

February 27, 2026

The Honourable Doug Downey
Attorney General of Ontario
McMurtry-Scott Building
720 Bay Street, 11th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Dear Minister Downey:

Re: Annual Report to the Attorney General

Pursuant to section 51.10.1(4) of the Courts of Justice Act, I am pleased to provide my annual report respecting the educational programs for judges at the Ontario Court of Justice for the 2025 calendar year.

The Ontario Court of Justice strives to develop and maintain professional competence and social awareness, and encourage personal growth, through its Education Plan for all judges. Our Continuing Education Plan can be viewed at [Continuing Education Plan for Judges](#).

Judges attend annual programs created by the Ontario Court of Justice, as well as other education programs presented by organizations and associations such as the National Judicial Institute and the Canadian Association of Provincial Court Judges. In addition to providing this annual continuing education for all judges, in 2025 I designated six (6) programs for newly appointed judges, pursuant to section 51.10.1(3) of the *Courts of Justice Act*. These programs, together with other educational programs delivered in 2025, are detailed in the attached appendix.

Social context education is integrated into our judicial education. Our programs continue to include sessions that educate judges on cultural competence, awareness of unconscious bias, intimate partner violence, coercive control, sexual assault law, anti-Black and Indigenous discrimination and racism and the experience of vulnerable populations that are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

To complement this judicial education, two events were held to commemorate Black History Month in February 2025. The Ontario Court of Justice, together with the Superior Court of Justice and Ontario Court of Appeal, hosted a moderated discussion in February 2025 between Associate Chief Justice Aston Hall and Professor Natasha Henry-Dixon, an expert in African Canadian history at York University, highlighting the experiences of Black residents and leaders of the Black community in Toronto's historic St. John's Ward neighbourhood. In addition, our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Committee organized a panel presentation for approximately 200 upper year students of three Scarborough-area Catholic high schools on February 24, 2025, exposing the students to numerous career opportunities in the justice sector.

To observe Indigenous History Month in June 2025, together with our Indigenous Initiatives Advisory Committee, we produced a videotaped, candid conversation between Justice Jodi-Lynn Waddilove and Acting Senior Indigenous Justice of the Peace Louise Logue. For the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we gathered numerous resources to permit a wide variety of self-directed learning opportunities on a diverse number of topics. We also created experiential learning opportunities by curating a list of regional community events honouring September 30, 2025, to deepen our understanding of the residential school legacy and the ways in which it continues to affect Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Additionally, over the summer and fall of 2025, the Equity and Diversity Committee held six luncheons with equity-deserving associations of legal professionals to hear about their experiences in the Ontario Court of Justice and generate ideas about how the Court could better reflect the diversity of Ontario's population, as well as ensure it is an accessible, inclusive space for all justice system participants. These luncheons started thoughtful and valuable conversations, which will continue into 2026.

I am very proud of our efforts to provide our judges with access to robust initial and continuing education this past year, and I look forward to another successful year in 2026.

Yours truly,



SHARON NICKLAS

Chief Justice / Juge en chef






Ontario Court of Justice / Cour de justice de l'Ontario

APPENDIX

2025 CALENDAR OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

DATE	PROGRAM NAME	APPROXIMATE NO. OF ATTENDEES
January 16 – 17, 2025	<p>Internal: Pre-Retirement Seminar</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Psychology of Retirement: What is Retirement, The Importance of Work, Preparing for Change, Identity, Your Social Network</i> • <i>Everything You Need to Know About the Per Diem Program for Judges</i> • <i>Life in Retirement</i> • <i>Pensions for Ontario Court Judges</i> • <i>The Association of Ontario Judges: Some Pension History and the Current Structure</i> • <i>Benefits for Retired Judges</i> • <i>Financial Planning: Income Sources at Retirement, Estate Planning</i> 	45
February 5-7, 2025	<p>Internal: Judicial Developmental Institute – Family Law  </p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>DivorceMate</i> • <i>Interpreting Financial Records</i> • <i>Specific Source of Income</i> • <i>Support Issues</i> • <i>Restraining Orders</i> • <i>IPV Impact on Children and Family Violence and Parenting Plans</i> • <i>Evidence Issues in IPV Cases</i> • <i>How Our Courts Are Addressing IPV Cases Involved in Both Family and Criminal Courts</i> • <i>Office of the Children's Lawyer: Update</i> • <i>Hot Topics</i> 	55

Courses respecting:

-  Designated programming for newly appointed judges
-  Sexual assault law
-  Intimate partner violence
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-  Social context, which includes systemic racism and systemic discrimination






DATE	PROGRAM NAME	APPROXIMATE NO. OF ATTENDEES
April 2, 2025	<p>Internal: Technology Session for Newly Appointed Judges ▲</p> <p>This program introduced newly appointed judges to technology inside and outside the courtroom, to assist them in effectively managing their workflow and decision-writing.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technology Inside and Outside the Courtroom plus MS Outlook</i> • <i>MS OneNote, MS Word</i> • <i>OCJ Note-Taking Template and Word Templates</i> • <i>OCJ Judgement Templates</i> • <i>PDFs</i> • <i>AI – Artificial Intelligence and Microsoft Co-Pilot</i> 	13
April 7-11, 2025	<p>External: French Legal Terminology Session for French-speaking Judges</p> <p>This program is offered to bilingual judges.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Présentation de la plateforme « Antidote »</i> 	10
April 27 – May 2, 2025	<p>External: CAPCJ New Judges' Education Program ■★</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My Life as an Indigenous Person</i> • <i>Bail Hearing</i> • <i>Confessions: Common Law Rule and Right to Counsel</i> • <i>Procedure and Evidence on Voir Dire – Summary Dismissal of Frivolous Motions</i> • <i>Hearsay – Principled Approach</i> 	21

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DATE	PROGRAM NAME	APPROXIMATE NO. OF ATTENDEES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Section 9 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> • <i>Section 24 (2) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms</i> • <i>Judicial Pre-Authorization: Issues for Provincial Court Judges</i> • <i>Prior Statements – Consistent and Inconsistent</i> • <i>Child Testimony</i> • <i>General Principles of Sentencing and Specific Principles from Gladue</i> • <i>Evolution of Digital Evidence</i> • <i>Sexual Assaults – Essential Elements – Consent</i> • <i>Evidence of the Complainant’s Sexual Activity</i> • <i>Credibility, Credibility: Practical Cases</i> • <i>The Offences of Operating a Motor Vehicle While Impaired</i> 	
May 21 – 23, 2025	<p>Internal: Joint Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Court of Justice, Association of Ontario Judges   </p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Young Witnesses and Young Accused; What is Different About The Adolescent Brain</i> • <i>The Adolescent Brain and Credibility Assessment: Young Witnesses in Sexual Assault Cases and Other Trials</i> • <i>Driving Offences: A “Roadside” Discussion</i> • <i>Child Support for children over the age of majority: Post-secondary and Persons with disabilities</i> • <i>Hot Topics in Criminal Law</i> • <i>Practical Considerations in Setting Up an Integrated Domestic Violence Court</i> • <i>Multicultural Society, Multilingual Trials: It’s a Matter of Interpretation</i> 	295

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Hot Topics: Procedural Issues for All</i> • <i>Coercive Control and Intimate Partner/Family Violence</i> • <i>Balancing Privacy and Fair Trial Rights: Access to Records under the Youth Criminal Justice Act</i> 	
June 16 – 20, 2025	<p>Internal: New Judges Orientation Program ▲ ■ ★</p> <p>This program is an introduction to becoming a judge and recognizing the transition from counsel to judge.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Digital Resources and Research Tools</i> • <i>Bar to Bench and Judicial Ethics</i> • <i>Your Court, Your Way: Finding Your Judicial Style</i> • <i>Judicial Well-Being and the Impact of Trauma</i> • <i>Fireside Chat: time on the bench and how to manage work life</i> • <i>Becoming a Culturally Competent Judge: Minimizing Cultural Bias and Achieving Fairness</i> • <i>Sexual Assault Trials: Key Considerations for New Judges</i> • <i>Judicial Obligations in Sentencing: Lessons from Key Cases and Other Tools for Crafting Proportionate and Effective Sentences</i> • <i>Re-examining Justice: Indigenous Peoples, the Legal System, and the Role of the Judge</i> • <i>Developing & Delivering Effective Reasons for Decision</i> • <i>How to Apply the Principles: Identify the Deep Issues, Introductions & Issue-driven Structures</i> • <i>Practical Insights from an Appellate Judge</i> 	10




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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fireside Chat: How to Organize & Prepare to Develop Reasons Efficiently</i> • <i>How to be Clear at the Paragraph, Sentence & Word Level</i> • <i>How to Develop & Deliver Oral Judgment</i> • <i>Vulnerable Parties in your Courtroom: A Clinical Psychologist's Perspective on Key Issues and Communication Strategies</i> • <i>What it Means to Be a Judge: Values, Vision, Judicial Independence, and Discretion</i> • <i>Your Questions, Answered: A Dialogue with the Chief and Associate Chief</i> 	
June 25 – 27, 2025	<p>Internal: Family Law Primer: Foundations for the Bench</p> <p>This comprehensive two-day program is designed to provide family law judges with a foundational understanding of key issues in family law</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Statutory Pathway for making Parenting Decisions</i> • <i>How to Case Manage a Parenting Case</i> • <i>Jurisdictional Pitfalls</i> • <i>The Child Support Guidelines</i> • <i>How to Calculate Income</i> • <i>How to Determine Retroactive Child Support</i> • <i>Case Management of Support Cases</i> • <i>Spousal Support</i> • <i>How to use Divorcemate Software – Using it for Child Support and Spousal Support Calculations</i> • <i>Overview of how a child protection case works based on a sample scenario/problem</i> • <i>How to Case Manage a Child Protection Case</i> • <i>Evidentiary Issues in Child Protection Cases</i> 	39

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Special Issues in Child Protection Case</i> 	
September 10 – 12, 2025	<p>Internal: Annual Family Law Program   </p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assessment and Intervention with Domestic Violence Case in Child Protection Proceedings</i> • <i>Indigenous Child Welfare Updates</i> • <i>Short Snappers: Health Care decisions with Kin Placements; Preserving Civil Litigation Claims; Evidentiary Issues on a Temporary Care and Custody Hearing; Evidentiary Issues on a Motion for Summary Judgment</i> • <i>Relocation Issues in Child Protection Matters</i> • <i>Cross-Over Youth from Child Protection to Criminal Matters</i> • <i>Adoption Primer and Reminders: Practical Tips and Pitfalls to Avoid</i> • <i>From Access to Openness: Successful Openness Planning in Adoption Cases</i> • <i>Hot Topics</i> 	68
September 15 – 19, 2025	<p>External: CAPCJ Conference</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Navigating Uncertainty: Best Practices for Judges in a Changing Future</i> • <i>The Guilty Plea in Context</i> • <i>Stretching the Borders of Section 8: The Scary Reach of Digital Surveillance and How it Challenges Constitutional Values</i> • <i>A Year Since Kruk: Applying Common Sense to Judicial Fact Finding</i> • <i>The Virtual Court Platform</i> • <i>Electronic Evidence: A discussion on its advantages and potential pitfalls</i> • <i>AI in the Courtroom: Tools, Techniques, and Cautions for Judges</i> 	27





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Credibility Assessments – The Permissible and Impermissible Limits of a Credibility Analysis</i> • <i>Police Access to Online Information</i> • <i>Accredited Justice Facility Dogs</i> • <i>From Technology to Social Enterprise: 12 Neighbours</i> • <i>The Failure’s Journey: How a Failure Can Make You a Hero...or Lessons in Judicial Innovation from a Complete Loser</i> • <i>Limits on the Use and Admissibility of Expert Opinion</i> • <i>Is Technology Good for the Criminal Justice System</i> • <i>Lessons Learned from Problem Solving Courts: Translating What Works into Regular Court Processes</i> • <i>Roundtable – Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age</i> 	
September 17, 2025	<p>Internal: New Judges Technology Session ▲</p> <p>This program introduced newly appointed judges to technology inside and outside the courtroom, to assist them in effectively managing their workflow and decision-writing.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technology Inside and Outside the Courtroom plus MS Outlook</i> • <i>MS OneNote Training</i> • <i>PDFs</i> • <i>MS Word</i> • <i>OCJ Note-Taking Template and Word Templates</i> • <i>OCJ Judgment Templates</i> • <i>AI Artificial Intelligence and Microsoft Co-Pilot</i> 	27



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October 8 – 10, 2025	<p>Internal: East Regional Seminar  </p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Coercive Control and Intimate Partner Violence: Legal Developments & Practical Considerations</i> • <i>Seeing the Whole Picture: Evidence in Intimate Partner Violence Cases</i> • <i>IPV Peace Bonds: What’s New, What Matters</i> • <i>Sentencing in IPV Cases: Law, Judgment, and Consequences</i> • <i>Handling Digital Evidence</i> • <i>Collaborative Justice Program: Restorative Justice Ottawa Session</i> • <i>AI in Judicial Practice – Tools, Trends and Tomorrow’s Challenges</i> • <i>Jail Conditions and Sentencing: What Judges Should Know</i> • <i>Coping with Credibility Evaluation: Pitfalls and Best Practices</i> • <i>Top Ten Cases</i> 	56
October 15 – 17, 2025	<p>Internal: Toronto Regional Seminar  </p> <p>This program brings together timely updates in substantive criminal law, evidence, and judicial practice.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ontario 211 and ConnexOntario: Overview of Services</i> • <i>Short Snappers: Self-Represented Litigants; 161 Orders: Unintended Consequences; Impaired Driving; Gender-Inclusive Language; Morris Updates: Social Context Evidence and Sentencing</i> • <i>Dealing with Digital Evidence: Authentication, Integrity, Genuineness, and Use</i> 	108

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Garofoli Application</i> • <i>AI in Judicial Practice – Tools, Trends and Tomorrow’s Challenges</i> • <i>Internet Child Exploitation: Challenges & Solutions</i> • <i>Incarceration Issues and Sentencing</i> • <i>The Youth Criminal Justice Act in Practice</i> • <i>Sexual Assault Law Update</i> 	
October 29 – 31, 2025	<p>Internal: North Regional Seminar</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Internet Child Exploitation: Challenges & Solutions</i> • <i>Judgment Writing: Back to the Basics</i> • <i>Short Snappers: Cellphone search issues, Experts Update, Knowledge and Control: Driver/Passenger possession issues, Sexual Inactivity, Judgment writing tips with the use of Co-Pilot</i> • <i>Algoma Treatment and Remand Centre Tour</i> • <i>Top Ten Cases 2025</i> • <i>Substantive Framework for a Garofoli Hearing (s. 8)</i> • <i>Personal Research: Understanding the Landmines of "DIY"</i> • <i>Practical Issues in Pleas and Sentencing</i> • <i>Sentencing Panel: Unique Issues</i> 	46
November 5 – 7, 2025	<p>Internal: West Regional Seminar  </p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Social Context Panel</i> • <i>Judicial Practice Management</i> • <i>Digital Evidence Presentation</i> • <i>Troubleshooting Panel</i> 	84

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Treatment of Inmates: Implications of Prison and Remand Conditions</i> • <i>Sexual Assault Law Updates</i> • <i>Neurodivergence 101: Centering Autistic Perspectives on Canada's Justice System</i> • <i>Practical AI for Judges: A Live Demonstration</i> • <i>Impaired Driving Updates</i> • <i>Top Ten Cases</i> 	
November 18, 2025	<p>Internal: Technology Session for Newly Appointed Judges ▲</p> <p>This program introduced newly appointed judges to technology inside and outside the courtroom, to assist them in effectively managing their workflow and decision-writing.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Technology Inside and Outside the Courtroom plus MS Outlook</i> • <i>MS OneNote Training</i> • <i>PDFs</i> • <i>OCJ Judgment Templates</i> • <i>MS Word</i> • <i>OCJ Note-Taking Template and Word Templates</i> • <i>AI – Artificial Intelligence and Microsoft Co-Pilot</i> 	7
November 24 – 28, 2025	<p>External: Newly Appointed Provincial and Territorial Judges Skills Seminar – National Judicial Institute ▲★</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dealing with Credibility</i> • <i>Cognitive Bias and How Best to Address It</i> • <i>Crafting a Judgment: Blending Communication and Content</i> • <i>Nuts and Bolts of Being a New Judge</i> 	24

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Challenge of Communicating with the Self-Represented and the Under-Represented Litigant</i> • <i>Getting it Done: Some Tips on Efficient and Timely Delivery of Judgments</i> • <i>The Practice of Getting it Done: The Short Turnaround Ruling</i> • <i>Judgment Exercise</i> • <i>Trauma Exposure and the Impact on Judges</i> • <i>To Intervene or Not Intervene: The Role of the Trial Judge</i> • <i>Guilty Pleas and Sentencing</i> • <i>Dealing with Lawyers and Lawyer Conflict</i> 	
December 8 – 12, 2025	<p>Internal: New Judges Orientation Program ▲ ■★</p> <p>This program is an introduction to becoming a judge, recognizing the transition from counsel to judge.</p> <p>Sessions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What it Means to Be a Judge: Values, Vision, Judicial Independence, and Discretion</i> • <i>Digital Resources and Research Tools</i> • <i>Bar to Bench and Judicial Ethics</i> • <i>Your Court, Your Way: Finding Your Judicial Style</i> • <i>Red Flags and Resilience</i> • <i>Fireside Chat: time on the bench and how to manage work life</i> • <i>Becoming a Culturally Competent Judge: Minimizing Cultural Bias and Achieving Fairness</i> • <i>Sexual Assault Trials: Key Considerations for New Judges</i> 	16 + 2 from NFLD

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Judicial Obligations in Sentencing: Lessons from Key Cases and Other Tools for Crafting Proportionate and Effective Sentences</i> • <i>Re-examining Justice: Indigenous Peoples, the Legal System, and the Role of the Judge</i> • <i>Developing & Delivering Effective Reasons for Decision</i> • <i>How to Apply the Principles: Identify the Deep Issues, Introductions & Issue-driven Structures</i> • <i>Practical Insights from a Retired Appellate Judge</i> • <i>Fireside Chat: How to Organize & Prepare to Develop Reasons Effectively</i> • <i>How to be Clear at the Paragraph, Sentence & Word Level</i> • <i>How to Develop & Deliver Oral Judgements</i> • <i>Vulnerable Parties in your Courtroom: A Clinical Psychologist's Perspective on Key Issues and Communication Strategies</i> • <i>Your Questions, Answered: A Dialogue with the Chief and Associate Chief</i> 	

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