

COVID-19 Pandemic – Scheduling of Family Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice (May 7, 2020)

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Province of Ontario has extended the Declaration of Emergency until May 12, 2020 and has indicated that the declaration may be further extended beyond this date. In light of the continued uncertainty about the duration of the state of emergency in Ontario, the Ontario Court of Justice will not be returning to full operations on May 29, 2020. No trials will be conducted until July 6, 2020 at the earliest, unless a judge seized with a continuing matter orders otherwise.

The Court will continue discussions to consider gradually expanding the range of matters that it is hearing.

The Court is working closely with its justice partners, including the Ministry of the Attorney General, to adopt technology that will increase participants' ability to access courthouse services using remote means, such as by the electronic filing of court material, remote scheduling processes, and remote hearings. The Court is also working with stakeholders to plan for the eventual resumption of in-person attendances in a way that protects the health and safety of all participants based on the best available public health information.

In order to protect the health and safety of all court users and to help contain the spread of COVID-19, **we continue to ask members of the legal profession and members of the public to NOT attend courthouses in person at this time unless a judge orders otherwise or if you are unable to email family court documents relating to an urgent family matter.**

Under no circumstances should you come into a courthouse if you have been advised by public health officials, your doctor or the Ontario Ministry of Health (MOH) website (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus>) to self-isolate.

Please continue to check the Ontario Court of Justice website for updates (<https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/>).

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This Notice supplements the March 28, 2020 Scheduling of Family Matters in the Ontario Court of Justice. Please read this directive in conjunction with the March 28, 2020 directive.

The OCJ will continue to hear urgent matters. Starting on May 19, 2020, **cases conferences in previously adjourned matters and, subject to local direction, other matters** will be permitted to be heard in the Ontario Court of Justice. In addition to these matters, each local courthouse will continue to hear certain in-chambers requests.

New proceedings, unless urgent, will not be heard at this time.

The scheduling and document filing requirements for case conferences and other matters will be determined locally by the Local Administrative Judge, keeping in mind the limited on-site court staff resources.

All other family court matters not addressed by this Directive (for example, trials) and previously scheduled between March 20, 2020 to May 29, 2020 will be now be adjourned until **July 6, 2020**.

Additional Important Information:

When a document has been filed electronically, it is not necessary to file a paper copy.

Parties shall not assume that the judge hearing the matter will have access to the entire court file.