

## Notice to the profession from the Law Society of BC

### **COVID-19 update: March 27, 2020**

As the profession continues to address the challenges of providing services and advice to clients in these exceptional times, the Law Society continues to work with the courts, government and government agencies to address issues that affect your ability to do so.

The provincial government designated the work of lawyers and paralegals to be essential services. As such, law offices are permitted to remain open in instances where remote business practices are not feasible, but they must follow the orders and guidance provided by the Provincial Health Officer to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Further information and a full list of businesses that are permitted to stay open may be found on the [Government of BC website](#).

### **Suspension of limitation periods**

The Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General has made a Ministerial Order under s. 9 of the Emergency Program Act that suspends limitation periods and time periods for commencing a civil or family action, proceeding, claim or appeal in B.C. The suspension is effective as of March 26, 2020 and continues until the date that the declaration of a state of emergency regarding COVID-19 expires or is cancelled. The full Ministerial Order may be read [here](#).

### **Update regarding execution of affidavits**

The Court of Appeal, the Supreme Court and the Provincial Court have expanded the process for commissioning affidavits in circumstances where it is not possible or is medically unsafe for the deponent to attend before a commissioner to apply to affidavits for use in Court Proceedings generally. Links to the full Notices may be found below:

[Court of Appeal of British Columbia](#)

[Supreme Court of British Columbia](#)

[Provincial Court of British Columbia](#)

Where lawyers reasonably determine that circumstances require virtual commissioning of an affidavit and follow the procedure in the Courts notices, the Law Society will consider the requirement that the deponent be physically present before the lawyers, set out in Appendix A 1(a) of the *Code of Professional Conduct*, to have been met.

### **Update on changes to Supreme Court registry services**

Supreme Court of British Columbia registries are no longer providing in-person registry services during the suspension of the court's regular operations. Documents for requests for an urgent hearing where a person is unable to use the electronic process established by the court, or for regular filings that are not defined as essential and urgent, may be submitted to the registry by using one of the following methods:

For civil or family matters:

- E-filing using [Court Services Online](#);
- Fax filing at a registry designated as a fax filing registry;
- Mailing to any Supreme Court registry;
- Using the secure drop box available from 9 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday at Supreme Court registries.

For criminal matters:

- Mailing to any Supreme Court registry;
- Faxing to a criminal registry;
- Using the secure drop box available at Supreme Court registries.

Further information, including contact details for court registries, may be found [here](#).

### **Update on Provincial Court**

The Provincial Court of British Columbia has issued a Notice to the Profession and Public that it has suspended regular operations at all of its locations and that some court locations have been [closed](#). Urgent matters will proceed in "Hub Court" locations. For more information about Hub locations and the procedures for determining urgent matters, read the full Notice [here](#).

### **Supports for managing health and social impacts of COVID-19**

LifeWorks is an employee assistance program funded by the Law Society that offers free, confidential, 24/7 support – including for issues related to mental, physical or social well-being of articulated students, lawyers and their

immediate families. Lawyers can obtain professional help and referrals for issues related to mental or physical health issues that they are experiencing. Further information about LifeWorks is available on our [website](#).