

A Message from our CEO and Managing Partner in response to COVID-19

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I am sure you are all being inundated with emails from every manner of enterprise advising you of their response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the risk of only adding to them, I wanted to advise you of what steps we have taken and how that may affect you. We expect that you will notice very little difference in your communications with our firm members and the service you've come to expect and deserve.

From the beginning, we have taken guidance from the experts at Manitoba Health. As those recommendations continued to suggest an escalation in the steps, including social distancing, that should be taken to slow the spread of the virus, we ensured we were doing our part. Many of our lawyers were already working remotely.

As of Wednesday, we have arranged for all of our lawyers and staff to be in position to work at home. We have strongly suggested that they do so until at least the end of March. To date, none of our firm members' health has been affected by the virus, but we felt this step was the right one in order to protect our firm members, and as a matter of public health, to slow the spread of disease in the community.

We do not expect that your interactions with the firm will change much at all. While working remotely, all of the firm members, both lawyers and staff have access to our firm's document management system, email, online meeting and video conferencing technology, telephone and voicemail systems, files, and everything else needed for a seamless transition to our remote environment. We will continue to maintain a small staff complement at our office to ensure that physical mail, deliveries, faxes and finance matters are handled promptly and professionally.

We are committed to ensuring your needs are met and have no doubt they will. We thank you for your understanding, as we work through this unprecedented time together. In that regard, we expect that you have pressing needs yourselves as you wade through these challenging times. We are ready, as always, to help you with any of your legal needs and you



should feel free to contact any of us, if required. We have noticed that there are a number of similar issues that are arising in our client's businesses and workplaces.

For example:

Is this crisis a "force majeure" event, and is it possible to cancel or terminate contracts during this crisis? Can we get a discount on the rent we are paying to our landlord? What are our rights and obligations as a landlord? Can we require an employee to advise if he or she has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or in close contact with someone who has? What options do we have in our by-laws or under the law to hold shareholder meetings, other than in person? We are reducing hours or temporarily closing - what type of notification do we have to give to our funders, shareholders and other stakeholders in our business? What is the impact on my business of a declaration by the provincial or federal government of a state of emergency? We are reducing hours or temporarily closing - what are the requirements and obligations with respect to our employees and independent contractors? Are my employees and independent contractors eligible for Employment Insurance benefits during this time? Does our "business interruption" provision apply in our policy of insurance? What are the changes made by CRA in the tax filing deadlines?

To further assist our valued clients during these difficult times, we have also launched a COVID-19 Resource Centre, which includes complimentary articles and alerts related to the pandemic, as well as a list of trusted and reputable links.

If we can assist you with any of the above or deal with any other issues you are dealing with, we are ready to assist.

Take care and stay well,

Keith LaBossiere,
CEO & Managing Partner

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this article. The authors are not able to provide free legal advice. If you are seeking advice on specific matters, please contact Keith LaBossiere, CEO & Managing Partner at kdl@tdslaw.com, or 204.934.2587. Please be aware that any unsolicited information sent to the author(s) cannot be considered to be solicitor-client privileged.

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