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signed versions can be put together to create a single valid document. This reduces the need for multiple virtual conferences and the couriering of documents between the testator/grantor and each of the two witnesses.

As virtual witnessing of Wills and Powers of Attorney has only just begun, further guidelines and clarifications on best practices will continue to evolve. Legal professionals are working hard during this time to maintain the health and safety of our clients, and at the same time, continue to provide the same essential legal services.

If you do not have a Will or Powers of Attorney, or need to make updates, you can still do so safely from your home if you have an internet connection and access to a computer or other device that has video conferencing capabilities.

It is important to note that virtual witnessing of Wills and Powers of Attorney is only applicable during the state of emergency. We are recommending to clients to go back to their lawyer after the state of emergency is lifted to resign their Wills and Powers of Attorney the "old fashioned way."

Our Charitable Partners

We'd be happy to speak with you! If you'd like to learn more about leaving a gift in your Will, please contact one of our Charity Partners using the information below.



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COMMUNITY PARTNERS: Confederation College / George Jeffrey Children's Foundation / Northern Ontario School of Medicine / St. Joseph's Foundation / Thunder Bay Community Foundation / Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation

Your Will is a Gift

A way to be remembered by your community



Remote Witnessing of Wills and Powers of Attorney in Ontario

Written By: Rene Larson, H.B.A., J.D., Larson Lawyers

The Government of Ontario issued an Emergency Order (O.Reg.129/20) on April 7, 2020 allowing remote or "virtual" witnessing of Wills and Powers of Attorney during the COVID-19 emergency.

Under normal circumstances, in order for Wills and Powers of Attorney to be valid in Ontario, they must be signed by the testator/grantor in the physical presence of two adult witnesses. As a result of COVID-19 and the social distancing guidelines, witnesses being in "the presence of" the testator/grantor is no longer recommended for health and safety reasons.

Virtual witnessing provides flexibility to allow more people to sign their Wills and Powers of Attorney while following the social distancing guidelines. Under the Emergency Order, Wills and Powers of Attorney witnessed virtually will be valid as long as the person signing their Will and

Powers of Attorney and both witnesses can see and hear each other in real time via "audio-visual communication technology", with at least one witness being a lawyer or paralegal in Ontario.

"Audio-visual communication technology" is defined in the Emergency Order as "any electronic method of communication in which participants are able to see, hear and communicate with each other in real time." Examples of communication software being used currently are Zoom, Facetime, and Skype. It is important to keep in mind that some communication software will be more secure than others.

For the purposes of virtual Will signing, it is important that the lawyer be in control of which communication software is being used to ensure the most secure connection possible.

By one of the witnesses being a lawyer or paralegal, it also ensures that the virtual witnessing is completed according to the Emergency Order, and that there are no concerns regarding lack of capacity or undue influence. It should be noted that paralegals can only be witnesses as they are not authorized to make Wills.

Virtual witnesses must still meet all the same requirements previous to the Emergency Order; they must be over 18; not a beneficiary under the Will or spouse of a beneficiary; not a named attorney or spouse of a named attorney; and not a child of the person granting the power of attorney.

In order to resolve practical issues surrounding virtual witnessing, the Government of Ontario issued a second Emergency Order on April 22, 2020 which allows for Wills and Powers of Attorney to be signed in counterpart. This means that the testator/grantor and both witnesses can sign the same version of the Will or Power of Attorney at the same time via video conference, and the three

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CONFEDERATION COLLEGE

During its ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Confederation College has proudly established many supports for its students, employees and communities. In March, Confederation donated thousands of pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE) to the Northern Supply Chain, the shared services program supporting health care supply procurement and distribution across the Northern Ontario region. Confederation's contribution included over 25,000 pairs of gloves, close to 2,700 face masks/shields and an assortment of medical gowns, goggles, hand sanitizer and sterilizing wipes.

The College was also able to loan equipment to the Dryden Regional Health Centre including hospital beds and adjustable bedside tables, privacy dividers, wheelchairs, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, a vital signs machine, medication cart and patient lift.

In reflecting on the contribution, President Kathleen Lynch said "We are so pleased to have helped our communities support the health and well-being of residents across the region. It also gives us great comfort and pride to know that our communities are further supported by skilled, knowledgeable and compassionate Confederation College alumni who are hard at work, keeping essential services going. On behalf of our entire College community, I thank all frontline staff for the courageous work you are doing each and every day."



NORTHERN ONTARIO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

They may not yet be allowed on the front lines of Canada's battle against the COVID-19 pandemic, but Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) medical students are finding ways to support our frontline healthcare workers during the COVID-19 outbreak. The initiative began when medical students realized that COVID-19 was likely to hit hard and make extraordinary demands of Canada's healthcare workers.

Approximately 45 NOSM students have volunteered so far for tasks including child care and running errands for Northern Ontario healthcare personnel. To reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, the medical school is limiting the initiative to one volunteer per family. Jai Mashru, president of the NOSM student council said students are also willing to do things such as monitoring crisis support lines and helping local health units with contact tracing.

The Northern Ontario School of Medicine is also working with their hospital partners, creating practice ventilators and PPEs in order to provide training for medical workers on how to properly don and use personal protective equipment without wasting critical resources.

For more information about what NOSM is doing to help during this crisis visit us at www.nosm.ca.



GEORGE JEFFREY CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

George Jeffrey Children's Centre clinicians have been exploring new ways to stay connected to clients during COVID-19 including creating videos focused on skills and activities families can practice at home.

Closing during the COVID-19 pandemic hasn't stopped George Jeffrey Children's Centre from helping children. The Centre's innovative team of professionals has stayed connected with children and their families during the crisis. From phone calls to virtual appointments, care for children with special needs has continued.

Various program areas like Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Speech-Language Therapy created activity calendars that have been shared online for families to use at home. Clinicians, like Sandra, Miranda, and Zach, also developed videos of activities with how-to instructions for families to try at home with their children – these activities focus on important skills for children.

In addition to providing direct care, the staff at George Jeffrey stepped up through their staff charity fund to make a donation to Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA) to help ensure families in need can be supported.

The generosity of donors has helped our Centre be equipped for this continuity of care, and their ongoing support will be essential as the Centre drives forward on building more capacity for special needs care throughout our region. Together, we are helping children live their lives to their fullest.



ST. JOSEPH'S FOUNDATION

One of the biggest challenges for all of us during the COVID-19 pandemic is social distancing, this is especially true for the clients at St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) with the restrictions on visitors at all of our sites. Thanks to a generous donation of 30 iPads from Michael and Suzanne Comuzzi the Televisitation program was launched. "When I heard about St. Joseph's Care Group's need for iPads to connect clients and families, I immediately thought of my own family. We were fortunate when our mother was in the hospital to go and visit with her every day. I can't imagine what it is like for families now not having that ability. Suzanne and I are thrilled to provide this needed equipment to connect families together".

Through the use of iPads, staff are helping clients and their families stay connected through the Televisitation program. One family member said it was the best surprise to be offered a FaceTime visit. "I live in Toronto, and speak with my father twice daily, for my dad to be able to see me and his grandchildren is indescribable. The experience was also relieving for me at this incredibly stressful time."



THUNDER BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Thunder Bay COVID-19 Community Relief Fund, a partnership of the Thunder Bay Community Foundation and the United Way of Thunder Bay, has provided over \$200,000 in grants to date to organizations such as Roots to Harvest and Thunder Bay and Area Victim Services.

The collaborative fund provides one place for philanthropists, community leaders, corporations and individuals to contribute to ensure that community members affected by the pandemic stay safe, healthy and have access to basic needs such as food, clothing, hygiene products, shelter and crisis counselling. This fund truly shows the power of community collaboration and working together to reach diverse networks.

Every single dollar is supporting the front-line agencies that are ensuring people have access to basic needs during the crisis as both organizations have waived any and all administrative costs.

Thunder Bay's health and social service organizations are experiencing an increase in demand for services to meet basic needs while also experiencing a decrease in donations and a loss of fundraising revenues due to cancelled events. As the situation continues, demand continues to grow.

To make a donation to help please go to www.uwaytbay.ca or www.tbcf.org alternately by mail to either organization.



THUNDER BAY REGIONAL HEALTH SCIENCES FOUNDATION

Dr. Zaki Ahmed, Chief of Staff and a Registered Nurse in the Intensive Care Unit, show the vitally important ventilator; used to help patients breathe when they can no longer do so themselves.

It's a piece of equipment on everyone's minds these days; ventilators. These pieces of critical care equipment are being used in Intensive Care Units across the world.

For patients with severe symptoms of COVID-19, where breathing on their own becomes impossible, ventilators are used to move air in and out of the patient's lungs.

Generous donors, through the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation, have previously funded these essential, life-saving, pieces of equipment. Each one costs approximately \$55,000. A small price to pay for someone's life, but a large expense nonetheless.

Donations ensure that we can continually outfit our ICU and many other areas in the Health Sciences Centre with the latest and best equipment to care for our families and friends.