and to the Profession – Interim Guidelines re Mode of Appearance for Ontario Court of Justice Criminal Proceedings.

### **Update March 10, 2022: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to Newmarket March 14, 2022**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Newmarket on March 14, 2022. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project](#).

### **Update January 31, 2022: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to Kitchener and Windsor January 31, 2022**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Kitchener and Windsor on January 31, 2022. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto, Oshawa, London, Guelph, Kitchener and Windsor](#).

### **Update (November 29, 2021): Private Prosecution Applications**

Effective November 29, 2021, the Ontario Court of Justice will resume accepting applications for private prosecutions province-wide. If you wish to apply to lay a charge against another person, you can either attend a courthouse in person or contact the courthouse. Courthouse addresses and contact information are available at the [Contacts and Courthouse Info](#) page of this website. The court has established a new remote application process. The remote process does not prevent you from attending a courthouse in person if you wish, subject to health and safety guidelines. Prior to attending at a courthouse or contacting the courthouse please review the [Guide for Applying for a Private Prosecution](#) and the [Private Prosecution Application form](#). The Guide may answer many questions that you may have. Please note that the courthouse staff and Justices of the Peace/Judges cannot provide you with legal advice. If you wish to obtain legal advice please contact a lawyer.

### **Update October 15, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to Old City Hall October 18, 2021**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch at Old City Hall (Toronto) on October 18, 2021. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto, Oshawa, London and Guelph](#).

### **Update October 4, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to College Park October 4, 2021**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in College Park

(Toronto) on October 4, 2021. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto, Oshawa, London and Guelph](#)

**Update September 16, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to Toronto West (2201 Finch Ave. W) and Toronto North (1000 Finch Ave. W) on September 20, 2021**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Toronto West (2201 Finch Ave. W) and Toronto North (1000 Finch Ave. W) on September 20, 2021. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto, Oshawa, London and Guelph](#)

**Update September 3, 2021: Judge-led Intensive Case Management Courts**

To address the large backlog of cases in the Ontario Court of Justice case management courts arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court is establishing a new case management court – the Judge-led Intensive Case Management Court (JICMC) – in every base court location across the province. The JICMCs will supplement and assist the permanent (“regular”) case management courts already operating at each court location. The JICMCs will supplement and assist the permanent (“regular”) case management courts already operating at each court location. Cases will be referred into the JICMC based on case age, with priority being given to older cases. For more details, please see [COVID-19 Judge-led Intensive Case Management Courts and Judge-led Intensive Case Management Courts – Connection and Scheduling Information](#).

**Update August 26, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to Guelph on August 30, 2021**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Guelph on August 30, 2021. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto East \(1911 Eglinton Ave. East\), Oshawa, London and Guelph](#).

**Update August 20, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to London on August 23, 2021**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in London on August 23, 2021. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto East \(1911 Eglinton Ave. East\), Oshawa and London](#).

**Update July 30, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Expanding to Toronto East (1911 Eglinton Ave. E.) on August 9, 2021 and to Oshawa on August 16, 2021**

The pilot project authorizing out-of-court adjournments for Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Toronto East

(1911 Eglinton Avenue East) on August 9, 2021 and in Oshawa on August 16, 2021. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa, Toronto East \(1911 Eglinton Ave. East\) and Oshawa](#).

#### **Update (July 15, 2021): S. 810 Peace Bond Applications**

Effective July 19, 2021 the Ontario Court of Justice will resume accepting applications for s. 810 *Criminal Code* peace bonds province-wide. If you wish to apply for a s. 810 peace bond, instead of attending a courthouse, you should contact your local courthouse using the contact information on the [Contacts and Courthouse Info](#) page of this website. The court has established a new remote application process so that you may not be required to attend in person to start a peace bond application. Prior to contacting the courthouse please review the [Guide for Applying for a Peace Bond](#) and the [Peace Bond Application form](#). The Guide may answer many questions that you may have. Please note that the courthouse staff and Justices of the Peace/Judges cannot provide you with legal advice. If you wish to obtain legal advice please contact a lawyer.

#### **Update (June 30, 2021): Electronic Signatures and Enhanced Designations of Counsel**

The Court has issued a new rule (Rule 3.4 of the Criminal Rules of the Ontario Court of Justice) authorizing the use of electronic signatures, which comes into force July 5, 2021. Rule 3.4(1) sets out the definition of electronic signature. Rule 3.4(2) authorizes the Court to issue practice directions authorizing additional methods of signing particular electronic documents. Pursuant to this rule, a new provision (paragraph 10.1) has been added to the [Practice Direction Authorizing Alternate Form of Appearance where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed](#), allowing accused persons to sign Enhanced Designations through their counsel.

#### **Update (May 18, 2021): Resumption of out-of-custody trials and preliminary inquiries as of May 25, 2021**

In-person out-of-custody trials and preliminary inquiries may proceed as scheduled commencing Tuesday May 25, 2021. The Court continues to urge all judicial officials, parties and counsel to use remote proceedings unless an in-person appearance is required to ensure meaningful access to justice. See [Update re Criminal Proceedings: resumption of out-of-custody trials and preliminary inquiries as of May 25, 2021](#) (published May 18, 2021).

#### **Update (May 4, 2021): Reducing out-of-custody trials and preliminary inquiries between April 26 and May 21, 2021**

The reduction of out-custody trials and preliminary inquiries has been extended to May 21, 2021. However, between May 10 and May 21, 2021, virtual out of custody trials and preliminary may proceed. For more information, see [Update re Criminal Proceedings: reducing out-of-custody trials and preliminary inquiries between April 26 and May 21, 2021](#) (April 21, 2021; updated May 4, 2021).

#### **Update April 22, 2021: Updates to the Ontario Court of Justice Bail Protocol**

The Ontario Court of Justice Bail Protocol (introduced in May 2020) has been updated. The revisions clarify and reinforce the Protocol's objective of ensuring that bail proceedings are dealt with justly and efficiently. See [Ontario Court of Justice Protocol Re Bail Hearings](#)

### **Update January 28, 2021: Enhanced Designation Pilot Launching in Ottawa February 1, 2021**

On February 1, 2021, a pilot project involving Enhanced Designations of Counsel will launch in Ottawa. In the pilot, accused persons whose counsel have filed an Enhanced Designation of Counsel may have their matters adjourned to the next court date without the matter being addressed in court. For more information, see [Out of Court Adjournment of Matters where an Enhanced Designation of Counsel has been Filed – Pilot Project in Ottawa](#)

### **Update August 24, 2020: Guides for Court Appearances by Video or Telephone**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario Court of Justice is holding some court proceedings by using the Zoom platform or the JVN (Justice Video Network) WebRTC platform or by audioconference (telephone).

To help to ensure that remote hearings run effectively, the Court is publishing [Guidelines for Conducting Remote Hearings in the Ontario Court of Justice](#). The Guidelines provide best practices for remote hearings.

For technical information about participating in a Zoom hearing, please see the [ZOOM User Guide for Remote Hearings in the Ontario Court of Justice](#).

For technical information about participating in a JVN hearing, please see the [JVN WebRTC Manual](#) and [JVN WebRTC Troubleshooting Tips](#).

## **Latest Announcements About Family Proceedings in the OCJ (Updated March 18, 2022)**

**Updated March 18, 2022 – Scheduling of Family Matters at the Ontario Court of Justice:** [Scheduling of Family Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice](#)

### **Update August 24, 2020: Guides for Court Appearances by Video or Telephone**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ontario Court of Justice is holding some court proceedings by using the Zoom platform or the JVN (Justice Video Network) WebRTC platform or by audioconference (telephone).

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For technical information about participating in a JVN hearing, please see the [JVN WebRTC Manual](#) and [JVN WebRTC Troubleshooting Tips](#).

[A Guide for Self-represented Family Litigants During COVID-19](#)

## **Latest Announcements About Provincial Offences Act Proceedings in the OCJ (January 13, 2022)**

### **Update – January 13, 2022**

On January 10, 2022, the Chief Justice of Ontario Court of Justice made an order pursuant to s. 85 of the *Provincial Offences Act* extending most timelines under the Act that expire on or after January 1, 2022 to February 14, 2022. A copy of this order is available here: [Order pursuant to s. 85 of the POA \(January 10, 2022\)](#)

### **Update – September 3, 2021**

On August 10, 2021, the Chief Justice issued an order under s. 85 of the *Provincial Offences Act* extending until November 1, 2021 the time limits applicable to appeals under the *Provincial Offences Act* and set out in the Act, which would have expired on or after March 15, 2020. Please see [Order pursuant to s. 85 of the POA \(August 10, 2021\)](#).

The time limits for proceedings in the Ontario Court of Justice set out in sections 116 (2) (a), 116 (3) and 135 (2) of the *Provincial Offences Act*, and in subsections 5 (2) ) and 5 (3) of the *Rules of the Ontario Court (General Division) and the Ontario Court (Provincial Division) relating to appeals under section 116 of the Provincial Offences Act*, Reg. of Ont. 723/94, which would have expired on or after March 15, 2020, are extended until November 1, 2021.

Prior to September 7, 2021, only urgent appeals under the POA to a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice may be filed. Urgent appeals under the POA are those where the defendant risks a license suspension. On September 7<sup>th</sup> POA appeals to a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice that are not urgent will also be accepted for filing

Please see [COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: Provincial Offences Act Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice](#).

### **Update March 31, 2021**

On March 31, 2021, the Chief Justice made an Order pursuant to s. 85 of the *Provincial Offences Act* extending timelines until September 7, 2021 relating to POA appeals under the *Act* that would have expired on or after March 15, 2020. Please see [Order pursuant to s. 85 of the POA \(March 31, 2021\)](#).

The time limits for proceedings in the Ontario Court of Justice prescribed under the *Provincial Offences Act* in sections 116(2)(a), 116(3) and 135(2) of the *Provincial Offences Act*, and under sections 5(2) and 5(3) of the *Rules of the Ontario Court (General Division) and the Ontario Court (Provincial Division) in Appeals Under Section 116 of the Provincial Offences Act*, O. Reg. 723/94, that would have expired on or after March 15, 2020 are extended until September 7, 2021.

Prior to September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021, only urgent POA appeals to a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice will be accepted for filing. Urgent POA appeals are limited to those where the defendant is subject to a licence suspension.

As of April 12, 2021, any POA Appeal that is already before the court may be scheduled for a remote hearing as per the direction of the Regional Senior Justice. No in-person POA Appeals will be held earlier than October 4, 2021.

Please see COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: Provincial Offences Act Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice.

### **Update January 21, 2021**

On January 21, 2021, the Chief Justice made an order pursuant to s. 85 of the *Provincial Offences Act* extending timelines relating to POA appeals under the *Act* until April 12, 2021. In addition, *Provincial Offences Act* appeals to a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice scheduled from Monday, March 16, 2020 through to and including Friday April 9, 2021 will be adjourned. Please see [Order pursuant to s. 85 of the POA \(January 21, 2021\)](#)

Remote hearings by video conference may begin at court locations that have the technology available and have advised the Ontario Court of Justice of their readiness to support video proceedings. This includes both trial and non-trial proceedings.

Once the Ontario Court of Justice is advised that a Provincial Offences court has implemented all the necessary health and safety measures, very limited in-person appearances, may begin at that location.

Remote appearances (by audio or video conferencing) will continue to be the presumption unless otherwise ordered by the Regional Senior Justice of the Peace or the presiding justice of the peace.

Please see COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: Provincial Offences Act Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice.

### **Update December 23, 2020**

Remote hearings by video conference may begin on January 25, 2021 at court locations that have the technology available. This includes both trial and non-trial proceedings.

Additionally, as early as January 25, 2021, once the Ontario Court of Justice is advised that a Provincial Offences court has implemented all the necessary health and safety measures, in-person appearances may begin at that location. Remote appearances (by audio or video conferencing) will continue to be the presumption unless otherwise ordered by the Regional Senior Justice of the Peace or the presiding justice of the peace.

Please see COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: Provincial Offences Act Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice.

### **Update November 25, 2020**

On November 25, 2020, the Chief Justice of Ontario Court of Justice made an order pursuant to s. 85 of the *Provincial Offences Act* extending most timelines under the *Act* until February 26, 2021. A copy of this order is available here:

- [Order pursuant to s. 85 of the POA \(November 25, 2020\)](#)

Additionally, the Court has provided additional information about the scheduling direction on POA proceedings during COVID-19 in s. 4.0 of the revised COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: *Provincial Offences Act* Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice.

## **Update October 14, 2020**

All in-person appearances scheduled in municipally-administered Provincial Offences courts and all *Provincial Offences Act* appeals to a judge of the Ontario Court of Justice will be adjourned until January 22, 2021. All court locations will continue to hear matters remotely. Please see [COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: \*Provincial Offences Act\* Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice](#).

## **Update September 2, 2020: Provincial Offences Act Matters**

Until further notice, no in-person *Provincial Offences Act* proceedings will be conducted until at least Monday, October 19th, 2020. For details on the types of *Provincial Offences Act* matters that may proceed by audio conferencing, please see [COVID-19: Notice to Counsel/Paralegals and the Public re: \*Provincial Offences Act\* Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice](#).

## **General Information: COVID-19 Procedures and Scheduling**

The Ontario Court of Justice has significantly revised its procedures and schedules in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Court adopted a reduced operational schedule beginning on March 16, 2020. In accordance with directives from the Chief Medical Officers of Health of Canada and Ontario, restrictions and measures have been put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including requirements for physical distancing and limits on the numbers of people permitted in courthouses and courtrooms.

Since March 2020, the Court has been working closely with its justice partners, including the Ministry of the Attorney General, to adopt technology that will allow participants to access justice and court-related services without the need for attending in person. Many court proceedings, which have traditionally taken place in person, are now taking place using remote technology, such as video conference or audio conference. The Court has also been working with justice partners to plan for the resumption of in-person attendances in a way that protects the health and safety of all participants.

## **Criminal and Family Proceedings in the OCJ**

The Ministry of the Attorney General, which is responsible for courts administration and courthouse facilities, has established an incremental plan to prepare courthouses and courtrooms to facilitate the return to full court operations across Ontario. The first phase of the plan was implemented Monday July 6, 2020 in a limited number of courthouses and courtrooms; additional courthouses have resumed in-person hearings throughout the summer and fall of 2020. Court operations will continue to expand incrementally as the Ministry implements additional health and safety measures in courthouses and courtrooms.

As part of the return to operations plan, the Ministry is implementing health and safety measures in each courthouse. This involves the completion of site assessments at all courthouses and the implementation of all necessary health and safety precautions, based on public health expert advice, for the protection of all court users, including judicial officers, lawyers, litigants, witnesses, staff and members of the public. The Ministry will not re-open any courthouse unless and until it has concluded that the health and safety of courthouse participants will be adequately protected.



More information about the precautionary health and safety measures at courthouses implemented is available on the following website: [COVID-19: Reopening courtrooms](#). These health and safety measures include screening of all persons entering the courthouse. Before you enter an Ontario courthouse, you will need to answer screening questions. You can complete the online screening before going to court: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/courthouse-screening> and then show the result as you enter. If you cannot complete the screening online, other screening options are available at the courthouse.

### **Updates**

Please continue to check the Ontario Court of Justice website for updates. Court operations will continue to expand as the Ministry facilitates the resumption of hearings in additional courthouses and courtrooms in accordance with its recovery plan. The Court will continue working actively with all justice partners to implement a fair and orderly return to operations. As we do so, the health and safety of all court users remains our paramount concern.