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Our Reference #: M-2023-2275

March 24, 2023

Dear Heads of Council, Municipal Chief Administrative Officers, and Clerks:

I am pleased to write to you today to provide an update on modernization initiatives in Ontario's *Provincial Offences Act* (POA) courts.

On November 23, 2022, proposed amendments to the POA aimed at modernizing and streamlining processes in POA courts were introduced in the Ontario Legislature as Schedule 8 under Bill 46, the *Less Red Tape, Stronger Ontario Act, 2023*. I am happy to advise that Bill 46 received Royal Assent on March 22, 2023.

As a result, the following changes to the POA have been approved:

Implementation of Amendments to Allow for Clerk Review of Reopening Applications

Currently, the POA allows a defendant convicted of either failing to respond to a charge laid by certificate of offence or of failing to appear for a hearing or early resolution meeting, to apply to have the conviction struck and the matter reopened. Such applications are currently reviewed by a justice of the peace and may be granted if the justice of the peace is satisfied that, through no fault of their own, the defendant was unable to appear for a hearing or an early resolution meeting or did not receive a notice or document relating to the offence.

Effective September 22, 2023, clerks of the court will grant, but not deny, applications to strike a conviction on a ticket, if satisfied that the defendant, through no fault of their own, missed a notice or was unable to attend a meeting or hearing related to the ticket. If the clerk is not able to grant the application and strike the conviction, the clerk must forward the application to a justice of the peace to make the determination whether to grant or deny the request for a reopening.

These amendments will assist municipalities in recovering from the disruption of court operations created by the pandemic by freeing up judicial time and allowing municipal court staff to address the backlog of cases more quickly.

Repeal of the Bill 177 Early Resolution Reforms

Effective March 22, 2023, amendments to section 5.1 of the POA, together with previously proposed sections 5.2 to 5.5 are repealed, although they had not yet come into force. These previously proposed amendments would have changed the "early resolution" process in ways that are no longer desired by stakeholders.

The Ministry of the Attorney General looks forward to continuing engagement with partners and stakeholders on new opportunities for modernizing the early resolution process.

If you have any questions, or if you would like more information about these initiatives, please contact Ms. Wendy Chen, Manager of the POA Unit, either by email at JUS.G.MAG.POASupport@ontario.ca or by telephone at (437) 244-8733.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the administration of justice and for supporting access to justice services for all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug Downey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the name.

Doug Downey
Attorney General

c: Wendy Chen, Manager, POA Unit, Court Services Division, Ministry of the Attorney General