

# Asked and Answered with Lerner's LLP

## Civil Litigation during the pandemic – how are the Courts coping?

As it did in so many other areas of our lives, when the Covid-19 pandemic arrived in 2020, it interrupted the delivery of legal services. Although considered “essential”, many law firms effectively closed their offices: lawyers worked from home and found new ways to meet with clients and other lawyers. Courthouses closed to the public and many cases, except those considered urgent, were adjourned. The Ontario government suspended most provincial limitations and procedural time periods until September 14, 2020.

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Following an initial focus on urgent cases, the pandemic jump-started Ontario’s court system to introduce long overdue technology and process improvements, and Courts embraced Zoom and other videoconferencing to conduct hearings. At a recent virtual Town Hall meeting the Chief Justices of Ontario’s three levels of Courts were on hand to discuss these changes. They noted that lawyers had “risen to the occasion” to ensure clients were heard, and that between March and November of 2020 the Superior Court of Justice held +74,000 virtual

hearings and conducted 140 remote trials. The Court of Appeal decided +800 appeals in 2020 (about 75% of its normal caseload), and currently does not expect any backlog when we finally emerge from the pandemic.

Ontario Courts began the return to in-person hearings in the fall. When the second wave hit, the courts returned to remote hearings in all but the most urgent of cases, but with the technology in place allowing for a smoother transition while we wait for vaccines to be delivered and the curve to flatten.

Lawyers and the court system in which we advance our clients’ cases continue to adapt and “carry on” during this challenging time. Lerner's has, for generations now, served its clients through difficult times and will continue to do so during and after the pandemic.

Find out more about Lerner's LLP at [lerner's.ca](http://lerner's.ca)

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