Federation of Law Societies of Canada

Fédération des ordres professionnels de juristes du Canada

Model Code of Professional Conduct

NOTE: THE 2016 AMENDMENTS TO THE MODEL CODE ARE TRACKED IN RED IN THIS DOCUMENT

As amended ~~October 10, 2014~~ March 10, 2016

[…]

PREFACE

One of the hallmarks of a free and democratic ~~civilized~~ society is the Rule of Law. Its importance is manifested in every legal activity in which citizens engage, from the sale of real property to the prosecution of murder to international trade. As participants in a justice system that advances the Rule of Law, lawyers hold a unique and privileged position in society. Self-regulatory powers have been granted to the legal profession on the understanding that the profession will exercise those powers in the public interest. Part of that responsibility is ensuring the appropriate regulation of the professional conduct of lawyers. Members of the legal profession who draft, argue, interpret and challenge the law of the land can attest to the robust legal system in Canada. They also acknowledge the public's reliance on the integrity of the people who work within the legal system and the authority exercised by the governing bodies of the profession. While lawyers are consulted for their knowledge and abilities, more is expected of them than forensic acumen. A special ethical responsibility comes with membership in the legal profession. This Code attempts to define and illustrate that responsibility in terms of a lawyer's professional relationships with clients, the Justice system and the profession.

The Code sets out statements of principle followed by exemplary rules and commentaries, which contextualize the principles enunciated. The principles are important statements of the expected standards of ethical conduct for lawyers and inform the more specific guidance in the rules and commentaries. The Code assists in defining ethical practice and in identifying what is questionable ethically. Some sections of the Code are of more general application, and some sections, in addition to providing ethical guidance, may be read as aspirational. The Code in its entirety should be considered a reliable and instructive guide for lawyers that establishes only the minimum standards of professional conduct expected of members of the profession. Some circumstances that raise ethical considerations may be sufficiently unique that the guidance in a rule or commentary may not answer the issue or provide the required direction. In such cases, lawyers should consult with the Law Society, senior practitioners or the courts for guidance.

A breach of the provisions of the Code may or may not be sanctionable. The decision to address a lawyer's conduct through disciplinary action based on a breach of the Code will be made on a case-by-case basis after an assessment of all relevant information. The rules and commentaries are intended to encapsulate the ethical standard for the

practice of law in Canada. A failure to meet this standard may result in a finding that the lawyer has engaged in conduct unbecoming or professional misconduct.

The Code of Conduct was drafted as a national code for Canadian lawyers. It is recognized, however, that regional differences will exist in respect of certain applications of the ethical standards. Lawyers who practise outside their home jurisdiction should find the Code useful in identifying these differences.

The practice of law continues to evolve. Advances in technology, changes in the culture of those accessing legal services and the economics associated with practising law will continue to present challenges to lawyers. The ethical guidance provided to lawyers by their regulators should be responsive to this evolution. Rules of conduct should assist, not hinder, lawyers in providing legal services to the public in a way that ensures the public interest is protected. This calls for a framework based on ethical principles that, at the highest level, are immutable, and a profession that dedicates itself to practise according to the standards of competence, honesty and loyalty. The Law Society intends and hopes that this Code will be of assistance in achieving these goals.

[…]

3.2 QUALITY OF SERVICE

Quality of Service

3.2-1 A lawyer has a duty to provide courteous, thorough and prompt service to clients. The quality of service required of a lawyer is service that is competent, timely, conscientious, diligent, efficient and civil.

Commentary

[1] This rule should be read and applied in conjunction with section 3.1 regarding competence.

[2] A lawyer has a duty to provide a quality of service at least equal to that which lawyers generally expect of a competent lawyer in a like situation. An ordinarily or otherwise competent lawyer may still occasionally fail to provide an adequate quality of service.

[3] A lawyer has a duty to communicate effectively with the client. What is effective will vary depending on the nature of the retainer, the needs and sophistication of the client and the need for the client to make fully informed decisions and provide instructions.

[4] A lawyer should ensure that matters are attended to within a reasonable time frame. If the lawyer can reasonably foresee undue delay in providing advice or services, the lawyer has a duty to so inform the client, so that the client can make an informed choice about his or her options, such as whether to retain new counsel.

Examples of expected practices

[5] The quality of service to a client may be measured by the extent to which a lawyer maintains certain standards in practice. The following list, which is illustrative and not exhaustive, provides key examples of expected practices in this area:

(a) keeping a client reasonably informed;

(b) answering reasonable requests from a client for information;

(c) responding to a client's telephone calls;

(d) keeping appointments with a client, or providing a timely explanation or apology when unable to keep such an appointment;

(e) taking appropriate steps to do something promised to a client, or informing or explaining to the client when it is not possible to do so;

(f) ensuring, where appropriate, that all instructions are in writing or confirmed in writing;

(g) answering, within a reasonable time, any communication that requires a reply;

(h) ensuring that work is done in a timely manner so that its value to the client is maintained;

(i) providing quality work and giving reasonable attention to the review of documentation to avoid delay and unnecessary costs to correct errors or omissions;

(j) maintaining office staff, facilities and equipment adequate to the lawyer's practice;

(k) informing a client of a proposal of settlement, and explaining the proposal properly;

(l) providing a client with complete and accurate relevant information about a matter;

(m) making a prompt and complete report when the work is finished or, if a final report cannot be made, providing an interim report when one might reasonably be expected;

(n) ~~avoidance of self-induced disability, for example from~~ avoiding the use of intoxicants or drugs~~,~~ that interferes with or prejudices the lawyer's services to the client;

(o) being civil.

[6] A lawyer should meet deadlines, unless the lawyer is able to offer a reasonable explanation and ensure that no prejudice to the client will result. Whether or not a specific deadline applies, a lawyer should be prompt in ~~prosecuting~~ handling a matter, responding to communications and reporting developments to the client. In the absence of developments, contact with the client should be maintained to the extent the client reasonably expects.

[…]

Short-term Summary Legal Services

3.4-2A In rules 3.4-2B to 3.4-2D "Short-term summary legal services" means advice or representation to a client under the auspices of a pro bono or not-for-profit legal services provider with the expectation by the lawyer and the client that the lawyer will not provide continuing legal services in the matter.

3.4-2B A lawyer may provide short-term summary legal services without taking steps to determine whether there is a conflict of interest.

3.4-2C Except with consent of the clients as provided in rule 3.4-2, a lawyer must not provide, or must cease providing short-term summary legal services to a client where the lawyer knows or becomes aware that there is a conflict of interest.

3.4-2D A lawyer who provides short-term summary legal services must take reasonable measures to ensure that no disclosure of the client's confidential information is made to another lawyer in the lawyer's firm.

Commentary

[1] Short-term summary legal service and duty counsel programs are usually offered in circumstances in which it may be difficult to systematically screen for conflicts of interest in a timely way, despite the best efforts and existing practices and procedures of the not-for-profit legal services provider and the lawyers and law firms who provide these services. Performing a full conflicts screening in circumstances in which the short-term summary services described in these rules are being offered can be very challenging given the timelines, volume and logistics of the setting in which the services are provided.

[2] The limited nature of short-term summary legal services significantly reduces the risk of conflicts of interest with other matters being handled by the lawyer's firm. Accordingly, the lawyer is disqualified from acting for a client receiving short-term summary legal services only if the lawyer has actual knowledge of a conflict of interest between the client receiving short-term summary legal services and an existing client of the lawyer or an existing client of the *pro bono* or not-for-profit legal services provider or between the lawyer and the client receiving short-term summary legal services.

[3] Confidential information obtained by a lawyer providing the services described in Rules 3.4-2A-2D will not be imputed to the lawyers in the lawyer's firm or to non-lawyer partners or associates in a multi-discipline partnership. As such, these individuals may continue to act for another client adverse in interest to the client who is obtaining or has obtained short-term summary legal services, and may act in future for another client adverse in interest to the client who is obtaining or has obtained short-term summary legal services.

[4] In the provision of short-term summary legal services, the lawyer's knowledge

about possible conflicts of interest is based on the lawyer's reasonable recollection and information provided by the client in the ordinary course of consulting with the *pro bono* or not-for-profit legal services provider to receive its services.

[…]

Concurrent Representation with protection of confidential client information

3.4-4 Where there is no dispute among the clients about the matter that is the subject of the proposed representation, two or more lawyers in a law firm may act for current clients with competing interests and may treat information received from each client as confidential and not disclose it to the other clients, provided that:

(a) disclosure of the risks of the lawyers so acting has been made to each client;

(b) the lawyer recommends each client receive independent legal advice, including on the risks of concurrent representation;

(c) the clients each determine that it is in their best interests that the lawyers so act and consent to the concurrent representation;

(d) each client is represented by a different lawyer in the firm;

(e) appropriate screening mechanisms are in place to protect confidential information; and

(f) all lawyers in the law firm withdraw from the representation of all clients in respect of the matter if a dispute that cannot be resolved develops among the clients.

Commentary

[1] This rule provides guidance on concurrent representation, which is permitted in limited circumstances. Concurrent representation is not contrary to the rule prohibiting representation where there is a conflict of interest provided that the clients are fully informed of the risks and understand that if a dispute arises among the clients that cannot be resolved the lawyers may have to withdraw, resulting in potential additional costs.

[2] An example is a law firm acting for a number of sophisticated clients in a matter such as competing bids in a corporate acquisition in which, although the clients' interests are divergent and may conflict, the clients are not in a dispute. Provided that each client is represented by a different lawyer in the firm and there is no real risk that the firm will not be able to properly represent the legal interests of each client, the firm

may represent both even though the subject matter of the retainers is the same. Whether or not a risk of impairment of representation exists is a question of fact.

[3] The basis for the advice described in the rule from both the lawyers involved in the concurrent representation and those giving the required independent legal advice is whether concurrent representation is in the best interests of the clients. Even where all clients consent, the lawyers should not accept a concurrent retainer if the matter is one in which one of the clients is less sophisticated or more vulnerable than the other.

[4] In cases of concurrent representation lawyers should employ, as applicable, the reasonable screening measures to ensure non-disclosure of confidential information within the firm set out in the rule on conflicts from transfer between law firms (see Rule 3.4-2~~0~~6).

[…]

Lawyer Due-diligence for non-lawyer staff

3.4-23 A lawyer or a law firm must exercise due diligence in ensuring that each member and employee of the law firm, and each other person whose services the lawyer or the law firm has retained:

(a) complies with rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-23; and

(b) does not disclose confidential information:

i. of clients of the firm; or

ii. any other law firm in which the person has worked.

Commentary

[1] This rule is intended to regulate lawyers and articled law students who transfer between law firms. It also imposes a general duty on lawyers and law firms to exercise due diligence in the supervision of non-lawyer staff to ensure that they comply with the rule and with the duty not to disclose confidences of clients of the lawyer's firm and confidences of clients of other law firms in which the person has worked.

[2] Certain non-lawyer staff in a law firm routinely have full access to and work extensively on client files. As such, they may possess confidential information about the

client. If these staff move from one law firm to another and the new firm acts for a client opposed in interest to the client on whose files the staff worked, unless measures are taken to screen the staff, it is reasonable to conclude that confidential information may be shared. It is the responsibility of the lawyer/law firm to ensure that staff who may have confidential information that if disclosed, may prejudice the interests of the client of the former firm, have no involvement with and no access to information relating to the relevant client of the new firm.

3.4-24 ***[deleted]***

3.4-25 ***[deleted]***

3.4-26 ***[deleted]***

[…]

5.3 *[deleted]*

~~**5.3 INTERVIEWING WITNESSES**~~

~~Interviewing Witnesses~~

~~**5.3** Subject to the rules on communication with a represented party set out in rules 7.2-4 to 7.2-8, a lawyer may seek information from any potential witness, whether under subpoena or not, but the lawyer must disclose the lawyer's interest and take care not to subvert or suppress any evidence or procure the witness to stay out of the way.~~

5.4 COMMUNICATING WITH WITNESSES

5.4-1 A lawyer may seek information from any potential witness, provided that:

(a) before doing so, the lawyer discloses the lawyer's interest in the matter;

(b) the lawyer does not encourage the witness to suppress evidence or to refrain from providing information to other parties in the matter; and

(c) the lawyer observes Rules 7.2-6 to 7.2-8 on communicating with represented parties.

Commentary

[1] There is generally no property in a witness. To achieve the truth-seeking goal of the justice system, any person having information relevant to a proceeding should be free to impart it voluntarily and in the absence of improper influence. A lawyer should not advise a potential witness to refrain from speaking to other parties except as provided in this rule.

Expert witnesses

[2] Special considerations may apply when communicating with expert witnesses. Depending on the area of practice and the jurisdiction, there may be legal or procedural limitations on the permissible scope of a lawyer's contact with an expert witness, including the application of litigation or solicitor-client privilege. This may include notifying an opposing party's counsel prior to communicating with that party's expert witness.

Conduct during Witness Preparation and Testimony

5.4-2 A lawyer must not influence a witness or potential witness to give evidence that is false, misleading or evasive.

5.4-3 A lawyer involved in a proceeding must not obstruct an examination or cross-examination in any manner.

Commentary

General Principles

[1] The ethical duty against improperly influencing a witness or a potential witness applies at all stages of a proceeding, including while preparing a witness to give evidence or to make a statement, and during testimony under oath or affirmation. The role of an advocate is to assist the witness in bringing forth the evidence in a manner that ensures fair and accurate comprehension by the tribunal and opposing parties.

[2] A lawyer may prepare a witness, for discovery and for appearances before tribunals, by discussing courtroom and questioning procedures and the issues in the case, reviewing facts, refreshing memory, and by discussing admissions, choice of words and demeanour. It is, however, improper to direct or encourage a witness to misstate or misrepresent the facts or to give evidence that is intentionally evasive or vague.

Communicating with Witnesses Under Oath or Affirmation

[3] During any witness testimony under oath or affirmation, a lawyer should not engage in conduct designed to improperly influence the witness' evidence.

[4] The ability of a lawyer to communicate with a witness at a specific stage of a proceeding will be influenced by the practice, procedures or directions of the relevant

tribunal, and may be modified by agreement of counsel with the approval of the tribunal. Lawyers should become familiar with the rules and practices of the relevant tribunal governing communication with witnesses during examination-in-chief and cross-examination, and prior to or during re-examination.

[5] A lawyer may communicate with a witness during examination-in-chief. However, there may be local exceptions to this practice.

[6] It is generally accepted that a lawyer is not permitted to communicate with the witness during cross-examination except with leave of the tribunal or with the agreement of counsel. The opportunity to conduct a full-ranging and uninterrupted cross-examination is fundamental to the adversarial system. It is counterbalanced by an opposing advocate's ability to ensure clarity of testimony through initial briefing, direct examination and re-examination of that lawyer's witnesses. There is therefore no justification for obstruction of cross-examination by unreasonable interruptions, repeated objections to proper questions, attempts to have the witness change or tailor evidence, or other similar conduct while the examination is ongoing.

[7] A lawyer should seek approval from the tribunal before speaking with a witness after cross-examination and before re-examination.

Discoveries and Other Examinations

[8] Rule 5.4 also applies to examinations under oath or affirmation that are not before a tribunal including examinations for discovery, examinations on affidavits and examinations in aid of execution. Lawyers should scrupulously avoid any attempts to influence witness testimony, particularly as the tribunal is unable to directly monitor compliance. This rule is not intended to prevent discussions or consultations that are necessary to fulfil undertakings given during such examinations.

~~**5.4 COMMUNICATING WITH WITNESSES**~~

~~**5.4-1** A lawyer may seek information from any potential witness, provided that:~~

- ~~before doing so, the lawyer discloses the lawyer's interest in the matter;~~
- ~~the lawyer does not encourage the witness to suppress evidence or to refrain from providing information to other parties in the matter; and~~

- the lawyer observes Rules 7.2-6 to 7.2-8 on communicating with represented parties.

Commentary

[1] There is generally no property in a witness. To achieve the truth-seeking goal of the justice system, any person having information relevant to a proceeding should be free to impart it voluntarily and in the absence of improper influence. A lawyer should not advise a potential witness to refrain from speaking to other parties except as provided in these rules.

Conduct during Witness Preparation and Testimony

5.4-2 A lawyer must not influence a witness or potential witness to give evidence that is false, misleading or evasive.

5.4-3 A lawyer involved in a proceeding must not obstruct an examination or cross-examination in any manner.

Commentary

General Principles

[1] The ethical duty against improperly influencing a witness or a potential witness applies at all stages of a proceeding, including while preparing a witness to give evidence or to make a statement, and during testimony under oath or affirmation. The role of an advocate is to assist the witness in bringing forth the evidence in a manner that ensures fair and accurate comprehension by the tribunal and opposing parties.

[2] A lawyer may prepare a witness, for discovery and for appearances before tribunals, by reviewing facts, refreshing memory, and by discussing admissions, choice of words and demeanour. It is, however, improper to direct or encourage a witness to misstate or misrepresent the facts or to give evidence that is intentionally evasive or vague.

Communicating with Witnesses Under Oath or Affirmation

[3] During any witness testimony under oath or affirmation, a lawyer should not

engage in conduct designed to improperly influence the witness' evidence.

[4] The ability of a lawyer to communicate with a witness at a specific stage of a proceeding will be influenced by the practice, procedures or directions of the relevant tribunal, and may be modified by agreement of counsel with the approval of the tribunal. Lawyers should become familiar with the rules and practices of the relevant tribunal governing communication with witnesses during examination-in-chief and cross-examination, and prior to or during re-examination.

[5] A lawyer may communicate with a witness during examination-in-chief. However, there may be local exceptions to this practice.

[6] It is generally accepted that a lawyer is not permitted to communicate with the witness during cross-examination except with leave of the tribunal or with the agreement of counsel. The opportunity to conduct a full-ranging and uninterrupted cross-examination is fundamental to the adversarial system. It is counterbalanced by an opposing advocate's ability to ensure clarity of testimony through initial briefing, direct examination and re-examination of that lawyer's witnesses. There is therefore no justification for obstruction of cross-examination by unreasonable interruptions, repeated objections to proper questions, attempts to have the witness change or tailor evidence, or other similar conduct while the examination is ongoing.

[7] A lawyer should seek approval from the tribunal before speaking with a witness after cross-examination and before re-examination.

Discoveries and Other Examinations

[8] Rule 5.4 also applies to examinations under oath or affirmation that are not before a tribunal including examinations for discovery, examinations on affidavits and examinations in aid of execution. Lawyers should scrupulously avoid any attempts to influence witness testimony, particularly as the tribunal is unable to directly monitor compliance. This rule is not intended to prevent discussions or consultations that are necessary to fulfil undertakings given during such examinations.

Expert witnesses

[9] Special considerations may apply when communicating with expert witnesses. Depending on the area of practice and the jurisdiction, there may be legal or procedural limitations on the permissible scope of a lawyer's contact with an expert witness, including the application of litigation or solicitor-client privilege. It may be advisable to notify an opposing party's counsel prior to communicating with that party's expert witness.

5.4 COMMUNICATION WITH WITNESSES GIVING EVIDENCE

5.4-1 A lawyer involved in a proceeding must not, during an examination and a cross-examination, obstruct the examination and the cross-examination in any manner.

Communication with Witnesses Giving Evidence

5.4-2 Subject to the direction of the tribunal, a lawyer must observe the following rules respecting communication with witnesses giving evidence:

during examination-in-chief, the examining lawyer may discuss with the witness any matter;

during cross-examination of the lawyer's own witness, the lawyer must not discuss with the witness the evidence given in chief or relating to any matter introduced or touched on during the examination-in-chief;

upon the conclusion of cross-examination and during any re-examination the lawyer may discuss with the witness any matter.

Commentary

[1] The application of these rules may be determined by the practice and procedures of the tribunal and may be modified by agreement of counsel.

[2] The term "cross-examination" means the examination of a witness or party adverse in interest to the client of the lawyer conducting the examination. It therefore includes an examination for discovery, examination on affidavit or examination in aid of execution. The rule prohibits obstruction or improper discussion by any lawyer involved in a proceeding and not just by the lawyer whose witness is under cross-examination.

[3] The opportunity to conduct a fully ranging and uninterrupted cross-examination is fundamental to the adversarial system. It is counterbalanced by an opposing advocate's ability to ensure clarity of testimony through initial briefing, direct examination and re-examination of that lawyer's witnesses. There is therefore no justification for obstruction of cross-examination by unreasonable interruptions, repeated objection to proper questions, attempts to have the witness change or tailor evidence, or other similar conduct while the examination is ongoing.

[4] While any testimony-related discussion is generally prohibited during breaks, there are two qualifications to the rule as it relates to examinations for discovery. First, if the examination for discovery of a witness is adjourned for longer than one week, it is permissible for counsel to discuss with the witness all issues arising out of the matter, including evidence that has been or is to be given, provided that opposing counsel has been advised of the lawyer's intention to do so. If opposing counsel objects, the matter must be resolved by the court having jurisdiction over the proceedings.

[5] This rule is not intended to prevent discussions or consultations that are necessary to fulfill undertakings given during an examination for discovery. However, under no circumstances are such qualifications to be interpreted as permitting improper briefing such as that described in this rule.

[6] This rule is not intended to prohibit a lawyer with no prior involvement in the proceedings, who has been retained by a witness under cross-examination, from consulting with the lawyer's new client.

[7] This rule applies with necessary modifications to examinations out of court.

[…]

Role of Mediator

5.7-1 A lawyer who acts as a mediator must, at the outset of the mediation, ensure that the parties to it understand fully that:

(a) the lawyer is not acting as a lawyer for either party but, as mediator, is acting to assist the parties to resolve the matters in issue; and

(b) although communications pertaining to and arising out of the mediation process may be covered by some other common law privilege, they will not be covered by solicitor-client privilege.

[…]

Duty to Report ~~Misconduct~~

7.1-3 Unless to do so would be unlawful or would involve a breach of solicitor-client privilege, a lawyer must report to the Society:

(a) the misappropriation or misapplication of trust monies;

(b) the abandonment of a law practice;

(c) participation in criminal activity related to a lawyer's practice;

~~(d) the mental instability of a lawyer of such a nature that the lawyer's clients are likely to be materially prejudiced;~~

(d) conduct that raises a substantial question as to another lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or competency as a lawyer; ~~and~~

(e) conduct that raises a substantial question about the lawyer's capacity to provide professional services; and

~~(e)~~

(f) any ~~other~~ situation in which a lawyer's clients are likely to be materially prejudiced.

Commentary

[1] Unless a lawyer who departs from proper professional conduct or competence is checked at an early stage, loss or damage to clients or others may ensue. Evidence of minor breaches may, on investigation, disclose a more serious situation or may indicate the commencement of a course of conduct that may lead to serious breaches in the future. It is, therefore, proper (unless it is privileged or otherwise unlawful) for a lawyer to report to the Society any instance involving a breach of these rules. If a lawyer is in any doubt whether a report should be made, the lawyer should consider seeking the advice of the Society directly or indirectly (e.g., through another lawyer). In all cases, the report must be made without malice or ulterior motive.

[2] Nothing in this ~~paragraph~~ rule is meant to interfere with the lawyer-client relationship. ~~In all cases, the report must be made without malice or ulterior motive.~~

[3] ~~Often, i~~ Instances of ~~improper~~ conduct described in this rule can arise from a variety of stressors, physical, mental or emotional conditions, disorders or addictions. ~~, mental or family disturbances or substance abuse.~~ Lawyers who face such challenges ~~suffer from such problems~~ should be encouraged by other lawyers to seek assistance as early as possible.

[4] The Society supports professional support groups, such as the [Lawyers' Assistance Program and the Risk and Practice Management Program], in their commitment to the provision of confidential counselling. Therefore, lawyers providing peer support ~~acting in the capacity of counsellors~~ for professional support groups will not be called by the Society or by any investigation committee to testify at any conduct, capacity or competence hearing without the consent of the lawyer from whom the information was received. Notwithstanding the above, a lawyer counselling another lawyer has an ethical obligation to report to the Society upon learning that the lawyer being assisted is engaging in ~~or may in the future engage in~~ serious misconduct or in criminal activity related to the lawyer's practice or there is a substantial risk that the lawyer may in the future engage in such conduct or activity. The Society cannot countenance such conduct regardless of a lawyer's attempts at rehabilitation.

[…]

7.8 ERRORS AND OMISSIONS

Informing Client of Errors or Omissions

7.8- 1 When, in connection with a matter for which a lawyer is responsible, a lawyer discovers an error or omission that is or may be damaging to the client and that cannot be rectified readily, the lawyer must:

(a) promptly inform the client of the error or omission without admitting legal liability;

(b) recommend that the client obtain independent legal advice concerning the matter, including any rights the client may have arising from the error or omission; and

(c) advise the client of the possibility that, in the circumstances, the lawyer may no longer be able to act for the client.

Commentary

[1] In addition to the obligations imposed by Rule 7.8-1, the lawyer has the contractual obligation to report to the lawyer's insurer. Rule 7.8-2 also imposes an ethical duty to report to the insurer(s). Rule 7.8-1 does not relieve a lawyer from the duty to report to the insurer or other indemnitor even if the lawyer attempts to rectify.

Notice of Claim

7.8-2 A lawyer must give prompt notice of any circumstance that ~~the lawyer~~ may ~~reasonably expect to~~ give rise to a claim to an insurer or other indemnitor so that the client's protection from that source will not be prejudiced.

Commentary

[1] Under the lawyer's compulsory professional liability insurance policy, a lawyer is contractually required to give written notice to the insurer immediately after the lawyer becomes aware of any actual or alleged error or any circumstances that could give rise to a claim. The duty to report is also an ethical duty which is imposed on the lawyer to protect clients. The duty to report arises whether or not the lawyer considers the claim to have merit.

[2~~1~~] The introduction of compulsory insurance has imposed additional obligations upon a lawyer, but these obligations must not impair the relationship and duties of the lawyer to the client. A lawyer has an obligation to comply with the provisions of the policy of insurance. The insurer's rights must be preserved, and the lawyer, in informing the client of an error or omission, should be careful not to prejudice any rights of indemnity

that either of them may have under an insurance, client's protection or indemnity plan, or otherwise. There may well be occasions when a lawyer believes that certain actions or a failure to take action have made the lawyer liable for damages to the client when, in reality, no liability exists. Further, in every case, a careful assessment will have to be made of the client's damages arising from a lawyer's negligence.

[…]

Federation of Law Societies of Canada

Fédération des ordres professionnels de juristes du Canada

Model Code of Professional Conduct

As amended March 10, 2016

[…]

PREFACE

One of the hallmarks of a free and democratic ~~civilized~~ society is the Rule of Law. Its importance is manifested in every legal activity in which citizens engage, from the sale of real property to the prosecution of murder to international trade. As participants in a justice system that advances the Rule of Law, lawyers hold a unique and privileged position in society. Self-regulatory powers have been granted to the legal profession on the understanding that the profession will exercise those powers in the public interest. Part of that responsibility is ensuring the appropriate regulation of the professional conduct of lawyers. Members of the legal profession who draft, argue, interpret and challenge the law of the land can attest to the robust legal system in Canada. They also acknowledge the public's reliance on the integrity of the people who work within the legal system and the authority exercised by the governing bodies of the profession. While lawyers are consulted for their knowledge and abilities, more is expected of them than forensic acumen. A special ethical responsibility comes with membership in the legal profession. This Code attempts to define and illustrate that responsibility in terms of a lawyer's professional relationships with clients, the Justice system and the profession.

The Code sets out statements of principle followed by exemplary rules and commentaries, which contextualize the principles enunciated. The principles are important statements of the expected standards of ethical conduct for lawyers and inform the more specific guidance in the rules and commentaries. The Code assists in defining ethical practice and in identifying what is questionable ethically. Some sections of the Code are of more general application, and some sections, in addition to providing ethical guidance, may be read as aspirational. The Code in its entirety should be considered a reliable and instructive guide for lawyers that establishes only the minimum standards of professional conduct expected of members of the profession. Some circumstances that raise ethical considerations may be sufficiently unique that the guidance in a rule or commentary may not answer the issue or provide the required direction. In such cases, lawyers should consult with the Law Society, senior practitioners or the courts for guidance.

A breach of the provisions of the Code may or may not be sanctionable. The decision to address a lawyer's conduct through disciplinary action based on a breach of the Code will be made on a case-by-case basis after an assessment of all relevant information. The rules and commentaries are intended to encapsulate the ethical standard for the

practice of law in Canada. A failure to meet this standard may result in a finding that the lawyer has engaged in conduct unbecoming or professional misconduct.

The Code of Conduct was drafted as a national code for Canadian lawyers. It is recognized, however, that regional differences will exist in respect of certain applications of the ethical standards. Lawyers who practise outside their home jurisdiction should find the Code useful in identifying these differences.

The practice of law continues to evolve. Advances in technology, changes in the culture of those accessing legal services and the economics associated with practising law will continue to present challenges to lawyers. The ethical guidance provided to lawyers by their regulators should be responsive to this evolution. Rules of conduct should assist, not hinder, lawyers in providing legal services to the public in a way that ensures the public interest is protected. This calls for a framework based on ethical principles that, at the highest level, are immutable, and a profession that dedicates itself to practise according to the standards of competence, honesty and loyalty. The Law Society intends and hopes that this Code will be of assistance in achieving these goals.

[…]

3.2 QUALITY OF SERVICE

Quality of Service

3.2-1 A lawyer has a duty to provide courteous, thorough and prompt service to clients. The quality of service required of a lawyer is service that is competent, timely, conscientious, diligent, efficient and civil.

Commentary

[1] This rule should be read and applied in conjunction with section 3.1 regarding competence.

[2] A lawyer has a duty to provide a quality of service at least equal to that which lawyers generally expect of a competent lawyer in a like situation. An ordinarily or otherwise competent lawyer may still occasionally fail to provide an adequate quality of service.

[3] A lawyer has a duty to communicate effectively with the client. What is effective will vary depending on the nature of the retainer, the needs and sophistication of the client and the need for the client to make fully informed decisions and provide instructions.

[4] A lawyer should ensure that matters are attended to within a reasonable time frame. If the lawyer can reasonably foresee undue delay in providing advice or services, the lawyer has a duty to so inform the client, so that the client can make an informed choice about his or her options, such as whether to retain new counsel.

Examples of expected practices

[5] The quality of service to a client may be measured by the extent to which a lawyer maintains certain standards in practice. The following list, which is illustrative and not exhaustive, provides key examples of expected practices in this area:

(a) keeping a client reasonably informed;

(b) answering reasonable requests from a client for information;

(c) responding to a client's telephone calls;

(d) keeping appointments with a client, or providing a timely explanation or apology when unable to keep such an appointment;

(e) taking appropriate steps to do something promised to a client, or informing or explaining to the client when it is not possible to do so;

(f) ensuring, where appropriate, that all instructions are in writing or confirmed in writing;

(g) answering, within a reasonable time, any communication that requires a reply;

(h) ensuring that work is done in a timely manner so that its value to the client is maintained;

(i) providing quality work and giving reasonable attention to the review of documentation to avoid delay and unnecessary costs to correct errors or omissions;

(j) maintaining office staff, facilities and equipment adequate to the lawyer's practice;

(k) informing a client of a proposal of settlement, and explaining the proposal properly;

(l) providing a client with complete and accurate relevant information about a matter;

(m) making a prompt and complete report when the work is finished or, if a final report cannot be made, providing an interim report when one might reasonably be expected;

(n) ~~avoidance of self-induced disability, for example from~~ avoiding the use of intoxicants or drugs~~,~~ that interferes with or prejudices the lawyer's services to the client;

(o) being civil.

[6] A lawyer should meet deadlines, unless the lawyer is able to offer a reasonable explanation and ensure that no prejudice to the client will result. Whether or not a specific deadline applies, a lawyer should be prompt in ~~prosecuting~~ handling a matter, responding to communications and reporting developments to the client. In the absence of developments, contact with the client should be maintained to the extent the client reasonably expects.

[…]

Short-term Summary Legal Services

3.4-2A In rules 3.4-2B to 3.4-2D "Short-term summary legal services" means advice or representation to a client under the auspices of a pro bono or not-for-profit legal services provider with the expectation by the lawyer and the client that the lawyer will not provide continuing legal services in the matter.

3.4-2B A lawyer may provide short-term summary legal services without taking steps to determine whether there is a conflict of interest.

3.4-2C Except with consent of the clients as provided in rule 3.4-2, a lawyer must not provide, or must cease providing short-term summary legal services to a client where the lawyer knows or becomes aware that there is a conflict of interest.

3.4-2D A lawyer who provides short-term summary legal services must take reasonable measures to ensure that no disclosure of the client's confidential information is made to another lawyer in the lawyer's firm.

Commentary

[1] Short-term summary legal service and duty counsel programs are usually offered in circumstances in which it may be difficult to systematically screen for conflicts of interest in a timely way, despite the best efforts and existing practices and procedures of the not-for-profit legal services provider and the lawyers and law firms who provide these services. Performing a full conflicts screening in circumstances in which the short-term summary services described in these rules are being offered can be very challenging given the timelines, volume and logistics of the setting in which the services are provided.

[2] The limited nature of short-term summary legal services significantly reduces the risk of conflicts of interest with other matters being handled by the lawyer's firm. Accordingly, the lawyer is disqualified from acting for a client receiving short-term summary legal services only if the lawyer has actual knowledge of a conflict of interest between the client receiving short-term summary legal services and an existing client of the lawyer or an existing client of the *pro bono* or not-for-profit legal services provider or between the lawyer and the client receiving short-term summary legal services.

[3] Confidential information obtained by a lawyer providing the services described in Rules 3.4-2A-2D will not be imputed to the lawyers in the lawyer's firm or to non-lawyer partners or associates in a multi-discipline partnership. As such, these individuals may continue to act for another client adverse in interest to the client who is obtaining or has obtained short-term summary legal services, and may act in future for another client adverse in interest to the client who is obtaining or has obtained short-term summary legal services.

[4] In the provision of short-term summary legal services, the lawyer's knowledge

about possible conflicts of interest is based on the lawyer's reasonable recollection and information provided by the client in the ordinary course of consulting with the *pro bono* or not-for-profit legal services provider to receive its services.

[…]

Concurrent Representation with protection of confidential client information

3.4-4 Where there is no dispute among the clients about the matter that is the subject of the proposed representation, two or more lawyers in a law firm may act for current clients with competing interests and may treat information received from each client as confidential and not disclose it to the other clients, provided that:

(a) disclosure of the risks of the lawyers so acting has been made to each client;

(b) the lawyer recommends each client receive independent legal advice, including on the risks of concurrent representation;

(c) the clients each determine that it is in their best interests that the lawyers so act and consent to the concurrent representation;

(d) each client is represented by a different lawyer in the firm;

(e) appropriate screening mechanisms are in place to protect confidential information; and

(f) all lawyers in the law firm withdraw from the representation of all clients in respect of the matter if a dispute that cannot be resolved develops among the clients.

Commentary

[1] This rule provides guidance on concurrent representation, which is permitted in limited circumstances. Concurrent representation is not contrary to the rule prohibiting representation where there is a conflict of interest provided that the clients are fully informed of the risks and understand that if a dispute arises among the clients that cannot be resolved the lawyers may have to withdraw, resulting in potential additional costs.

[2] An example is a law firm acting for a number of sophisticated clients in a matter such as competing bids in a corporate acquisition in which, although the clients' interests are divergent and may conflict, the clients are not in a dispute. Provided that each client is represented by a different lawyer in the firm and there is no real risk that the firm will not be able to properly represent the legal interests of each client, the firm

may represent both even though the subject matter of the retainers is the same. Whether or not a risk of impairment of representation exists is a question of fact.

[3] The basis for the advice described in the rule from both the lawyers involved in the concurrent representation and those giving the required independent legal advice is whether concurrent representation is in the best interests of the clients. Even where all clients consent, the lawyers should not accept a concurrent retainer if the matter is one in which one of the clients is less sophisticated or more vulnerable than the other.

[4] In cases of concurrent representation lawyers should employ, as applicable, the reasonable screening measures to ensure non-disclosure of confidential information within the firm set out in the rule on conflicts from transfer between law firms (see Rule 3.4-2~~0~~6).

[…]

Lawyer Due-diligence for non-lawyer staff

3.4-23 A lawyer or a law firm must exercise due diligence in ensuring that each member and employee of the law firm, and each other person whose services the lawyer or the law firm has retained:

(a) complies with rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-23; and

(b) does not disclose confidential information:

i. of clients of the firm; or

ii. any other law firm in which the person has worked.

Commentary

[1] This rule is intended to regulate lawyers and articled law students who transfer between law firms. It also imposes a general duty on lawyers and law firms to exercise due diligence in the supervision of non-lawyer staff to ensure that they comply with the rule and with the duty not to disclose confidences of clients of the lawyer's firm and confidences of clients of other law firms in which the person has worked.

[2] Certain non-lawyer staff in a law firm routinely have full access to and work extensively on client files. As such, they may possess confidential information about the

client. If these staff move from one law firm to another and the new firm acts for a client opposed in interest to the client on whose files the staff worked, unless measures are taken to screen the staff, it is reasonable to conclude that confidential information may be shared. It is the responsibility of the lawyer/law firm to ensure that staff who may have confidential information that if disclosed, may prejudice the interests of the client of the former firm, have no involvement with and no access to information relating to the relevant client of the new firm.

3.4-24 ***[deleted]***

3.4-25 ***[deleted]***

3.4-26 ***[deleted]***

[…]

5.3 *[deleted]*

~~**5.3 INTERVIEWING WITNESSES**~~

~~Interviewing Witnesses~~

~~**5.3** Subject to the rules on communication with a represented party set out in rules 7.2-4 to 7.2-8, a lawyer may seek information from any potential witness, whether under subpoena or not, but the lawyer must disclose the lawyer's interest and take care not to subvert or suppress any evidence or procure the witness to stay out of the way.~~

5.4 COMMUNICATING WITH WITNESSES

5.4-1 A lawyer may seek information from any potential witness, provided that:

(a) before doing so, the lawyer discloses the lawyer's interest in the matter;

(b) the lawyer does not encourage the witness to suppress evidence or to refrain from providing information to other parties in the matter; and

(c) the lawyer observes Rules 7.2-6 to 7.2-8 on communicating with represented parties.

Commentary

[1] There is generally no property in a witness. To achieve the truth-seeking goal of the justice system, any person having information relevant to a proceeding should be free to impart it voluntarily and in the absence of improper influence. A lawyer should not advise a potential witness to refrain from speaking to other parties except as provided in this rule.

Expert witnesses

[2] Special considerations may apply when communicating with expert witnesses. Depending on the area of practice and the jurisdiction, there may be legal or procedural limitations on the permissible scope of a lawyer's contact with an expert witness, including the application of litigation or solicitor-client privilege. This may include notifying an opposing party's counsel prior to communicating with that party's expert witness.

Conduct during Witness Preparation and Testimony

5.4-2 A lawyer must not influence a witness or potential witness to give evidence that is false, misleading or evasive.

5.4-3 A lawyer involved in a proceeding must not obstruct an examination or cross-examination in any manner.

Commentary

General Principles

[1] The ethical duty against improperly influencing a witness or a potential witness applies at all stages of a proceeding, including while preparing a witness to give evidence or to make a statement, and during testimony under oath or affirmation. The role of an advocate is to assist the witness in bringing forth the evidence in a manner that ensures fair and accurate comprehension by the tribunal and opposing parties.

[2] A lawyer may prepare a witness, for discovery and for appearances before tribunals, by discussing courtroom and questioning procedures and the issues in the case, reviewing facts, refreshing memory, and by discussing admissions, choice of words and demeanour. It is, however, improper to direct or encourage a witness to misstate or misrepresent the facts or to give evidence that is intentionally evasive or vague.

Communicating with Witnesses Under Oath or Affirmation

[3] During any witness testimony under oath or affirmation, a lawyer should not engage in conduct designed to improperly influence the witness' evidence.

[4] The ability of a lawyer to communicate with a witness at a specific stage of a proceeding will be influenced by the practice, procedures or directions of the relevant

tribunal, and may be modified by agreement of counsel with the approval of the tribunal. Lawyers should become familiar with the rules and practices of the relevant tribunal governing communication with witnesses during examination-in-chief and cross-examination, and prior to or during re-examination.

[5] A lawyer may communicate with a witness during examination-in-chief. However, there may be local exceptions to this practice.

[6] It is generally accepted that a lawyer is not permitted to communicate with the witness during cross-examination except with leave of the tribunal or with the agreement of counsel. The opportunity to conduct a full-ranging and uninterrupted cross-examination is fundamental to the adversarial system. It is counterbalanced by an opposing advocate's ability to ensure clarity of testimony through initial briefing, direct examination and re-examination of that lawyer's witnesses. There is therefore no justification for obstruction of cross-examination by unreasonable interruptions, repeated objections to proper questions, attempts to have the witness change or tailor evidence, or other similar conduct while the examination is ongoing.

[7] A lawyer should seek approval from the tribunal before speaking with a witness after cross-examination and before re-examination.

Discoveries and Other Examinations

[8] Rule 5.4 also applies to examinations under oath or affirmation that are not before a tribunal including examinations for discovery, examinations on affidavits and examinations in aid of execution. Lawyers should scrupulously avoid any attempts to influence witness testimony, particularly as the tribunal is unable to directly monitor compliance. This rule is not intended to prevent discussions or consultations that are necessary to fulfil undertakings given during such examinations.

~~**5.4 COMMUNICATING WITH WITNESSES**~~

~~**5.4-1** A lawyer may seek information from any potential witness, provided that:~~

- ~~before doing so, the lawyer discloses the lawyer's interest in the matter;~~
- ~~the lawyer does not encourage the witness to suppress evidence or to refrain from providing information to other parties in the matter; and~~

- the lawyer observes Rules 7.2-6 to 7.2-8 on communicating with represented parties.

Commentary

[1] There is generally no property in a witness. To achieve the truth-seeking goal of the justice system, any person having information relevant to a proceeding should be free to impart it voluntarily and in the absence of improper influence. A lawyer should not advise a potential witness to refrain from speaking to other parties except as provided in these rules.

Conduct during Witness Preparation and Testimony

5.4-2 A lawyer must not influence a witness or potential witness to give evidence that is false, misleading or evasive.

5.4-3 A lawyer involved in a proceeding must not obstruct an examination or cross-examination in any manner.

Commentary

General Principles

[1] The ethical duty against improperly influencing a witness or a potential witness applies at all stages of a proceeding, including while preparing a witness to give evidence or to make a statement, and during testimony under oath or affirmation. The role of an advocate is to assist the witness in bringing forth the evidence in a manner that ensures fair and accurate comprehension by the tribunal and opposing parties.

[2] A lawyer may prepare a witness, for discovery and for appearances before tribunals, by reviewing facts, refreshing memory, and by discussing admissions, choice of words and demeanour. It is, however, improper to direct or encourage a witness to misstate or misrepresent the facts or to give evidence that is intentionally evasive or vague.

Communicating with Witnesses Under Oath or Affirmation

[3] During any witness testimony under oath or affirmation, a lawyer should not

engage in conduct designed to improperly influence the witness' evidence.

[4] The ability of a lawyer to communicate with a witness at a specific stage of a proceeding will be influenced by the practice, procedures or directions of the relevant tribunal, and may be modified by agreement of counsel with the approval of the tribunal. Lawyers should become familiar with the rules and practices of the relevant tribunal governing communication with witnesses during examination-in-chief and cross-examination, and prior to or during re-examination.

[5] A lawyer may communicate with a witness during examination-in-chief. However, there may be local exceptions to this practice.

[6] It is generally accepted that a lawyer is not permitted to communicate with the witness during cross-examination except with leave of the tribunal or with the agreement of counsel. The opportunity to conduct a full-ranging and uninterrupted cross-examination is fundamental to the adversarial system. It is counterbalanced by an opposing advocate's ability to ensure clarity of testimony through initial briefing, direct examination and re-examination of that lawyer's witnesses. There is therefore no justification for obstruction of cross-examination by unreasonable interruptions, repeated objections to proper questions, attempts to have the witness change or tailor evidence, or other similar conduct while the examination is ongoing.

[7] A lawyer should seek approval from the tribunal before speaking with a witness after cross-examination and before re-examination.

Discoveries and Other Examinations

[8] Rule 5.4 also applies to examinations under oath or affirmation that are not before a tribunal including examinations for discovery, examinations on affidavits and examinations in aid of execution. Lawyers should scrupulously avoid any attempts to influence witness testimony, particularly as the tribunal is unable to directly monitor compliance. This rule is not intended to prevent discussions or consultations that are necessary to fulfil undertakings given during such examinations.

Expert witnesses

[9] Special considerations may apply when communicating with expert witnesses. Depending on the area of practice and the jurisdiction, there may be legal or procedural limitations on the permissible scope of a lawyer's contact with an expert witness, including the application of litigation or solicitor-client privilege. It may be advisable to notify an opposing party's counsel prior to communicating with that party's expert witness.

5.4 COMMUNICATION WITH WITNESSES GIVING EVIDENCE

5.4-1 A lawyer involved in a proceeding must not, during an examination and a cross-examination, obstruct the examination and the cross-examination in any manner.

Communication with Witnesses Giving Evidence

5.4-2 Subject to the direction of the tribunal, a lawyer must observe the following rules respecting communication with witnesses giving evidence:

during examination-in-chief, the examining lawyer may discuss with the witness any matter;

during cross-examination of the lawyer's own witness, the lawyer must not discuss with the witness the evidence given in chief or relating to any matter introduced or touched on during the examination-in-chief;

upon the conclusion of cross-examination and during any re-examination the lawyer may discuss with the witness any matter.

Commentary

[1] The application of these rules may be determined by the practice and procedures of the tribunal and may be modified by agreement of counsel.

[2] The term "cross-examination" means the examination of a witness or party adverse in interest to the client of the lawyer conducting the examination. It therefore includes an examination for discovery, examination on affidavit or examination in aid of execution. The rule prohibits obstruction or improper discussion by any lawyer involved in a proceeding and not just by the lawyer whose witness is under cross-examination.

[3] The opportunity to conduct a fully ranging and uninterrupted cross-examination is fundamental to the adversarial system. It is counterbalanced by an opposing advocate's ability to ensure clarity of testimony through initial briefing, direct examination and re-examination of that lawyer's witnesses. There is therefore no justification for obstruction of cross-examination by unreasonable interruptions, repeated objection to proper questions, attempts to have the witness change or tailor evidence, or other similar conduct while the examination is ongoing.

[4] While any testimony-related discussion is generally prohibited during breaks, there are two qualifications to the rule as it relates to examinations for discovery. First, if the examination for discovery of a witness is adjourned for longer than one week, it is permissible for counsel to discuss with the witness all issues arising out of the matter, including evidence that has been or is to be given, provided that opposing counsel has been advised of the lawyer's intention to do so. If opposing counsel objects, the matter must be resolved by the court having jurisdiction over the proceedings.

[5] This rule is not intended to prevent discussions or consultations that are necessary to fulfill undertakings given during an examination for discovery. However, under no circumstances are such qualifications to be interpreted as permitting improper briefing such as that described in this rule.

[6] This rule is not intended to prohibit a lawyer with no prior involvement in the proceedings, who has been retained by a witness under cross-examination, from consulting with the lawyer's new client.

[7] This rule applies with necessary modifications to examinations out of court.

[…]

Role of Mediator

5.7-1 A lawyer who acts as a mediator must, at the outset of the mediation, ensure that the parties to it understand fully that:

(a) the lawyer is not acting as a lawyer for either party but, as mediator, is acting to assist the parties to resolve the matters in issue; and

(b) although communications pertaining to and arising out of the mediation process may be covered by some other common law privilege, they will not be covered by solicitor-client privilege.

[…]

Duty to Report ~~Misconduct~~

7.1-3 Unless to do so would be unlawful or would involve a breach of solicitor-client privilege, a lawyer must report to the Society:

(a) the misappropriation or misapplication of trust monies;

(b) the abandonment of a law practice;

(c) participation in criminal activity related to a lawyer's practice;

~~(d) the mental instability of a lawyer of such a nature that the lawyer's clients are likely to be materially prejudiced;~~

(d) conduct that raises a substantial question as to another lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or competency as a lawyer; ~~and~~

(e) conduct that raises a substantial question about the lawyer's capacity to provide professional services; and

~~(e)~~

(f) any ~~other~~ situation in which a lawyer's clients are likely to be materially prejudiced.

Commentary

[1] Unless a lawyer who departs from proper professional conduct or competence is checked at an early stage, loss or damage to clients or others may ensue. Evidence of minor breaches may, on investigation, disclose a more serious situation or may indicate the commencement of a course of conduct that may lead to serious breaches in the future. It is, therefore, proper (unless it is privileged or otherwise unlawful) for a lawyer to report to the Society any instance involving a breach of these rules. If a lawyer is in any doubt whether a report should be made, the lawyer should consider seeking the advice of the Society directly or indirectly (e.g., through another lawyer). In all cases, the report must be made without malice or ulterior motive.

[2] Nothing in this ~~paragraph~~ rule is meant to interfere with the lawyer-client relationship. ~~In all cases, the report must be made without malice or ulterior motive.~~

[3] ~~Often, i~~ Instances of ~~improper~~ conduct described in this rule can arise from a variety of stressors, physical, mental or emotional conditions, disorders or addictions. ~~, mental or family disturbances or substance abuse.~~ Lawyers who face such challenges ~~suffer from such problems~~ should be encouraged by other lawyers to seek assistance as early as possible.

[4] The Society supports professional support groups, such as the [Lawyers' Assistance Program and the Risk and Practice Management Program], in their commitment to the provision of confidential counselling. Therefore, lawyers providing peer support ~~acting in the capacity of counsellors~~ for professional support groups will not be called by the Society or by any investigation committee to testify at any conduct, capacity or competence hearing without the consent of the lawyer from whom the information was received. Notwithstanding the above, a lawyer counselling another lawyer has an ethical obligation to report to the Society upon learning that the lawyer being assisted is engaging in ~~or may in the future engage in~~ serious misconduct or in criminal activity related to the lawyer's practice or there is a substantial risk that the lawyer may in the future engage in such conduct or activity. The Society cannot countenance such conduct regardless of a lawyer's attempts at rehabilitation.

[…]

7.8 ERRORS AND OMISSIONS

Informing Client of Errors or Omissions

7.8- 1 When, in connection with a matter for which a lawyer is responsible, a lawyer discovers an error or omission that is or may be damaging to the client and that cannot be rectified readily, the lawyer must:

(a) promptly inform the client of the error or omission without admitting legal liability;

(b) recommend that the client obtain independent legal advice concerning the matter, including any rights the client may have arising from the error or omission; and

(c) advise the client of the possibility that, in the circumstances, the lawyer may no longer be able to act for the client.

Commentary

[1] In addition to the obligations imposed by Rule 7.8-1, the lawyer has the contractual obligation to report to the lawyer's insurer. Rule 7.8-2 also imposes an ethical duty to report to the insurer(s). Rule 7.8-1 does not relieve a lawyer from the duty to report to the insurer or other indemnitor even if the lawyer attempts to rectify.

Notice of Claim

7.8-2 A lawyer must give prompt notice of any circumstance that ~~the lawyer~~ may ~~reasonably expect to~~ give rise to a claim to an insurer or other indemnitor so that the client's protection from that source will not be prejudiced.

Commentary

[1] Under the lawyer's compulsory professional liability insurance policy, a lawyer is contractually required to give written notice to the insurer immediately after the lawyer becomes aware of any actual or alleged error or any circumstances that could give rise to a claim. The duty to report is also an ethical duty which is imposed on the lawyer to protect clients. The duty to report arises whether or not the lawyer considers the claim to have merit.

[2~~1~~] The introduction of compulsory insurance has imposed additional obligations upon a lawyer, but these obligations must not impair the relationship and duties of the lawyer to the client. A lawyer has an obligation to comply with the provisions of the policy of insurance. The insurer's rights must be preserved, and the lawyer, in informing the client of an error or omission, should be careful not to prejudice any rights of indemnity

that either of them may have under an insurance, client's protection or indemnity plan, or otherwise. There may well be occasions when a lawyer believes that certain actions or a failure to take action have made the lawyer liable for damages to the client when, in reality, no liability exists. Further, in every case, a careful assessment will have to be made of the client's damages arising from a lawyer's negligence.

[…]