



## Witten LLP's Pandemic Response Plan March 2020

### PURPOSE

The purpose of Witten LLP's Pandemic Response Plan (the "**Plan**") is to address circumstances in which there has been a serious infectious disease outbreak that may affect or has affected Witten's offices. This document focuses on infectious diseases such as the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, a pandemic flu, or other infectious disease outbreaks which may result in Witten "**Members**" (defined as Partners, Associates, Articling Students, Contractors and Staff) being unable to report to work for an extended period of time. This Plan is now in effect and shall remain in effect until the Witten LLP Management Committee declares otherwise. Where there is a conflict between this Plan and an existing Witten LLP policy, this Plan shall take precedence.

Witten's first concern is to ensure the health and safety of our Members, clients and the public. We are committed to taking all reasonable and necessary steps to protect everyone's well-being. Recovery from an infectious disease outbreak may not be achieved immediately. Therefore, it is important to ensure that Witten's core business activities and professional/ legal obligations can be maintained for an extended period of time with a potentially reduced number of Members if any of our Members are unable to work from either the office or their homes. It is equally important to ensure that Witten is prepared to resume business in an organized manner once the infectious disease outbreak has been resolved.

Witten will respect and follow all applicable Government legislation, regulations, recommendations and directives.

Witten is also committed to respecting the human dignity and privacy rights of all Members. Members who report symptoms in accordance with this Policy will not suffer any adverse discrimination or treatment.

### PLANNING

- Pandemic Response Coordinators: Renn Moodley and Patricia Kimmitt
- Back up Pandemic Response Coordinators: Members of the Crisis Management Committee (Ellery Lew, Steve Shafir, Kevin Smith, Coralie Mohr, Keltie Lambert and Aasim Chaudhry)
- Role of the Pandemic Response Coordinators and the Crisis Management Committee:
  1. Track and communicate the latest developments of COVID-19;
  2. Make decisions, in accordance with the current recommendations and directives of the relevant public health authorities, regarding:
    - i. The appropriate measures to implement before, during and after an infectious disease outbreak;
    - ii. Member health and safety; and
    - iii. Member sick leave, personal leave and accommodations;

3. Communicate the measures being implemented to Members, clients and the public;
  4. Communicate frequently with affected Members to stay informed of their work status; and
  5. Ensure compliance with our legal, professional and ethical obligations to Members, clients, the Court and the public.
- Planning measures:
    - Work from home options;
      - Increasing awareness of availability of virtual private network (“VPN”) for Members;
      - Training re: remote meeting (i.e. video and teleconferencing) technologies;
    - Train back up Members for critical business functions;
    - Investigate options to send items and documents electronically (email or fax), rather than by courier or traditional mail options, if possible; and
    - Build and maintain inventory of critical hygiene and disinfection supplies such as hand sanitizer, Kleenex, disposable disinfecting wipes, hand soap and disposable hand towels.

## **AWARENESS AND PREVENTION**

- Cleaning and disinfecting measures:
  - Disinfect high contact areas within the office (e.g. door handles, taps, touch screens, security keypads, etc.);
  - Coordinate with the building management company to ensure continuity of cleaning services during outbreak;
  - Resources to be provided to Members:
    - Hand sanitizer;
    - Kleenex;
    - Disposable disinfecting wipes;
  - Resources for which inventory must be maintained:
    - Hand sanitizer;
    - Kleenex;
    - Disposable disinfecting wipes;
    - Hand soap;
    - Disposable hand towels.
- Education of Members using resources such as signs posted throughout the office and regular email communications on matters such as:
  - The symptoms of the relevant infectious disease, in this case, COVID-19;
  - Proper hand washing technique;
  - Respiratory etiquette (coughing and sneezing);
  - Social distancing;
  - Staying home from work when a Member is showing symptoms of infectious disease or is otherwise sick;
  - Reporting to the Pandemic Response Coordinator if the Members are undergoing testing for infectious disease such as COVID-19;

- Vaccination and anti-viral treatment campaigns, if applicable (**NOTE:** There is currently no vaccination or anti-viral medication available for COVID-19); and
- Additional matters as recommended by government health authorities.
- Encourage Members to use remote meeting technologies (e.g. video and teleconferencing) rather than face-to-face meetings, if possible.
- Encourage Members to send documents electronically (email or fax), if possible (rather than by traditional mail or by courier).
- Remind Members of:
  - Firm policies regarding sick leave, and family medical/compassionate leave
  - Members' options if they cannot come to work:
    - Working from home;
    - Sick leave policy and benefits;
    - Employment Insurance;
    - Other government benefits, which may be announced, in the future.

## **OUTBREAK OF COVID-19**

- Remind Members to:
  - Wash their hands often and well;
  - Avoid touching your face, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands;
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick;
  - Clean and disinfect surfaces that are frequently touched;
  - Stay at home and away from others if they are feeling ill;
  - When sick, cover their cough and sneezes and then immediately wash their hands; and
  - Call Health Link, at 811, if they are concerned about symptoms or believe they may be at risk.
- Cancel all non-essential internal meetings.
- Advise Members to not come in to work if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, unusual tiredness, difficulty breathing) until they receive medical advice.
- Advise Members to contact a Pandemic Response Coordinator if:
  - They are unable to attend work due to illness or quarantine;
  - They are undergoing or have undergone testing for COVID-19;
  - A family member or close contact has been diagnosed with or is showing symptoms of COVID-19.
- Following a decision by the Pandemic Response Coordinators as to when the Member can return to work:
  - Staff should contact Susana Mark;
  - Associate lawyers should contact their supervising lawyer; and

- Partners and Contractors should contact another lawyer in their practice group and/or Ron Sorokin, Witten LLP's managing partner.

To discuss and receive instructions regarding: applicable benefits and logistics for working from home, identification of work client priorities (e.g. court dates, closings, limitation periods, etc.) and next steps.

- Reception desk
  - Reception staff to keep a record of visitors to the office so that we can pass their details to local health authorities should contact tracing be required;
  - Reception staff to use gloves when handling incoming mail and are to place mail items coming from known or suspected outbreak areas into plastic bags for safe handling and disinfection;
  - Gloves are available for all staff who wish to use them for the purposes of handling mail and packages.
- Visitors to the Office
  - Encourage Members to consider teleconference or videoconference, rather than in-person meeting;
  - Assess risk to the health and safety of the office of having visitors from affected areas, and in particular, from outside of Canada with regard to the most up to date recommendations from Health Canada and/or Alberta Health. If they are unable to attain reasonable assurance that there is no risk to the community, Members should cancel the visit or make alternate arrangements.
- Travel outside of Canada
  - Require Members planning to travel outside of Canada to:
    - Advise the Pandemic Response Coordinators of their travel plans;
    - Evaluate all associated risks, which may include the risk of becoming ill, falling under the restrictions of a foreign government, or forfeiting traveler's cancellation or medical coverage;
    - Regularly monitor for travel restrictions by reviewing the Government of Canada's travel advisories and the CDC's Travel webpage;
    - All recommendations from Health Canada and/or Alberta Health must be followed;
    - Be aware that travelers returning from outside of Canada may be required by the federal or provincial government to self-isolate and contact their local public health unit to report their arrival and/or symptoms.
  - All Members must contact the Pandemic Response Coordinators BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK.
    - Decisions regarding the need or advisability of self-isolation will be determined on a case by case basis and depending upon the most up to date public health recommendations;
    - Regular updates regarding Travel Recommendations and Directives will be provided to all Members;
  - Encourage Members to contact Health Link at 811 before attending work if:
    - They have recently returned to Canada (within 14 days);

- They have fever or respiratory symptoms;
  - They believe they may be at risk for COVID-19 for any reason and are ill.
- Members stranded in areas that have imposed travel restrictions/lock-downs:
  - Contact the Pandemic Response Coordinators. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis.
- Members with family members or close contacts diagnosed with or showing symptoms of COVID-19 must, BEFORE RETURNING TO WORK:
  - Contact the Pandemic Response Coordinators if someone in their family or close contacts is diagnosed with or is showing symptoms of COVID-19;
  - Members with family members or close contacts diagnosed with or showing symptoms of COVID-19 are encouraged to stay at home and contact Health Link at 811.
- Members will be required to follow the direction of the Pandemic Response Coordinators. Following a decision by the Pandemic Response Coordinators as to when the Member can return to work:
  - Staff should contact Susana Mark;
  - Associate lawyers should contact their supervising lawyer; and
  - Partners and Contractors should contact another lawyer in their practice group and/or Ron Sorokin.

To discuss and receive instructions regarding: applicable benefits and logistics for working from home, identification of work client priorities (e.g. court dates, closings, limitation periods, etc.) and next steps.

- Office closure, if necessary:
  - The Crisis Management Committee will initiate the “phone tree” and/or other communication to ensure all Members are aware of the office closure and instructions for next steps.
  - Management Committee shall communicate with the landlord/ building services as required to implement office closure and cleaning protocols.
  - Notify clients and suppliers regarding office access changes:
    - On Witten’s website;
    - Add automatic message to Member’s outgoing emails advising recipients of any changes.
  - Ensure that Members keep their voicemail and out of office email messages up to date.
  - All efforts will be made to ensure business continuity through working from home and remote locations.

## ONGOING REVIEW OF PLAN

- Witten LLP Health and Safety Committee to coordinate regular review of the Plan;
- Regular review of critical business functions with backup personnel;
- Regular review of high use periods of work from home technologies, such as VPN;
- Regular testing of phone tree plan; and
- Regular review of the Plan to ensure it is up to date with any changes in personnel and critical business functions.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

- WHO: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- Alberta Health Services – COVID-19 FAQs for the Public:  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-ncov-2019-public-faq.pdf>
- Alberta Health Services – COVID -19 Information page:  
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx>
- Call Health Link, at 811, if you are concerned about your symptoms or believe you may be at risk.