ONTARIO

# Superior Court of Justice
# Southwest Region

## NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC AND THE PROFESSION

**FROM:** **Mr. Justice J. Paul R. Howard**
**Regional Senior Justice – Southwest Region**

**DATE:** **November 19, 2026**

**RE:** **Changes to the Regional Long Trial Sittings for Fall 2028**

[1] As our Regional Office starts to make ready for the preparation of the 2028 Annual Schedule, I write to counsel and litigants in the Southwest Region to alert you to some expected changes in the scheduling of our Civil Regional Long Trial Sittings (RLTS) for 2028.

**Background**

[2] The Southwest Region has been using the Civil (CV) RLTS model, with great success, since the Spring 2025 sittings. However, subsequent developments now indicate that the time has come to review our RLTS scheduling model in order to best serve the overall needs of all litigants in the Southwest Region.

[3] As you may recall, in the Spring of 2025, the Southwest Region held our first trial sittings based on the CV RLTS model, which model contemplates the scheduling of special 5-week trial sittings, held twice a year (commencing the end of March and the end of September), during which all Civil trials (whether jury or non-jury) expected to require more than 3 weeks of trial time must be scheduled into one of those special RLTS sittings.

[4] Our experience over the last 2 years of the RLTS sittings has been very positive. In the Spring 2025 sittings of the RLTS, we had over 100 trials originally on the trial list, and just 3 proceeded to trial. In the Fall 2025 sittings, we had 95 cases on

the trial list to start, and just 1 case proceeded to trial. In the Spring 2026 sittings earlier this year, we had 78 on the trial list to start, and 4 proceeded to trial (6 commenced, but 2 settled within the first week). And for this past Fall 2026 sittings, we had 52 cases on the trial list originally, and just 2 proceeded to trial.

[5] However, at the same time, our smaller centres in the Region are experiencing significant challenges in being able to call Family cases to trial because their limited trial sittings are overwhelmed by their Criminal trial imperatives, especially those cases that are *Jordan*-sensitive.

[6] These realities indicate that we should be reviewing our RLTS scheduling model.

**Revisions to the RLTS Scheduling Model**

[7] Accordingly, commencing in 2028, the Southwest Region will revise our RLTS scheduling model, as follows:

a) Over a 2-year period, 3 of the available 4 RLTS Spring and Fall Sittings shall remain reserved for long Civil trials, in the first instance.

b) But the 4th sittings of the RLTS shall be devoted to Family trials, to be managed on a Regional basis, consistent with the workings of the existing CV RLTS, with priority given to the Family cases from our smaller centres, in the first instance.

c) To be clear, the first RLTS sittings primarily devoted to Family cases shall be the Fall 2028 sittings.

d) Thereafter, on a go-forward basis, every Fall sittings of the RLTS in “even” years (i.e., 2028, 2030, 2032, etc.) shall be devoted to Family cases, in the first instance.

e) At least initially, until our smaller, non-Unified Family Court (UFC) centres show satisfactory improvement with their Family trial lists, the UFC centres in the Region (London and St. Thomas) shall not participate in this Family RLTS initiative, subject to further review.

[8] To be clear, to be eligible for hearing at the Fall 2028 sittings, it is not necessary that a Family trial be expected to require more than 3 weeks of trial time (unlike the requirement for the CV RLTS). That is, all Family trials, no matter what their expected length, are eligible to be heard at the Fall 2028 RLTS and following.

**Logistics of the Transition**

[9] In order to facilitate this transition, effective immediately, no further long CV trials shall be scheduled into the Fall 2028 RLTS sittings. On a go-forward basis, the Fall 2028 RLTS sittings shall be reserved exclusively for Family trials, again, with priority to be given to the Family trials from our smaller centres, in the first instance.

[10] It is recognized that, at present, we have a small handful of long CV trials that have already been scheduled into the Fall 2028 sittings of the RLTS. At present, there are just 7 such trials that have been scheduled into the Fall 2028 RLTS.

[11] Accordingly, for any case currently scheduled for trial during the Fall 2028 RLTS:

a) that trial shall be traversed to another sittings of the CV RLTS, whether earlier to the Spring 2028 sittings or later to the Spring 2029 sittings or thereafter;

b) if all parties consent to traversing their trial to a particular sittings of the CV RLTS, counsel may deliver correspondence to the local Trial Coordination Office, marked to the attention of the Regional Senior Justice, to indicate that the matter is to be traversed, on consent, to the agreed-upon date/sittings, and the appropriate endorsement will then issue accordingly;

c) if the parties are unable to agree upon the date of the sittings of the CV RLTS to which their trial should be traversed, the matter may return to their local CV Assignment Court, and counsel should advise their local Trial Coordination accordingly;

d) alternatively, counsel are at liberty to deliver correspondence to the local Trial Coordination Office to request the scheduling of a case conference before the Regional Senior Justice to address any such scheduling concerns;

e) for any case currently scheduled for trial during the Fall 2028 RLTS, in respect of which there has been no communicated response from counsel (or the litigants), as contemplated by paras. 11(b)-(d) above, by Monday, May 1, 2028, the trial of the matter shall be automatically traversed to the Spring 2029 sittings of the CV RTLS by way of administrative adjournment; and

f) for any case traversed from the Fall 2028 sittings to the Spring 2029 sittings or thereafter, counsel are at liberty to request that their matter be scheduled for the same intensive pretrial conference that would have been scheduled if their matter had not been traversed to a later sittings of the RLTS (i.e., the intensive pretrial would be scheduled for the late summer or early fall of 2028).

[12] The Court appreciates your understanding as we try to adapt our scheduling practices in order to meet the overall needs of the entire Southwest Region.

**Released: November 19, 2026**