

Ministry of the Attorney General

Court Services Division
Program Management Branch

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Our Reference #: A-2020-180

July 23, 2020

Municipal Chief Administrative Officers:

The Ministry of the Attorney General is pleased to advise that on July 21, 2020, Bill 197, the *COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, 2020*, received Royal Assent. As a result, the amendments to the *Provincial Offences Act (POA)* that come into force on Royal Assent are now in effect. These include:

- Allowing defendants to request a trial, in early resolution courts and in first attendance municipalities that administer parking, by mail or other electronic method permitted by the court house;
- Allowing defendants and prosecutors to conduct early resolution discussions remotely in all cases;
- Allowing any participant, including a clerk of the court, witness, judge, or justice of the peace, to attend any proceeding remotely by audio or video, unless the presiding judicial official orders otherwise;
- Allowing the judiciary to order in-person attendance where the interests of justice or a fair trial require it;
- Permitting provincial offences officers to seek search warrants remotely in all cases; and
- Allowing defendants to provide credible and trustworthy information upon applying for a re-opening without the need to attend court to have an affidavit commissioned.

Further technical consequential, complementary and housekeeping amendments will come into force on July 21, 2021.

These amendments will enable municipalities, in consultation with the judiciary, to make greater use of technology to deliver justice services remotely.

Thank you, again, for your invaluable support in helping the Ministry modernize the justice sector. The amendments to the POA enable transformational benefits for all Ontarians in every region of our province, making it easier, faster and more affordable to access justice no matter where people live.

Should you have any questions, please contact Wendy Chen, Acting Manager of the Ministry's POA Unit, by email at JUS.G.MAG.POASupport@ontario.ca.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jlee".

Jaimie Lee
A/Director, Program Management Branch
Court Services Division