

January 7, 2022

The Honourable Doug Downey, Attorney General
Ministry of the Attorney General
11th Floor, 720 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M7A 2S9

Dear Minister,

We, the Mayors of the Town of Caledon and the Town of Mono, respectfully submit this joint letter to provide you with our municipal perspectives, outline our unique challenges and frustrations, and also to propose solutions that would mitigate the serious issues facing our provincial offence courts in Dufferin and Caledon.

Municipal resources are being exhausted and pushed beyond capacity and the implications are profound. The information we share below clearly indicates that the Caledon/Dufferin POA Courts are in a crisis. We are not alone in the Province nor are the problems described here solely attributable to COVID 19.

The critical challenges are:

Last minute cancellations due to a lack of judicial resources

This is resulting in a negative and compounding administrative impact to case management. As example, between September 10th and December 15th there were 3,038 docket lines cancelled and rescheduled. This one example equates to 26 closed court days.

A related frustration is that early resolution dockets are often cancelled, with the next available return date being in June pushing some matter 12 months before they are able to have an early resolution. Matters requesting trials are being scheduled up to 24+ months out.

Another troubling result of this issue is the capital and operating costs to run a court are essentially wasted when we are forced to reschedule due to lack of, or cancellation of, judicial resources. We have provided the courtroom and technology, the court clerks and prosecutors, and notified all the defendants, only to repeatedly cancel.

Reduction of Judicial availability for administrative functions such as swearing of informations, issuing of summons and review of applications

This is creating an enormous backlog and, in some cases, has resulted in the swearing of informations occurring *after* an appearance date causing inconvenience to defendants and the need to re-issue summonses with attendant multiple, unproductive court attendances.

Outlined below are some possible solutions that from our perspective would mitigate these issues.

- Assign Justices of the Peace to POA courts either in person or virtually. This should entail total mobility for all justices of the peace regardless of region.
- There are currently over 80 per diem justices of the peace and they should be utilized to the fullest. Exemption from their presiding 'cap', something allowed for, should be considered to address backlog. Per diem justices of the peace willing to accept POA assignments would go a long way to addressing backlog.
- Allow e-Hub access for POA court matters immediately, for the swearing of informations and issuing of summons to start addressing the timeliness of judicial administrative functions and paperwork.
- Launch early resolution, trial and paperwork blitzes to address backlog. Make judicial dependant paperwork a mandatory part of court assignments.
- Use your legislative authority as Attorney General to fast track section 11 of the POA to proclaim the re-opening amendments and, amend the early resolution process in section 5 of the PA to permit the clerk of the court to enter convictions.
- Together with the Ontario Court of Justice, commit to convening a 'Justice Summit' on POA where all stakeholders can address the considerable issues facing our courts.

Minister, it is not inconceivable that hundreds if not thousands of serious charges are at risk of being withdrawn either by prosecutors or as the result of a court ruling on 11b of the Charter as it applies to old POA cases.

We are very willing to be part of the solution and welcome a further conversation with you or your staff on how we can work together. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Mayor John Creelman
Town of Mong



Mayor Allan Thompson
Town of Caledon

Copy to:

The Honourable Sylvia Jones, MPP Dufferin Caledon

The Honourable Lise Maisonneuve, Chief Justice, Ontario Court of Justice

The Honourable Paul R. Currie, Regional Senior Justice, Central West Judicial District

Her Worship Marsha Farnand, Regional Senior Justice of the Peace