



## Action Committee on Court Operations in Response to COVID-19

### **A Message from the Action Committee**

Our courts exist to serve Canadians. They perform a vital function in our democracy. As Canada adjusts to the new realities of the COVID-19 pandemic, courts are integral to supporting community recovery, restoring economic activity, and strengthening social cohesion. All those who come to Canada's courts must have confidence that appropriate measures are being taken to protect their health and safety.

Courts are places where people come together. Given the importance of physical distancing and the challenges this poses for court operations, a core element of every court's strategy for recovery and resilience will be to manage pressures on in-court resources. This requires a careful balance: we must uphold our hallmark principle of open and accessible courts, while preserving the health and safety of court users and ensuring the timely and effective delivery of justice to Canadians.

All participants in the court system have a role and a responsibility in making this happen. Adapting to and respecting proposed health and safety measures protects everyone: legal counsel, courts personnel, social service providers, judges, witnesses, litigants (including accused persons), and jurors drawn from the community. Ensuring that Canada fulfills its fundamental commitment to fair and accessible justice affects all court users, and requires system-wide engagement and effort.

For its part, through tip sheets and other guidance, the Action Committee offers resources to help our courts adapt health and safety practices - including physical distancing and other key safeguards against COVID-19 transmission - to the unique setting of court operations. The Action Committee is also dedicated to building more modern, responsive and resilient courts, recognizing the need for a multi-pronged approach that reflects the perspectives and marshals the efforts of each institutional branch. Protecting health and safety and upholding the fundamental values of our justice system are mutually sustaining commitments that guide our way forward.