
Chapter 3 Relationship to Clients

SECTION 3.1 COMPETENCE

Definitions

3.1-1 In this rule,

“competent lawyer” means a lawyer who has and applies relevant knowledge, skills and attributes in a manner appropriate to each matter undertaken on behalf of a client including

[Amended – October 2014]

- (a) knowing general legal principles and procedures and the substantive law and procedure for the areas of law in which the lawyer practises,
[Amended – June 2007]
- (b) investigating facts, identifying issues, ascertaining client objectives, considering possible options, and developing and advising the client on appropriate courses of action,
- (c) implementing, as each matter requires, the chosen course of action through the application of appropriate skills, including:
 - (i) legal research,
 - (ii) analysis,
 - (iii) application of the law to the relevant facts,
 - (iv) writing and drafting,
 - (v) negotiation,
 - (vi) alternative dispute resolution,
 - (vii) advocacy, and
 - (viii) problem-solving,
- (d) communicating at all relevant stages of a matter in a timely and effective manner;
[Amended – October 2014]
- (e) performing all functions conscientiously, diligently, and in a timely and cost-effective manner;

- (f) applying intellectual capacity, judgment, and deliberation to all functions;
- (g) complying in letter and in spirit with all requirements pursuant to the *Law Society Act*;
[Amended – October 2014]
- (h) recognizing limitations in one’s ability to handle a matter or some aspect of it, and taking steps accordingly to ensure the client is appropriately served;
- (i) managing one’s practice effectively;
- (j) pursuing appropriate professional development to maintain and enhance legal knowledge and skills; and
- (k) otherwise adapting to changing professional requirements, standards, techniques, and practices.

Competence

3.1-2 A lawyer shall perform any legal services undertaken on a client’s behalf to the standard of a competent lawyer.

Commentary

[1] As a member of the legal profession, a lawyer is held out as knowledgeable, skilled, and capable in the practice of law. Accordingly, the client is entitled to assume that the lawyer has the ability and capacity to deal adequately with all legal matters to be undertaken on the client’s behalf.

[2] Competence is founded upon both ethical and legal principles. This rule addresses the ethical principles. Competence involves more than an understanding of legal principles; it involves an adequate knowledge of the practice and procedures by which such principles can be effectively applied. To accomplish this, the lawyer should keep abreast of developments in all areas of law in which the lawyer practises.

[3] In deciding whether the lawyer has employed the requisite degree of knowledge and skill in a particular matter, relevant factors will include

- (a) the complexity and specialized nature of the matter;
- (b) the lawyer’s general experience;
- (c) the lawyer’s training and experience in the field;
- (d) the preparation and study the lawyer is able to give the matter; and

(e) whether it is appropriate or feasible to refer the matter to, or associate or consult with, a licensee of established competence in the field in question.

[4] In some circumstances, expertise in a particular field of law may be required; often the necessary degree of proficiency will be that of the general practitioner.

[5] A lawyer should not undertake a matter without honestly feeling competent to handle it, or being able to become competent without undue delay, risk, or expense to the client. This is an ethical consideration and is distinct from the standard of care that a tribunal would invoke for purposes of determining negligence.

[6] A lawyer must recognize a task for which the lawyer lacks competence and the disservice that would be done to the client by undertaking that task. If consulted about such a task, the lawyer should

(a) decline to act;

(b) obtain the client's instructions to retain, consult, or collaborate with a licensee who is competent for that task; or

(c) obtain the client's consent for the lawyer to become competent without undue delay, risk or expense to the client.

[7] The lawyer should also recognize that competence for a particular task may require seeking advice from or collaborating with experts in scientific, accounting, or other non-legal fields, and, in such a situation, when it is appropriate, the lawyer should not hesitate to seek the client's instructions to consult experts.

[7A] When a lawyer considers whether to provide legal services under a limited scope retainer, he or she must carefully assess in each case whether, under the circumstances, it is possible to render those services in a competent manner. An agreement to provide such services does not exempt a lawyer from the duty to provide competent representation. As in any retainer, the lawyer should consider the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation. The lawyer should ensure that the client is fully informed of the nature of the arrangement and clearly understands the scope and limitation of the services. See also rules 3.2-1A to 3.2-1A.2.

[8] A lawyer should clearly specify the facts, circumstances, and assumptions on which an opinion is based, particularly when the circumstances do not justify an exhaustive investigation and the resultant expense to the client. However, unless the client instructs otherwise, the lawyer should investigate the matter in sufficient detail to be able to express an opinion rather than mere comments with many qualifications.

[8.1] What is effective communication with the client 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.

[9] A lawyer should be wary of bold and over-confident assurances to the client, especially when the lawyer's employment may depend upon advising in a particular way.

[10] In addition to opinions on legal questions, the lawyer may be asked for or may be expected to give advice on non-legal matters such as the business, economic, policy, or social complications involved in the question or the course the client should choose. In many instances the lawyer's experience will be such that the lawyer's views on non-legal matters will be of real benefit to the client. The lawyer who expresses views on such matters should, if necessary and to the extent necessary, point out any lack of experience or other qualification in the particular field and should clearly distinguish legal advice from other advice.

[11] In a multi-discipline practice, a lawyer must ensure that the client is made aware that the legal advice from the lawyer may be supplemented by advice or services from a non-licensure. Advice or services from non-licensure members of the firm unrelated to the retainer for legal services must be provided independently of and outside the scope of the legal services retainer and from a location separate from the premises of the multi-discipline practice. The provision of non-legal advice or services unrelated to the legal services retainer will also be subject to the constraints outlined in the relevant by-laws and regulations governing multi-discipline practices.

[12] The requirement of conscientious, diligent, and efficient service means that a lawyer should make every effort to provide timely service to the client. If the lawyer can reasonably foresee undue delay in providing advice or services, the client should be so informed, so that the client can make an informed choice about their options, such as whether to retain new counsel.

[13] The lawyer should refrain from conduct that may interfere with or compromise their capacity or motivation to provide competent legal services to the client and be aware of any factor or circumstance that may have that effect.

[14] A lawyer who is incompetent does the client a disservice, brings discredit to the profession and may bring the administration of justice into disrepute. In addition to damaging the lawyer's own reputation and practice, incompetence may also injure the lawyer's partners and associates.

[15] **Incompetence, Negligence and Mistakes** – This rule does not require a standard of perfection. An error or omission, even though it might be actionable for damages in negligence or contract, will not necessarily constitute a failure to maintain the standard of professional competence described in the rule. While damages may be awarded for negligence, incompetence can give rise to the additional sanction of disciplinary action.

[15.1] The *Law Society Act* provides that a lawyer fails to meet standards of professional competence if there are deficiencies in

- (a) the lawyer's knowledge, skill, or judgment,
- (b) the lawyer's attention to the interests of clients,
- (c) the records, systems, or procedures of the lawyer's professional business, or
- (d) other aspects of the lawyer's professional business,

and the deficiencies give rise to a reasonable apprehension that the quality of service to clients may be adversely affected.

[Amended – June 2009, October 2014]

SECTION 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.

[New – October 2014]

Commentary

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

[2] An ordinarily or otherwise competent lawyer may still occasionally fail to provide an adequate quality of service.

[3] to [5] [FLSC – not in use]

[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 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.

[New – October 2014]

Legal Services Under a Limited Scope Retainer

3.2-1A Before providing legal services under a limited scope retainer, a lawyer shall advise the client honestly and candidly about the nature, extent and scope of the services that the lawyer can provide, and, where appropriate, whether the services can be provided within the financial means of the client.

3.2-1A.1 When providing legal services under a limited scope retainer, a lawyer shall confirm the services in writing and give the client a copy of the written document when practicable to do so.

Commentary

[1] Reducing to writing the discussions and agreement with the client about the limited scope retainer assists the lawyer and client in understanding the limitations of the service to be provided and any risks of the retainer.

[1.1] In certain circumstances, such as when the client is in custody, it may not be possible to give him or her a copy of the document. In this type of situation, the lawyer should keep a record of the limited scope retainer in the client file and, when practicable, provide a copy of the document to the client.

[2] A lawyer who is providing legal services under a limited scope retainer should be careful to avoid acting such that it appears that the lawyer is providing services to the client under a full retainer.

[3] [FLSC – not in use]

[4] A lawyer who is providing legal services under a limited scope retainer should consider how communications from opposing counsel in a matter should be managed. See rule 7.2-6A and rules 7.2-8 to 7.2-8.2.

[5] [FLSC – not in use]

[5.1] A lawyer should ordinarily confirm with the client in writing when the limited scope retainer is complete. Where appropriate under the rules of the tribunal, the lawyer may consider providing notice to the tribunal that the retainer is complete.

[5.2] In addition to the requirements of Rule 3.2-9, a lawyer who is asked to provide legal services under a limited scope retainer to a client who has diminished capacity to make decisions should carefully consider and assess in each case if, under the circumstances, it is possible to render those services in a competent manner.

[5.3] Where the limited services being provided include an appearance before a tribunal, a lawyer must be careful not to mislead the tribunal as to the scope of the retainer, and should consider whether disclosure of the limited nature of the retainer is required by the rules of practice or the circumstances.

[5.4] A lawyer should also consider whether the existence of a limited scope retainer should be disclosed to the tribunal or to an opposing party or, if represented, to an opposing party's counsel and whether the lawyer should obtain instructions from the client to make the disclosure.

[Amended – June 2015]

3.2-1A.2 Rule 3.2-1A.1 does not apply to a lawyer if the legal services are

- (a) legal services or summary advice provided as a duty counsel under the *Legal Aid Services Act, 1998* or through any other duty counsel or other advisory program operated by a not-for-profit organization;
- (b) summary advice provided in community legal clinics, student clinics or under the *Legal Aid Services Act, 1998*;
- (c) summary advice provided through a telephone-based service or telephone hotline operated by a community-based or government funded program;

(d) summary advice provided by the lawyer to a client in the context of an introductory consultation, where the intention is that the consultation, if the client so chooses, would develop into a retainer for legal services for all aspects of the legal matter; or

(e) *pro bono* summary legal services provided in a non-profit or court-annexed program.

[New – September 2011]

Commentary

[1] The consultation referred to in rule 3.2-1A.2(d) may include advice on preventative, protective, pro-active or procedural measures relating to the client’s legal matter, after which the client may agree to retain the lawyer.

[New – September 2011]

Honesty and Candour

3.2-2 When advising clients, a lawyer shall be honest and candid.

Commentary

[1] [FLSC – not in use]

[1.1] A lawyer has a duty of candour with the client on matters relevant to the retainer. This arises out of the rules and the lawyer’s fiduciary obligations to the client. The duty of candour requires a lawyer to inform the client of information known to the lawyer that may affect the interests of the client in the matter.

[1.2] In some limited circumstances, it may be appropriate to withhold information from a client. For example, with client consent, a lawyer may act where the lawyer receives information on a “for counsel’s eyes only” basis. However, it would not be appropriate to act for a client where the lawyer has relevant material information about that client received through a different retainer. In those circumstances the lawyer cannot be honest and candid with the client and should not act.

[2] The lawyer’s duty to the client who seeks legal advice is to give the client a competent opinion based on a sufficient knowledge of the relevant facts, an adequate consideration of the applicable law, and the lawyer’s own experience and expertise. The advice must be open and undisguised and must clearly disclose what the lawyer honestly thinks about the merits and probable results.

[2.1] A lawyer who is acting for both the borrower and the lender in a mortgage or loan transaction should also refer to rule 3.4-15 regarding the lawyer’s duty of disclosure to their clients.

[3] [FLSC – not in use]

[Amended – October 2014]

Language Rights

3.2-2A A lawyer shall, when appropriate, advise a client of the client's language rights, including the right to use.

- (i) the official language of the client's choice; and
- (ii) a language recognized in provincial or territorial legislation as a language in which a matter may be pursued, including, where applicable, aboriginal languages.

3.2-2B If a client proposes to use a language of his or her choice, and the lawyer is not competent in that language to provide the required services, the lawyer shall not undertake the matter unless he or she is otherwise able to competently provide those services and the client consents in writing.

Commentary

[1] The lawyer should advise the client of the client's language rights as soon as possible.

[2] The choice of language is that of the client not the lawyer. The lawyer should be aware of relevant statutory and constitutional law relating to language rights including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, s. 19(1) and Part XVII of the *Criminal Code* regarding language rights in courts under federal jurisdiction and in criminal proceedings. The lawyer should also be aware that provincial or territorial legislation may provide additional language rights, including in relation to aboriginal languages.

[3] When a lawyer considers whether to provide the required services in the language chosen by the client, the lawyer should carefully consider whether it is possible to render those services in a competent manner as required by Rule 3.1-2 and related Commentary.

[New – June, 2015]

When Client an Organization

3.2-3 Notwithstanding that the instructions may be received from an officer, employee, agent or representative, when a lawyer is employed or retained by an organization, including a corporation, in exercising the lawyer's duties and in providing professional services, the lawyer shall act for the organization.

Commentary

[1] A lawyer acting for an organization should keep in mind that the organization, as such, is the client and that a corporate client has a legal personality distinct from its shareholders, officers, directors, and employees. While the organization or corporation will act and give instructions through its officers, directors, employees, members, agents, or representatives, the lawyer should ensure that it is the interests of the organization that are to be served and protected. Further, given that an organization depends upon persons to give instructions, the lawyer should ensure that the person giving instructions for the organization is acting within that person's actual or ostensible authority.

[2] In addition to acting for the organization, the lawyer may also accept a joint retainer and act for a person associated with the organization. An example might be a lawyer advising about liability insurance for an officer of an organization. In such cases the lawyer acting for an organization should be alert to the prospects of conflicts of interest and should comply with the rules about the avoidance of conflicts of interest (Section 3.4, Conflicts).

[New – March 2004]

Encouraging Compromise or Settlement

3.2-4 A lawyer shall advise and encourage the client to compromise or settle a dispute whenever it is possible to do so on a reasonable basis and shall discourage the client from commencing or continuing useless legal proceedings.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] It is important to consider the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR). When appropriate, the lawyer should inform the client of ADR options and, if so instructed, take steps to pursue those options.

[1.1] In criminal, quasi-criminal or regulatory complaint proceedings, it is not improper for a lawyer for an accused or potential accused to communicate with a complainant or potential complainant to obtain factual information, arrange for restitution or an apology from an accused, or defend or settle any civil matters between the accused and the complainant. See also rule 7.2-6.

[1.2] When the complainant or potential complainant is unrepresented, the lawyer should have regard to the rules respecting unrepresented persons and make it clear that the lawyer is acting exclusively in the interests of the accused. If the complainant or potential complainant is vulnerable, the lawyer should take care not to take unfair or improper advantage of the circumstances. When communicating with an unrepresented complainant or potential complainant, it is prudent to have a witness present.

[Amended – October 2014]

Threatening Criminal Proceedings

3.2-5 A lawyer shall not, in an attempt to gain a benefit for a client, threaten, or advise a client to threaten:

- (a) to initiate or proceed with a criminal or quasi-criminal charge; or
- (b) to make a complaint to a regulatory authority.

[Amended – October 2014]

3.2-5.1 Rule 3.2-5(b) does not apply to an application made in good faith to a regulatory authority for a benefit to which a client may be legally entitled.

[New – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] It is an abuse of the court or regulatory authority's process to threaten to make or advance a complaint in order to secure the satisfaction of a private grievance. Even if a client has a legitimate entitlement to be paid monies, threats to take criminal or quasi-criminal action are not appropriate.

[2] It is not improper, however, to notify the appropriate authority of criminal or quasi-criminal activities while also taking steps through the civil system. Nor is it improper for a lawyer to request that another lawyer comply with an undertaking or trust condition or other professional obligation or face being reported to the Law Society. The impropriety stems from threatening to use criminal or quasi-criminal proceedings to gain a civil advantage.

[2.1] Where a regulatory authority exercises a jurisdiction that is essentially civil, it is not improper to threaten to make a complaint pursuant to that authority to achieve a benefit for the client. For example, where the regulatory authority of the office dealing with employment standards covers non-payment of wages, it is not improper to threaten to make a complaint pursuant to the relevant provincial statute for an order that wages be paid failing payment of unpaid wages.

[New – October 2014]

3.2-6 [FLSC - not in use]

Dishonesty, Fraud, etc. by Client or Others

3.2-7 A lawyer shall not knowingly assist in or encourage any dishonesty, fraud, crime, or illegal conduct or instruct a client or any other person on how to violate the law and avoid punishment.

[Amended – October 2014]

3.2-7.1 A lawyer shall not act or do anything or omit to do anything in circumstances where he or she ought to know that, by acting, doing the thing or omitting to do the thing, he or she is being used by a client, by a person associated with a client or by any other person to facilitate dishonesty, fraud, crime or illegal conduct.

[New – April 2012]

3.2-7.2 When retained by a client, a lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to ascertain the purpose and objectives of the retainer and to obtain information about the client necessary to fulfill this obligation.

3.2-7.3 A lawyer shall not use their trust account for purposes not related to the provision of legal services.

[Amended – April 2011]

Commentary

[1] Rule 3.2-7 which states that a lawyer must not knowingly assist in or encourage dishonesty, fraud, crime or illegal conduct, applies whether the lawyer's knowledge is actual or in the form of wilful blindness or recklessness. A lawyer should also be on guard against becoming the tool or dupe of an unscrupulous client or persons associated with such a client or any other person. Rules 3.2-7.1 to 3.2-7.3 speak to these issues.

[2] A lawyer should be alert to and avoid unwittingly becoming involved with a client or any other person who is engaged in criminal activity such as mortgage fraud or money laundering. Vigilance is required because the means for these and other criminal activities may be transactions for which lawyers commonly provide services such as

- (a) establishing, purchasing or selling business entities;
- (b) arranging financing for the purchase or sale or operation of business entities;
- (c) arranging financing for the purchase or sale of business assets; and
- (d) purchasing and selling real estate.

[3] To obtain information about the client and about the subject matter and objectives of the retainer, the lawyer may, for example, need to verify who are the legal or beneficial owners of property and business entities, verify who has the control of business entities, and clarify the nature and purpose of a complex or unusual transaction where the purpose is not clear. The lawyer should make a record of the results of these inquiries. It is especially important to obtain this information where a lawyer has suspicions or doubts about whether he or she might be assisting a client or any other person in dishonesty, fraud, crime or illegal conduct.

[3.1] Lawyers should be vigilant in identifying the presence of “red flags” in their areas of practice and make inquiries to determine whether a proposed retainer relates to a *bona fide* transaction. Information on “Red Flags in Real Estate Transactions” appears below.

[3.2] A client or another person may attempt to use a lawyer’s trust account for improper purposes, such as hiding funds, money laundering or tax sheltering. These situations highlight the fact that when handling trust funds, it is important for a lawyer to be aware of their obligations under these rules and the Law Society’s by-laws that regulate the handling of trust funds.

[4] A *bona fide* test case is not necessarily precluded by rule 3.2-7 and, so long as no injury to the person or violence is involved, a lawyer may properly advise and represent a client who, in good faith and on reasonable grounds, desires to challenge or test a law and the test can most effectively be made by means of a technical breach giving rise to a test case. In all situations, the lawyer should ensure that the client appreciates the consequences of bringing a test case.

[Amended – October 2014]

Red Flags in Real Estate Transactions

[4.1] A lawyer representing any party in a real estate transaction should be vigilant in identifying the presence of “red flags” and make inquiries to determine whether it is a *bona fide* transaction. Red flags include such things as

- (a) purchase price manipulations (revealed by, for example, deposits purportedly paid directly to the vendor, price escalations and “flips” in which a property is sold and re-sold within a short period of time for a substantially higher price, reductions in the balance due on closing in consideration of extra credits or deposits not required by the purchase agreement, amendments to the purchase price not disclosed to the mortgage lender, the acceptance on closing of an amount less than the balance due, a mortgage advance which approximates or exceeds the balance due resulting in surplus mortgage proceeds, and so on);
- (b) a nominal role for one or more parties (fraud is sometimes effected through the use of “straw people”, who may not exist or whose identities have either been purchased or stolen, as well as through the suspicious use of powers of attorney);
- (c) the purchaser contributes no funds or only a nominal amount towards the purchase price or the balance due on closing;
- (d) signs that the parties are concealing a non-arm’s length relationship or are colluding with respect to the purchase price;
- (e) suspicious or repeated third-party involvement (for example, giving instructions, supplying client directions or identification, and providing or receiving funds on closing); and
- (f) the proceeds of sale are disbursed or directed to be paid to parties who are unrelated to the transaction.

[4.2] The red flags listed above are not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding red flags is available from many sources, including the “Fighting Real Estate Fraud” page within the “Practice Resources” section of the website of the Law Society. Fraudulent real estate schemes and the red flags

associated with such schemes are numerous and evolving. Lawyers who practise real estate law have a professional obligation therefore to educate themselves on an ongoing basis regarding the red flags of real estate fraud.

[New – October 2012]

Dishonesty, Fraud, etc. when Client an Organization

3.2-8 A lawyer who is employed or retained by an organization to act in a matter in which the lawyer knows that the organization has acted, is acting or intends to act dishonestly, fraudulently, criminally or illegally, shall do the following, in addition to their obligations under rule 3.2-7:

- (a) advise the person from whom the lawyer takes instructions and the chief legal officer, or both the chief legal officer and the chief executive officer, that the conduct is, was or would be dishonest, fraudulent, criminal, or illegal and should be stopped;
- (b) if necessary because the person from whom the lawyer takes instructions, the chief legal officer or the chief executive officer refuses to cause the conduct to be stopped, advise progressively the next highest persons or groups, including ultimately, the board of directors, the board of trustees, or the appropriate committee of the board, that the conduct was, is or would be dishonest, fraudulent, criminal, or illegal and should be stopped; and
- (c) if the organization, despite the lawyer's advice, continues with or intends to pursue the wrongful conduct, withdraw from acting in the matter in accordance with rules in Section 3.7.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] The past, present, or intended misconduct of an organization may have harmful and serious consequences, not only for the organization and its constituency but also for the public, who rely on organizations to provide a variety of goods and services. In particular, the misconduct of publicly traded commercial and financial corporations may have serious consequences for the public at large. This rule addresses some of the professional responsibilities of a lawyer acting for an organization, including a corporation, when he or she learns that the organization has acted, is acting, or proposes to act in a way that is dishonest, fraudulent, criminal or illegal. In addition to these rules, the lawyer may need to consider, for example, the rules and commentary about confidentiality (Section 3.3)

[2] This rule speaks of conduct that is dishonest, fraudulent, criminal or illegal.

[3] Such conduct includes acts of omission. Indeed, often it is the omissions of an organization, such as failing to make required disclosure or to correct inaccurate disclosures that constitute the wrongful conduct to which these rules relate. Conduct likely to result in substantial harm to the organization, as opposed to genuinely trivial misconduct by an organization, invokes this rule.

[4] In determining their responsibilities under this rule, a lawyer should consider whether it is feasible and appropriate to give any advice in writing.

[5] A lawyer acting for an organization who learns that the organization has acted, is acting, or intends to act in a wrongful manner may advise the chief executive officer and shall advise the chief legal officer of the misconduct. If the wrongful conduct is not abandoned or stopped, the lawyer shall report the matter “up the ladder” of responsibility within the organization until the matter is dealt with appropriately. If the organization, despite the lawyer’s advice, continues with the wrongful conduct, the lawyer shall withdraw from acting in the particular matter in accordance with rule 3.7-1. In some but not all cases, withdrawal means resigning from their position or relationship with the organization and not simply withdrawing from acting in the particular matter.

[6] This rule recognizes that lawyers as the legal advisers to organizations are in a central position to encourage organizations to comply with the law and to advise that it is in the organizations’ and the public’s interest that organizations do not violate the law. Lawyers acting for organizations are often in a position to advise the executive officers of the organization, not only about the technicalities of the law, but also about the public relations and public policy concerns that motivated the government or regulator to enact the law. Moreover, lawyers for organizations, particularly in-house counsel, may guide organizations to act in ways that are legal, ethical, reputable, and consistent with the organization’s responsibilities to its constituents and to the public.

[Amended – October 2014]

Client with Diminished Capacity

3.2-9 When a client's ability to make decisions is impaired because of minority, mental disability, or for some other reason, the lawyer shall, as far as reasonably possible, maintain a normal lawyer and client relationship.

Commentary

[1] A lawyer and client relationship presupposes that the client has the requisite mental ability to make decisions about their legal affairs and to give the lawyer instructions. A client's ability to make decisions, however, depends on such factors as their age, intelligence, experience, and mental and physical health, and on the advice, guidance, and support of others. Further, a client's ability to make decisions may change, for better or worse, over time.

[1.1] When a client is or comes to be under a disability that impairs their ability to make decisions, the impairment may be minor or it might prevent the client from having the legal capacity to give instructions or to enter into binding legal relationships. Recognizing these factors, the purpose of this rule is to direct a lawyer with a client under a disability to maintain, as far as reasonably possible, a normal lawyer and client relationship.

[2] [FLSC – not in use]

[3] A lawyer with a client under a disability should appreciate that if the disability of the client is such that the client no longer has the legal capacity to manage their legal affairs, the lawyer may need to take steps to have a lawfully authorized representative appointed, for example, a litigation guardian, or to obtain the assistance of the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee or the Office of the Children's Lawyer to protect the interests of the client. In any event, the lawyer has an ethical obligation to ensure that the client's interests are not abandoned.

[4] [FLSC – not in use]

[5] When a lawyer takes protective action on behalf of a person or client lacking in capacity, the authority to disclose necessary confidential information may be implied in some circumstances. (See Commentary under rule 3.3-1 (Confidentiality) for a discussion of the relevant factors). If the court or other counsel becomes involved, the lawyer should inform them of the nature of the lawyer's relationship with the person lacking capacity.

[Amended – October 2014]

Medical-Legal Reports

3.2-9.1 A lawyer who receives a medical-legal report from a physician or health professional that is accompanied by a proviso that it not be shown to the client shall return the report immediately to the physician or health professional unless the lawyer has received specific instructions to accept the report on this basis.

Commentary

[1] The lawyer can avoid some of the problems anticipated by the rule by having a full and frank discussion with the physician or health professional, preferably in advance of the preparation of a medical-legal report, which discussion will serve to inform the physician or health professional of the lawyer's obligation respecting disclosure of medical-legal reports to the client.

3.2-9.2 A lawyer who receives a medical-legal report from a physician or health professional containing opinions or findings that if disclosed might cause harm or injury to the client shall attempt to dissuade the client from seeing the report, but if the client insists, the lawyer shall produce the report.

3.2-9.3 Where a client insists on seeing a medical-legal report about which the lawyer has reservations for the reasons noted in rule 3.2-9.2, the lawyer shall suggest that the client attend at the office of the physician or health professional to see the report in order that the client will have the benefit of the expertise of the physician or health professional in understanding the significance of the conclusion contained in the medical-legal report.

Title Insurance in Real Estate Conveyancing

3.2-9.4 A lawyer shall assess all reasonable options to assure title when advising a client about a real estate conveyance and shall advise the client that title insurance is not mandatory and is not the only option available to protect the client's interests in a real estate transaction.

Commentary

[1] A lawyer should advise the client of the options available to protect the client's interests and minimize the client's risks in a real estate transaction. The lawyer should be cognizant of when title insurance may be an appropriate option. Although title insurance is intended to protect the client against title risks, it is not a substitute for a lawyer's services in a real estate transaction.

[2] The lawyer should be knowledgeable about title insurance and discuss with the client the advantages, conditions, and limitations of the various options and coverages generally available to the client through title insurance. Before recommending a specific title insurance product, the lawyer should be knowledgeable about the product and take such training as may be necessary in order to acquire the knowledge.

3.2-9.5 A lawyer shall not receive any compensation, whether directly or indirectly, from a title insurer, agent or intermediary for recommending a specific title insurance product to their client.

3.2-9.6 A lawyer shall disclose to the client that no commission or fee is being furnished by any insurer, agent, or intermediary to the lawyer with respect to any title insurance coverage.

Commentary

[1] The fiduciary relationship between lawyer and client requires full disclosure in all financial dealings between them and prohibits the acceptance of any hidden fees by the lawyer, including the lawyer's law firm, any employee or associate of the firm, or any related entity.

3.2-9.7 If discussing TitlePLUS insurance with a client, a lawyer shall fully disclose the relationship between the legal profession, the Law Society, and the Lawyers' Professional Indemnity Company (LawPRO).

Reporting on Mortgage Transactions

3.2-9.8 Where a lawyer acts for a lender and the loan is secured by a mortgage on real property, the lawyer shall provide a final report on the transaction, together with the duplicate registered mortgage, to the lender within 60 days of the registration of the mortgage, or within such other time period as instructed by the lender.

3.2-9.9 The final report required by rule 3.2-9.8 must be delivered within the times set out in that rule even if the lawyer has paid funds to satisfy one or more prior encumbrances to ensure the priority of the mortgage as instructed and the lawyer has obtained an undertaking to register a discharge of the encumbrance or encumbrances but the discharge remains unregistered.

[New - February 2007]

SECTION 3.3 CONFIDENTIALITY**Confidential Information**

3.3-1 A lawyer at all times shall hold in strict confidence all information concerning the business and affairs of the client acquired in the course of the professional relationship and shall not divulge any such information unless

- (a) expressly or impliedly authorized by the client;
- (b) required by law or by order of a tribunal of competent jurisdiction to do so;
- (c) required to provide the information to the Law Society; or
- (d) otherwise permitted by rules 3.3-2 to 3.3-6.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] A lawyer cannot render effective professional service to the client unless there is full and unreserved communication between them. At the same time, the client must feel completely secure and entitled to proceed on the basis that, without any express request or stipulation on the client's part, matters disclosed to or discussed with the lawyer will be held in strict confidence.

[2] This rule must be distinguished from the evidentiary rule of lawyer and client privilege, which is also a constitutionally protected right, concerning oral or documentary communications passing between the client and the lawyer. The ethical rule is wider and applies without regard to the nature or source of the information or the fact that others may share the knowledge.

[3] A lawyer owes the duty of confidentiality to every client without exception and whether or not the client is a continuing or casual client. The duty survives the professional relationship and continues indefinitely after the lawyer has ceased to act for the client, whether or not differences have arisen between them.

[4] A lawyer also owes a duty of confidentiality to anyone seeking advice or assistance on a matter invoking a lawyer's professional knowledge, although the lawyer may not render an account or agree to represent that person. A solicitor and client relationship is often established without formality. A lawyer should be cautious in accepting confidential information on an informal or preliminary basis, since possession of the information may prevent the lawyer from subsequently acting for another party in the same or a related matter. (See Section 3.4 Conflicts.)

[5] Generally, unless the nature of the matter requires such disclosure, a lawyer should not disclose having been:

- (a) retained by a person about a particular matter; or
- (b) consulted by a person about a particular matter, whether or not the lawyer-client relationship has been established between them.

[6] A lawyer should take care to avoid disclosure to one client of confidential information concerning or received from another client and should decline employment that might require such disclosure.

[7] Sole practitioners who practise in association with other licensees in cost-sharing, space-sharing or other arrangements should be mindful of the risk of advertent or inadvertent disclosure of confidential information, even if the lawyers institute systems and procedures that are designed to insulate their respective practices. The issue may be heightened if a lawyer in the association represents a client on the other side of a dispute with the client of another licensee in the association. Apart from conflict of interest issues such a situation may raise, the risk of such disclosure may depend on the extent to which the licensees' practices are integrated, physically and administratively, in the association.

[8] A lawyer should avoid indiscreet conversations, even with the lawyer's spouse or family, about a client's affairs and should shun any gossip about such things even though the client is not named or otherwise identified. Similarly, a lawyer should not repeat any gossip or information about the client's business or affairs that is overheard or recounted to the lawyer. Apart altogether from ethical considerations or questions of good taste, indiscreet shop-talk between lawyers, if overheard by third parties able to identify the matter being discussed, could result in prejudice to the client. Moreover, the respect of the listener for lawyers and the legal profession will probably be lessened.

[8.1] Although the rule may not apply to facts that are public knowledge, nevertheless, the lawyer should guard against participating in or commenting on speculation concerning the client's affairs or business.

[9] In some situations, the authority of the client to disclose may be inferred. For example, some disclosure may be necessary in court proceedings, in a pleading or other court document. Also, it is implied that a lawyer may, unless the client directs otherwise, disclose the client's affairs to partners and associates in the law firm and, to the extent necessary, to administrative staff and to others whose services are used by the lawyer. But this implied authority to disclose places the lawyer under a duty to impress upon associates, employees, and students and other licensees engaged under contract with the lawyer or with the firm of the lawyer the importance of non-disclosure (both during their employment and afterwards) and requires the lawyer to take reasonable care to prevent their disclosing or using any information that the lawyer is bound to keep in confidence.

[10] The client's authority for the lawyer to disclose confidential information to the extent necessary to protect the client's interest may also be inferred in some situations where the lawyer is taking action on behalf of the person lacking capacity to protect the person until a legal representative can be appointed. In determining whether a lawyer may disclose such information, the lawyer should consider all circumstances, including the reasonableness of the lawyer's belief that the person lacks capacity, the potential harm that may come to the client if no action is taken, and any instructions the client may have given to the lawyer when capable of giving instructions about the authority to disclose information. Similar considerations apply to confidential information given to the lawyer by a person who lacks the capacity to become a client but nevertheless requires protection.

[11] A lawyer may have an obligation to disclose information under rules 5.5-2, 5.5-3 and 5.6-3 (Security of Court Facilities). If client information is involved in those situations, the lawyer should be guided by the provisions of this rule.

[11.1] The fiduciary relationship between a lawyer and a client forbids the lawyer or a third person from benefiting from the lawyer's use of a client's confidential information. If a lawyer engages in literary works, such as a memoir or autobiography, the lawyer is required to obtain the client's or former client's consent before disclosing confidential information.

[Amended - October 2014]

Justified or Permitted Disclosure

3.3-1.1 When required by law or by order of a tribunal of competent jurisdiction, a lawyer shall disclose confidential information, but the lawyer shall not disclose more information than is required.

3.3-2 [FLSC - not in use]

3.3-3 A lawyer may disclose confidential information, but must not disclose more information than is required, when the lawyer believes on reasonable grounds that there is an imminent risk of death or serious bodily harm, and disclosure is necessary to prevent the death or harm.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] Confidentiality and loyalty are fundamental to the relationship between a lawyer and a client because legal advice cannot be given and justice cannot be done unless clients have a large measure of freedom to discuss their affairs with their lawyers. However, in some very exceptional situations identified in this rule, disclosure without the client's permission might be warranted because the lawyer is satisfied that truly serious harm of the types identified is imminent and cannot otherwise be prevented. These situations will be extremely rare.

[2] The Supreme Court of Canada has considered the meaning of the words "serious bodily harm" in certain contexts, which may inform a lawyer in assessing whether disclosure of confidential information is warranted. In *Smith v. Jones*, [1999] 1 S.C.R. 455 at paragraph 83, the Court observed that serious psychological harm may constitute serious bodily harm if it substantially interferes with the health or well-being of the individual.

[3] In assessing whether disclosure of confidential information is justified to prevent death or serious bodily harm, a lawyer should consider a number of factors, including

- (a) the likelihood that the potential injury will occur and its imminence;
- (b) the apparent absence of any other feasible way to prevent the potential injury; and

(c) the circumstances under which the lawyer acquired the information of the client's intent or prospective course of action.

[4] How and when disclosure should be made under this rule will depend upon the circumstances. A lawyer who believes that disclosure may be warranted should seek legal advice. When practicable, a judicial order may be sought for disclosure.

[5] If confidential information is disclosed under rule 3.3-3, the lawyer should prepare a written note as soon as possible, which should include:

(a) the date and time of the communication in which the disclosure is made;

(b) the grounds in support of the lawyer's decision to communicate the information, including the harm intended to be prevented, the identity of the person who prompted communication of the information as well as the identity of the person or group of persons exposed to the harm; and

(c) the content of the communication, the method of communication used and the identity of the person to whom the communication was made.

[Amended – October 2014]

[5.1] A lawyer employed or retained to act for an organization, including a corporation, confronts a difficult problem about confidentiality when he or she becomes aware that the organization may commit a dishonest, fraudulent, criminal, or illegal act. This problem is sometimes described as the problem of whether the lawyer should "blow the whistle" on their employer or client. Although the rules make it clear that the lawyer shall not knowingly assist or encourage any dishonesty, fraud, crime, or illegal conduct (rule 3.2-7) and provide a rule for how a lawyer should respond to conduct by an organization that was, is or may be dishonest, fraudulent, criminal, or illegal (rule 3.2-8), it does not follow that the lawyer should disclose to the appropriate authorities an employer's or client's proposed misconduct. Rather, the general rule, as set out above, is that the lawyer shall hold the client's information in strict confidence, and this general rule is subject to only a few exceptions. Assuming the exceptions do not apply, there are, however, several steps that a lawyer should take when confronted with the difficult problem of proposed misconduct by an organization. The lawyer should recognise that their duties are owed to the organization and not to the officers, employees, or agents of the organization (rule 3.2-3)) and the lawyer should comply with rule 3.2-8, which sets out the steps the lawyer should take in response to proposed, past or continuing misconduct by the organization.

[Amended – March 2004]

3.3-4 If it is alleged that a lawyer or the lawyer's associates or employees

- (a) have committed a criminal offence involving a client's affairs;
- (b) are civilly liable with respect to a matter involving a client's affairs;
- (c) have committed acts of professional negligence; or

(d) have engaged in acts of professional misconduct or conduct unbecoming a lawyer, the lawyer may disclose confidential information in order to defend against the allegations, but shall not disclose more information than is required.

[Amended – October 2014]

3.3-5 A lawyer may disclose confidential information in order to establish or collect the lawyer's fees, but the lawyer shall not disclose more information than is required.

3.3-6 A lawyer may disclose confidential information to another lawyer to secure legal advice about the lawyer's proposed conduct.

[New – October 2014]

3.3-7 A lawyer may disclose confidential information to the extent reasonably necessary to detect and resolve conflicts of interest arising from the lawyer's change of employment or from changes in the composition or ownership of a law firm, but only if the information disclosed does not compromise the solicitor-client privilege or otherwise prejudice the client.

Commentary

[1] As a matter related to clients' interests in maintaining a relationship with counsel of choice and protecting client confidences, lawyers in different firms may need to disclose information to each other to detect and resolve conflicts of interest, such as when a lawyer is considering an association with another firm, two or more firms are considering a merger, or a lawyer is considering the purchase of a law practice.

[2] In these situations (see Rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-23 on Conflicts From Transfer Between Law Firms), rule 3.3-7 permits lawyers and law firms to disclose limited information. This type of disclosure would only be made once substantive discussions regarding the new relationship have occurred.

[3] This exchange of information between the firms needs to be done in a manner consistent with the transferring lawyer's and new firm's obligations to protect client confidentiality and privileged information and avoid any prejudice to the client. It ordinarily would include no more than the names of the persons and entities involved in a matter. Depending on the circumstances, it may include a brief summary of the general issues involved, and information about whether the representation has come to an end.

[4] The disclosure should be made to as few lawyers at the new law firm as possible, ideally to one lawyer of the new firm, such as a designated conflicts lawyer. The information should always be disclosed only to the extent reasonably necessary to detect and resolve conflicts of interest that might arise from the possible new relationship.

[5] As the disclosure is made on the basis that it is solely for the use of checking conflicts where lawyers are transferring between firms and for establishing screens, the disclosure

should be coupled with an undertaking by the new law firm to the former law firm that it will:

- (a) limit access to the disclosed information;
- (b) not use the information for any purpose other than detecting and resolving conflicts; and
- (c) return, destroy, or store in a secure and confidential manner the information provided once appropriate confidentiality screens are established.

[6] The client's consent to disclosure of such information may be specifically addressed in a retainer agreement between the lawyer and client. In some circumstances, however, because of the nature of the retainer, the transferring lawyer and the new law firm may be required to obtain the consent of clients to such disclosure or to the disclosure of any further information about the clients. This is especially the case where disclosure would compromise solicitor-client privilege or otherwise prejudice the client (e.g., the fact that a corporate client is seeking advice on a corporate takeover that has not been publicly announced; that a person has consulted a lawyer about the possibility of divorce before the person's intentions are known to the person's spouse; or that a person has consulted a lawyer about a criminal investigation that has not led to a public charge).

[New – June 2015]

SECTION 3.4 CONFLICTS

Duty to Avoid Conflicts of Interest

3.4-1 A lawyer shall not act or continue to act for a client where there is a conflict of interest, except as permitted under the rules in this Section.

Commentary

[1] As defined in rule 1.1-1, a conflict of interest exists when there is a substantial risk that a lawyer's loyalty to or representation of a client would be materially and adversely affected by the lawyer's own interest or the lawyer's duties to another client, a former client, or a third person. In this context, "substantial risk" means that the risk is significant and plausible, even if it is not certain or even probable that the material adverse effect will occur. The risk must be more than a mere possibility; there must be a genuine, serious risk to the duty of loyalty or to client representation arising from the retainer. A client's interests may be seriously prejudiced unless the lawyer's judgment and freedom of action on the client's behalf are as free as possible from conflicts of interest.

[2] A lawyer should examine whether a conflict of interest exists not only from the outset but throughout the duration of a retainer because new circumstances or information may establish or reveal a conflict of interest.

[3] In order to assess whether there is a conflict of interest, the lawyer is required to consider the lawyer's duties to current, former and joint clients, third persons, as well as the lawyer's own interests.

Representation

[4] Representation means acting for a client and includes the lawyer's advice to and judgment on behalf of the client.

The Fiduciary Relationship, the Duty of Loyalty and Conflicting Interests

[5] The value of an independent bar is diminished unless the lawyer is free from conflicts of interest. The rule governing conflicts of interest is founded in the duty of loyalty which is grounded in the law governing fiduciaries. The lawyer-client relationship is a fiduciary relationship and as such, the lawyer has a duty of loyalty to the client. To maintain public confidence in the integrity of the legal profession and the administration of justice, in which lawyers play a key role, it is essential that lawyers respect the duty of loyalty. Aspects of the duty of loyalty owed to a current client are the duty to commit to the client's cause, the duty of confidentiality, the duty of candour and the duty to avoid conflicting interests. Current clients must be assured of the lawyer's undivided loyalty, free from any material impairment of the lawyer and client relationship.

[6] [FLSC - not in use]

[7] Accordingly, factors for the lawyer's consideration in determining whether a conflict of interest exists include

- (a) the immediacy of the legal interests;
- (b) whether the legal interests are directly adverse;
- (c) whether the issue is substantive or procedural;
- (d) the temporal relationship between the matters;
- (e) the significance of the issue to the immediate and long-term interests of the clients involved; and
- (f) the clients' reasonable expectations in retaining the lawyer for the particular matter or representation.

Examples of Conflicts of Interest

[8] Conflicts of interest can arise in many different circumstances. The following are examples of situations in which conflicts of interest commonly arise requiring a lawyer to take particular care to determine whether a conflict of interest exists:

- (a) A lawyer acts as an advocate in one matter against a person when the lawyer represents that person on some other matter.
- (b) A lawyer provides legal advice on a series of commercial transactions to the owner of a small business and at the same time provides legal advice to an employee of the business on an

employment matter, thereby acting for clients whose legal interests are directly adverse.

(c) A lawyer, an associate, a law partner or a family member has a personal financial interest in a client's affairs or in a matter in which the lawyer is requested to act for a client, such as a partnership interest in some joint business venture with a client.

(i) A lawyer owning a small number of shares of a publicly traded corporation would not necessarily have a conflict of interest in acting for the corporation because the holding may have no adverse influence on the lawyer's judgment or loyalty to the client.

(d) A lawyer has a sexual or close personal relationship with a client.

(i) Such a relationship may conflict with the lawyer's duty to provide objective, disinterested professional advice to the client. The relationship may obscure whether certain information was acquired in the course of the lawyer and client relationship and may jeopardize the client's right to have all information concerning their affairs held in strict confidence. The relationship may in some circumstances permit exploitation of the client by their lawyer. If the lawyer is a member of a firm and concludes that a conflict exists, the conflict is not imputed to the lawyer's firm, but would be cured if another lawyer in the firm who is not involved in such a relationship with the client handled the client's work.

(e) A lawyer or their law firm acts for a public or private corporation and the lawyer serves as a director of the corporation.

These two roles may result in a conflict of interest or other problems because they may

- (i) affect the lawyer's independent judgment and fiduciary obligations in either or both roles,
- (ii) obscure legal advice from business and practical advice,
- (iii) jeopardize the protection of lawyer and client privilege, and
- (iv) disqualify the lawyer or the law firm from acting for the organization.

(f) Sole practitioners who practise with other licensees in cost-sharing or other arrangements represent clients on opposite sides of a dispute. See rule 3.3-1, Commentary [7]

[New and amended – October 2014]

Consent

3.4-2 A lawyer shall not represent a client in a matter when there is a conflict of interest unless there is express or implied consent from all clients and it is reasonable for the lawyer to conclude that he or she is able to represent each client without having a material adverse effect upon the representation of or loyalty to the other client.

- (a) Express consent must be fully informed and voluntary after disclosure.

- (b) Consent may be implied and need not be in writing where all of the following apply:
- (i) the client is a government, financial institution, publicly traded or similarly substantial entity, or an entity with in-house counsel,
 - (ii) the matters are unrelated,
 - (iii) the lawyer has no relevant confidential information from one client that might reasonably affect the representation of the other client, and
 - (iv) the client has commonly consented to lawyers acting for and against it in unrelated matters.

Commentary

[0.1] Rule 3.4-2 permits a client to accept the risk of material impairment of representation or loyalty. However, the lawyer would be unable to act where it is reasonable to conclude that representation or loyalty will be materially impaired even with client consent. Possible material impairment may be waived but actual material impairment cannot be waived.

Disclosure and consent

[1] Disclosure is an essential requirement to obtaining a client's consent. Where it is not possible to provide the client with adequate disclosure because of the confidentiality of the information of another client, the lawyer must decline to act.

[2] The lawyer should inform the client of the relevant circumstances and the reasonably foreseeable ways that the conflict of interest could adversely affect the client's interests. This would include the lawyer's relations to the parties and any interest in or connection with the matter.

[3] Following the required disclosure, the client can decide whether to give consent. As important as it is to the client that the lawyer's judgment and freedom of action on the client's behalf not be subject to other interests, duties or obligations, in practice this factor may not always be decisive. Instead, it may be only one of several factors that the client will weigh when deciding whether or not to give the consent referred to in the rule. Other factors might include, for example, the availability of another lawyer of comparable expertise and experience, the stage that the matter or proceeding has reached, the extra cost, delay and inconvenience involved in engaging another lawyer, and the latter's unfamiliarity with the client and the client's affairs.

Consent in advance

[4] A lawyer may be able to request that a client consent in advance to conflicts that might arise in the future. As the effectiveness of such consent is generally determined by the extent to which the client reasonably understands the material risks that the consent entails, the more comprehensive the explanation of the types of future representations that might arise and the actual and reasonably

foreseeable adverse consequences of those representations, the greater the likelihood that the client will have the requisite understanding. A general, open-ended consent will ordinarily be ineffective because it is not reasonably likely that the client will have understood the material risks involved. If the client is an experienced user of the legal services involved and is reasonably informed regarding the risk that a conflict may arise, such consent is more likely to be effective, particularly if, for example, the client is independently represented by other counsel in giving consent and the consent is limited to future conflicts unrelated to the subject of the representation.

[5] While not a pre-requisite to advance consent, in some circumstances it may be advisable to recommend that the client obtain independent legal advice before deciding whether to provide consent. Advance consent must be recorded, for example in a retainer letter.

Implied consent

[6] In some cases consent may be implied, rather than expressly granted. As the Supreme Court held in *R. v. Neil* and in *Strother v. 3464920 Canada Inc*, however, the concept of implied consent is applicable in exceptional cases only. Governments, chartered banks and entities that might be considered sophisticated consumers of legal services may accept that lawyers may act against them in unrelated matters where there is no danger of misuse of confidential information. The more sophisticated the client is as a consumer of legal services, the more likely it will be that an inference of consent can be drawn. The mere nature of the client is not, however, a sufficient basis upon which to assume implied consent; the matters must be unrelated, the lawyer must not possess confidential information from one client that could affect the representation of the other client, and there must be a reasonable basis upon which to conclude that the client has commonly accepted that lawyers may act against it in such circumstances.

[New – October 2014]

Dispute

3.4-3 Despite rule 3.4-2, a lawyer shall not represent opposing parties in a dispute.

Commentary

[1] A lawyer representing a client who is a party in a dispute with another party or parties must competently and diligently develop and argue the position of the client. In a dispute, the parties' immediate legal interests are clearly adverse. If the lawyer were permitted to act for opposing parties in such circumstances even with consent, the lawyer's advice, judgment and loyalty to one client would be materially and adversely affected by the same duties to the other client or clients. In short, the lawyer would find it impossible to act without offending the rules in Section 3.4.

[Amended – October 2014]

3.4-4 [FLSC - not in use]

Joint Retainers

3.4-5 Before a lawyer acts in a matter or transaction for more than one client, the lawyer shall advise each of the clients that

- (a) the lawyer has been asked to act for both or all of them;
- (b) no information received in connection with the matter from one client can be treated as confidential so far as any of the others are concerned; and
- (c) if a conflict develops that cannot be resolved, the lawyer cannot continue to act for both or all of them and may have to withdraw completely.

Commentary

[1] Although this rule does not require that a lawyer advise clients to obtain independent legal advice before the lawyer may accept a joint retainer, in some cases, the lawyer should recommend such advice to ensure that the clients' consent to the joint retainer is informed, genuine and uncoerced. This is especially so when one of the clients is less sophisticated or more vulnerable than the other.

[2] A lawyer who receives instructions from spouses or partners as defined in the *Substitute Decisions Act, 1992*, S.O. 1992, c. 30 to prepare one or more wills for them based on their shared understanding of what is to be in each will should treat the matter as a joint retainer and comply with this rule. Further, at the outset of this joint retainer, the lawyer should advise the spouses or partners that, if subsequently only one of them were to communicate new instructions, such as instructions to change or revoke a will

- (a) the subsequent communication would be treated as a request for a new retainer and not as part of the joint retainer;
- (b) in accordance with rules 3.3-1 to 3.3-6 (Confidentiality), the lawyer would be obliged to hold the subsequent communication in strict confidence and not disclose it to the other spouse or partner; and
- (c) the lawyer would have a duty to decline the new retainer, unless:
 - (i) the spouses or partners had annulled their marriage, divorced, permanently ended their conjugal relationship or permanently ended their close personal relationship, as the case may be;
 - (ii) the other spouse or partner had died; or
 - (iii) the other spouse or partner was informed of the subsequent communication and agreed to the lawyer acting on the new instructions.

[3] After advising the spouses or partners in the manner described above, the lawyer should obtain their consent to act in accordance with rule 3.4-7.

[3.1] Joint retainers should be distinguished from separate retainers in which a law firm is retained to assist two or more clients competing at the same time for the same opportunity such as, for example, by competing bids in a corporate acquisition or competing applications for a single licence. Each client would be represented by different lawyers in the firm. Since competing retainers of this kind are not joint retainers, information received can be treated as confidential and not disclosed to the client in the competing retainer. However, competing retainers to pursue the same opportunity require express consent pursuant to rule 3.4-2 because a conflict of interest will exist and the retainers will be related. With consent, confidentiality screens as described in rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-26 would be permitted between competing retainers to pursue the same opportunity. But confidentiality screens are not permitted in a joint retainer because rule 3.4-5(b) does not permit treating information received in connection with the

joint retainer as confidential so far as any of the joint clients are concerned.

[Amended – October 2014]

3.4-6 If a lawyer has a continuing relationship with a client for whom the lawyer acts regularly, before the lawyer accepts joint employment for that client and another client in a matter or transaction, the lawyer shall advise the other client of the continuing relationship and recommend that the client obtain independent legal advice about the joint retainer.

3.4-7 When a lawyer has advised the clients as provided under rules 3.4-5 and 3.4-6 and the parties are content that the lawyer act, the lawyer shall obtain their consent.

Commentary

[1] Consent in writing, or a record of the consent in a separate written communication to each client is required. Even if all the parties concerned consent, a lawyer should avoid acting for more than one client when it is likely that a contentious issue will arise between them or their interests, rights or obligations will diverge as the matter progresses.

3.4-8 Except as provided by rule 3.4-9, if a contentious issue arises between clients who have consented to a joint retainer, the lawyer shall not advise either of them on the contentious issue and the following rules apply:

- (a) The lawyer shall
 - (i) refer the clients to other lawyers for that purpose; or
 - (ii) if no legal advice is required and the clients are sophisticated, advise them that they have the option to settle the contentious issue by direct negotiation in which the lawyer does not participate.
- (b) If the contentious issue is not resolved, the lawyer shall withdraw from the joint representation.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] This rule does not prevent a lawyer from arbitrating or settling, or attempting to arbitrate or settle a dispute between two or more clients or former clients who are not under any legal disability and who wish to submit the dispute to the lawyer.

[2] If, after the clients have consented to a joint retainer, an issue contentious between them or some of them arises, the lawyer is not necessarily precluded from advising them on non-contentious matters.

3.4-9 Despite rule 3.4-8, if clients consent to a joint retainer and also agree that if a contentious issue arises the lawyer may continue to advise one of them, the lawyer may advise that client about the contentious matter and shall refer the other or others to another lawyer for that purpose.

Acting Against Former Clients

3.4-10 Unless the former client consents, a lawyer shall not act against a former client in

- (a) the same matter,
- (b) any related matter, or
- (c) save as provided by rule 3.4-11, any other matter if the lawyer has relevant confidential information arising from the representation of the former client that may prejudice that client.

Commentary

[1] Unlike rules 3.4-1 through 3.4-9, which deal with current client conflicts, rules 3.4.10 and 3.4-11 address conflicts where the lawyer acts against a former client. Rule 3.4-10 guards against the misuse of confidential information from a previous retainer and ensures that a lawyer does not attack the legal work done during a previous retainer, or undermine the client's position on a matter that was central to a previous retainer. It is not improper for a lawyer to act against a former client in a fresh and independent matter wholly unrelated to any work the lawyer has previously done for that client if previously obtained confidential information is irrelevant to that matter.

[Amended – October 2014]

3.4-11 When a lawyer has acted for a former client and obtained confidential information relevant to a new matter, another lawyer (“the other lawyer”) in the lawyer’s firm may act in the new matter against the former client provided that:

- (a) the former client consents to the other lawyer acting; or
- (b) the law firm establishes that it has taken adequate measures on a timely basis to ensure that there will be no risk of disclosure of the former client’s confidential information to the other lawyer having carriage of the new matter.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] The guidelines at the end of the Commentary to rule 3.4-26 regarding lawyer transfers between firms provide valuable guidance for the protection of confidential information in the rare cases in which, having

regard to all of the relevant circumstances, it is appropriate for another lawyer in the lawyer's firm to act against the former client.

Affiliations Between Lawyers and Affiliated Entities

3.4-11.1 Where there is an affiliation, before accepting a retainer to provide legal services to a client jointly with non-legal services of an affiliated entity, a lawyer shall disclose to the client

- (a) any possible loss of solicitor and client privilege because of the involvement of the affiliated entity, including circumstances where a non-lawyer or non-lawyer staff of the affiliated entity provide services, including support services, in the lawyer's office;
- (b) the lawyer's role in providing legal services and in providing non-legal services or in providing both legal and non-legal services, as the case may be;
- (c) any financial, economic or other arrangements between the lawyer and the affiliated entity that may affect the independence of the lawyer's representation of the client, including whether the lawyer shares in the revenues, profits or cash flows of the affiliated entity; and
- (d) agreements between the lawyer and the affiliated entity, such as agreements with respect to referral of clients between the lawyer and the affiliated entity, that may affect the independence of the lawyer's representation of the client.

3.4-11.2 Where there is an affiliation, after making the disclosure as required by rule 3.4-11.1, the lawyer shall obtain the client's consent before accepting a retainer under rule 3.4-11.1.

3.4-11.3 Where there is an affiliation, a lawyer shall establish a system to search for conflicts of interest of the affiliation.

Commentary

[1] Lawyers practising in an affiliation are required to control the practice through which they deliver legal services to the public. They are also required to address conflicts of interest in respect of a proposed retainer by a client as if the lawyer's practice and the practice of the affiliated entity were one where the lawyers accept a retainer to provide legal services to that client jointly with non-legal services of the affiliated entity. The affiliation is subject to the same conflict of interest rules as apply to lawyers and law firms. This obligation may extend to inquiries of offices of affiliated entities outside of Ontario where those offices are treated economically as part of a single affiliated entity.

[2] In reference to paragraph (a) of rule 3.4-11.1, see also subsection 3(2) of By-Law 7.1 (Operational Obligations and Responsibilities).

[Amended – January 2008]

Acting for Borrower and Lender

3.4-12 Subject to rule 3.4-14, a lawyer or two or more lawyers practising in partnership or association must not act for or otherwise represent both lender and borrower in a mortgage or loan transaction.

3.4-13 In rules 3.4-14 to 3.4-16 “lending client” means a client that is a bank, trust company, insurance company, credit union or finance company that lends money in the ordinary course of its business.

3.4-14 Provided there is compliance with this rule and rules 3.4-15 to 3.4-19, a lawyer may act for or otherwise represent both lender and borrower in a mortgage or loan transaction in any of the following situations:

- (a) the lender is a lending client;
- (b) the lender is selling real property to the borrower and the mortgage represents part of the purchase price;
- (c) the lawyer practises in a remote location where there are no other lawyers that either party could conveniently retain for the mortgage or loan transaction;
- (c.1) the consideration for the mortgage or loan does not exceed \$50,000; or
- (d) the lender and borrower are not at “arm’s length” as defined in section 251 of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada).

3.4-15 When a lawyer acts for both the borrower and the lender in a mortgage or loan transaction, the lawyer must disclose to the borrower and the lender, in writing, before the advance or release of the mortgage or loan funds, all material information that is relevant to the transaction.

Commentary

[1] What is material is to be determined objectively. Material information would be facts that would be perceived objectively as relevant by any reasonable lender or borrower. An example is a price escalation or “flip”, where a property is re-transferred or re-sold on the same day or within a short time period for a significantly higher price. The duty to disclose arises even if the lender or the borrower does not ask for the specific information.

3.4-16 If a lawyer is jointly retained by a client and a lending client in respect of a mortgage or loan from the lending client to the other client, including any guarantee of that mortgage or loan, the lending client's consent is deemed to exist upon the lawyer's receipt of written instructions from the lending client to act and the lawyer is not required to

- (a) provide the advice described in rule 3.4-5 to the lending client before accepting the retainer;
- (b) provide the advice described in rule 3.4-6; or
- (c) obtain the consent of the lending client as required by rule 3.4-7, including confirming the lending client's consent in writing, unless the lending client requires that its consent be reduced to writing.

Commentary

[1] Rules 3.4-13 and 3.4-16 are intended to simplify the advice and consent process between a lawyer and institutional lender clients. Such clients are generally sophisticated. Their acknowledgement of the terms of and consent to the joint retainer is usually confirmed in the documentation of the transaction (e.g., mortgage loan instructions) and the consent is generally acknowledged by such clients when the lawyer is requested to act.

[2] Rule 3.4-16 applies to all loans when a lawyer is acting jointly for both the lending client and another client regardless of the purpose of the loan, including, without restriction, mortgage loans, business loans and personal loans. It also applies where there is a guarantee of such a loan.

Multi-discipline Practice

3.4-16.1 A lawyer in a multi-discipline practice shall ensure that non-licensee partners and associates observe the rules in Section 3.4 for the legal practice and for any other business or professional undertaking carried on by them outside the legal practice.

[Amended - June 2009]

Short-term Limited Legal Services

3.4-16.2 In this rule and rules 3.4-16.3 to 3.4-16.6,

“*pro bono* client” means a client to whom a lawyer provides short-term limited legal services;

“short-term limited legal services” means *pro bono* summary legal services provided by a lawyer to a client under the auspices of Pro Bono Law Ontario’s Law Help Ontario program for matters in the Superior Court of Justice or in Small Claims Court, with the expectation by the lawyer and the client that the lawyer will not provide continuing legal representation in the matter.

3.4-16.3 A lawyer engaged in the provision of short-term limited legal services may provide legal services to a *pro bono* client unless

- (a) the lawyer knows or becomes aware that the interests of the *pro bono* client are directly adverse to the immediate interests of another current client of the lawyer, the lawyer’s firm or Pro Bono Law Ontario; or
- (b) the lawyer has or, while providing the short-term limited legal services, obtains confidential information relevant to a matter involving a current or former client of the lawyer, the lawyer’s firm or Pro Bono Law Ontario whose interests are adverse to those of the *pro bono* client.

3.4-16.4 A lawyer who is a partner, an associate, an employee or an employer of a lawyer providing short-term limited legal services to a *pro bono* client may act for other clients of the law firm whose interests are adverse to the *pro bono* client so long as adequate and timely measures are in place to ensure that no disclosure of the *pro bono* client’s confidential information is made to the lawyer acting for the other clients.

3.4-16.5 A lawyer who is unable to provide short-term limited legal services to a *pro bono* client because of the operation of rules 3.4-16.3(a) or 3.4-16.3(b) shall cease to provide short term limited legal services to the *pro bono* client as soon as the lawyer actually becomes aware of the adverse interest or as soon as he or she has or obtains the confidential information referred to in rule 3.4-16.3 and the lawyer shall not seek the *pro bono* client’s waiver of the conflict.

3.4-16.6 In providing short-term limited legal services, a lawyer shall

- (a) ensure, before providing the legal services, that the appropriate disclosure of the nature of the legal services has been made to the client; and
- (b) determine whether the client may require additional legal services beyond the short-term limited legal services and if additional services are required or advisable, encourage the client to seek further legal assistance.

Commentary

[1] Short term limited legal service 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 Pro Bono Law Ontario (PBLO) and the lawyers and law firms who provide these services. Performing a full conflicts screening in circumstances in which the *pro bono* services described in rule 3.4-16.2 are being offered can be very challenging given the timelines, volume and logistics of the setting in which the services are provided. The time required to screen for conflicts may mean that qualifying individuals for whom these brief legal services are available are denied access to legal assistance.

[2] Rules 3.4-16.2 to 3.4-16.6 apply in circumstances in which the limited nature of the legal services being provided by a lawyer 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 limited legal services only if the lawyer has actual knowledge of a conflict of interest between the *pro bono* client and an existing or former client of the lawyer, the lawyer's firm or PBLO. For example, a conflict of interest of which the lawyer has no actual knowledge but which is imputed to the lawyer because of the lawyer's membership in or association or employment with a firm would not preclude the lawyer from representing the client seeking short-term limited legal services.

[3] The lawyer's knowledge would be based on the lawyer's reasonable recollection and information provided by the client in the ordinary course of the consultation and in the client's application to PBLO for legal assistance.

[4] The personal disqualification of a lawyer participating in PBLO's program does not create a conflict for the other lawyers participating in the program, as the conflict is not imputed to them.

[5] Confidential information obtained by a lawyer representing a *pro bono* client, as defined in rule 3.4-16.2, will not be imputed to the lawyer's licensee partners, associates and employees or non-licensee partners or associates in a multi-discipline partnership. As such, these individuals may continue to act for another client adverse in interest to the *pro bono* client who is obtaining or has obtained short-term limited legal services, and may act in future for another client adverse in interest to the *pro bono* client who is obtaining or has obtained short-term limited legal services.

[6] Appropriate screening measures must be in place to prevent disclosure of confidential information relating to the client to the lawyer's partners, associates, employees or employer (in the practice of law). Rule 3.4-16.4 extends, with necessary modifications, the rules and guidelines about conflicts arising from a lawyer transfer between law firms (rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-26) to the situation of a law firm acting against a current client of the firm in providing short term limited legal services. Measures that the lawyer providing the short-term limited legal services should take to ensure the confidentiality of information of the client's information include

(a) having no involvement in the representation of or any discussions with others in the firm about another client whose interests conflict with those of the *pro bono* client;

(b) identifying relevant files, if any, of the *pro bono* client and physically segregating access to them to those working on the file or who require access for specifically identified or approved reasons; and

(c) ensuring that the firm has distributed a written policy to all licensees, non-licensee partners and associates and support staff, explaining the screening measures that are in place.

[7] Rule 3.4-16.5 precludes a lawyer from obtaining a waiver in respect of conflicts of interest that arise in providing short-term legal services.

[New – April 22, 2010]

Lawyers Acting for Transferor and Transferee in Transfers of Title

3.4-16.7 Subject to rule 3.4-16.8, an individual lawyer shall not act for or otherwise represent both the transferor and the transferee in a transfer of title to real property.

3.4-16.8 Rule 3.4-16.7 does not prevent a law firm of two or more lawyers from acting for or otherwise representing a transferor and a transferee in a transfer of title to real property so long as the transferor and transferee are represented by different lawyers in the firm and there is no violation of rule 3.4.

3.4-16.9 So long as there is no violation of the rules in Section 3.4, an individual lawyer may act for or otherwise represent both the transferor and the transferee in a transfer of title to real property if

- (a) the *Land Registration Reform Act* permits the lawyer to sign the transfer on behalf of the transferor and the transferee;
- (b) the transferor and transferee are “related persons” as defined in section 251 of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada); or
- (c) the lawyer practises law in a remote location where there are no other lawyers that either the transferor or the transferee could without undue inconvenience retain for the transfer.

[Effective March 31, 2008]

Conflicts from Transfer Between Law Firms

Interpretation and Application of Rule

3.4-17 In rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-26

“matter” means a case, a transaction, or other client representation, but within such representation does not include offering general “know-how” and, in the case of a government lawyer, providing policy advice unless the advice relates to a particular client representation.

[Amended – June 2015]

3.4-18 Rules 3.4-17 to 3.4-23 apply when a lawyer transfers from one law firm (“former law firm”) to another (“new law firm”), and

- (a) the transferring lawyer or the new law firm is aware at the time of the transfer or later discovers it is reasonable to believe the transferring lawyer has confidential information relevant to the new law firm’s matter for its client; or
- (b) the transferring lawyer or the new law firm is aware at the time of the transfer or later discovers that
 - (i) the new law firm represents a client in a matter that is the same as or related to a matter in which the former law firm represents or represented its client (“former client”);
 - (ii) the interests of those clients in that matter conflict; and
 - (iii) the transferring lawyer actually possesses relevant information respecting that matter.

Commentary

[1] the purpose of the rule is to deal with actual knowledge. Imputed knowledge does not give rise to disqualification. As stated by the Supreme Court of Canada in *Macdonald Estate v. Martin*, [1990] 3 SCR 1235, with respect to the partners or associates of a lawyer who has relevant confidential information, the concept of imputed knowledge is unrealistic in the area of the mega-firm. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the inference to be drawn is that lawyers working together in the same firm will share confidences on the matters on which they are working, such that actual knowledge may be presumed. That presumption can be rebutted by clear and convincing evidence that shows that all reasonable measures, as discussed in rule 3.4-20, have been taken to ensure that no disclosure will occur by the transferring lawyer to the member or members of the firm who are engaged against a former client.

[2] The duties imposed by this rule concerning confidential information should be distinguished from the general ethical duty to hold in strict confidence all information concerning the business and affairs of the client acquired in the course of the professional relationship, which duty applies without regard to the nature or source of the information or to the fact that others may share the knowledge.

[3] Law firms with multiple offices - This rule treats as one “law firm” such entities as the various legal services units of a government, a corporation with separate regional legal departments and an interjurisdictional law firm.

[Amended – June 2015]

3.4-19 Rules 3.4-20 to 3.4-22 do not apply to a lawyer employed by the federal, a provincial or a territorial government who, after transferring from one department, ministry or agency to another, continues to be employed by that government..

Commentary

[1] Government employees and in-house counsel — The definition of “law firm” includes one or more lawyers practising in a government, a Crown corporation, any other public body or a corporation. Thus, the rule applies to lawyers transferring to or from government service and into or out of an in-house counsel position, but does not extend to purely internal transfers in which, after transfer, the employer remains the same.

[Amended – June 2015]

Law Firm Disqualification

3.4-20 If the transferring lawyer actually possesses confidential information relevant to a matter respecting the former client that may prejudice the former client if disclosed to a member of the new law firm, the new law firm must cease its representation of its client in that matter unless

- (a) the former client consents to the new law firm’s continued representation of its client; or
- (b) the new law firm has
 - (i) taken reasonable measures to ensure that there will be no disclosure of the former client’s confidential information by the transferring lawyer to any member of the new law firm; and
 - (ii) advised the lawyer’s former client, if requested by the client, of the measures taken.

Commentary

[1] It is not possible to offer a set of “reasonable measures” that will be appropriate or adequate in every case. Instead, the new law firm that seeks to implement reasonable measures must exercise professional judgment in determining what steps must be taken “to ensure that no disclosure will occur to any member of the new law firm of the former client’s confidential information”. Such measures may include timely and properly constructed confidentiality screens.

[2] For example, the various legal services units of a government, a corporation with separate regional legal departments, an interjurisdictional law firm, or a legal aid program may be able to demonstrate that, because of its institutional structure, reporting relationships, function, nature of work, and geography, relatively fewer “measures” are necessary to ensure the non-disclosure of client confidences. If it can be shown that, because of factors such as the above, lawyers in separate units, offices or department do not “work together” with other lawyer in other units, offices or departments, this will be taken into account in the determination of what screening measures are “reasonable”.

[3] The guidelines that follow are intended as a checklist of relevant factors to be considered. Adoption of only some of the guidelines may be adequate in some cases, while adoption of them all may not be

sufficient in others.

Guidelines: How to Screen/Measures to be taken

1. The screened lawyer should have no involvement in the new law firm's representation of its client in the matter.
2. The screened lawyer should not discuss the current matter or any information relating to the representation of the former client (the two may be identical) with anyone else in the new law firm.
3. No member of the new law firm should discuss the current matter or the previous representation with the screened lawyer.
4. The firm should take steps to preclude the screened lawyer from having access to any part of the file.
5. The new law firm should document the measures taken to screen the transferring lawyer, the time when these measures were put in place (the sooner the better), and should advise all affected lawyers and support staff of the measures taken.
6. These Guidelines apply with necessary modifications to situations in which non-lawyer staff employees leave one law firm to work for another and a determination is made, before hiring the individual, on whether any conflicts of interest will be created and whether the potential new hire actually possesses relevant confidential information.

How to Determine If a Conflict Exists Before Hiring a Potential Transferee

[4] When a law firm considers hiring a lawyer from another law firm, the transferring lawyer and the new law firm need to determine, before the transfer, whether any conflicts of interest will be created. Conflicts can arise with respect to clients of the law firm that the transferring lawyer is leaving and with respect to clients of a firm in which the transferring lawyer worked at some earlier time.

[5] After completing the interview process and before hiring the transferring lawyer, the new law firm should determine whether any conflicts exist. In determining whether the transferring lawyer actually possesses relevant confidential information, both the transferring lawyer and the new law firm must be very careful, during any interview of a potential transferring lawyer, or other recruitment process, to ensure that they do not disclose client confidences. See Rule 3.3-7 which provides that a lawyer may disclose confidential information to the extent the lawyer reasonably believes necessary to detect and resolve conflicts of interest where lawyers transfer between firms.

[6] A lawyer's duty to the lawyer's firm may also govern a lawyer's conduct when exploring an association with another firm and is beyond the scope of these Rules.

Transferring Lawyer Disqualification

3.4-21 Unless the former client consents, a transferring lawyer referred to in rule 3.4-20 or 3.4-22 must not

- (a) participate in any manner in the new law firm's representation of its client in the matter; or
- (b) disclose any confidential information respecting the former client except as permitted by rule 3.3-7.

[Amended – June 2015]

3.4-22 Unless the former client consents, members of the new law firm must not discuss the new law firm's representation of its client or the former law firm's representation of the former client in that matter with a transferring lawyer referred to in rule 3.4-20 except as permitted by rule 3.3-7.

[Amended – June 2015]

Lawyer Due Diligence for non-lawyer staff

3.4-23 A transferring lawyer and the members of the new law firm shall exercise due diligence in ensuring that each member and employee of the lawyer's law firm, and all other persons 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 of
 - (i) 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 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 transferring lawyer and the members of the new law firm to ensure that staff who may have confidential information that if disclosed, may prejudice the interest of a client of the former firm, have no involvement with and no access to information relating to

the relevant client of the new firm.

[Amended – June 2015]

3.4-24 [deleted]

3.4-25 [deleted]

3.4-26 [deleted]

Doing Business with a Client

3.4-27 [FLSC – not in use]

3.4-28 A lawyer must not enter into a transaction with a client unless the transaction is fair and reasonable to the client, the client consents to the transaction and the client has independent legal representation with respect to the transaction.

Commentary

[1] This provision applies to any transaction with a client, including

- (a) lending or borrowing money;
- (b) buying or selling property;
- (c) accepting a gift, including a testamentary gift;
- (d) giving or acquiring ownership, security or other pecuniary interest in a company or other entity;
- (e) recommending an investment; and
- (f) entering into a common business venture.

[2] The relationship between lawyer and client is a fiduciary one, and no conflict between the lawyer's own interest and the lawyer's duty to the client can be permitted. The remuneration paid to a lawyer by a client for the legal work undertaken by the lawyer for the client does not give rise to a conflicting interest.

Transactions with Clients

3.4-29 Subject to rule 3.4-30, if a client intends to enter into a transaction with their lawyer or with a corporation or other entity in which the lawyer has an interest other than a corporation or other entity whose securities are publicly traded, before accepting any retainer, the lawyer must

- (a) disclose and explain the nature of the conflicting interest to the client or, in the case of a potential conflict, how and why it might develop later;

- (b) recommend and require that the client receive independent legal advice; and
- (c) if the client requests the lawyer to act, obtain the client's consent.

Commentary

[1] If the lawyer does not choose to disclose the conflicting interest or cannot do so without breaching confidence, the lawyer must decline the retainer.

[2] A lawyer should not uncritically accept a client's decision to have the lawyer act. It should be borne in mind that, if the lawyer accepts the retainer, the lawyer's first duty will be to the client. If the lawyer has any misgivings about being able to place the client's interests first, the retainer should be declined.

[3] Generally, in disciplinary proceedings under this rule, the burden will rest upon the lawyer to show good faith, that adequate disclosure was made in the matter, and that the client's consent was obtained.

[4] If the investment is by borrowing from the client, the transaction may fall within the requirements of rule 3.4-31.

3.4-30 When a client intends to pay for legal services by transferring to a lawyer a share, participation or other interest in property or in an enterprise, other than a non-material interest in a publicly traded enterprise, the lawyer must recommend but need not require that the client receive independent legal advice before accepting a retainer.

Borrowing from Clients

3.4-31 A lawyer must not borrow money from a client unless

- (a) the client is a lending institution, financial institution, insurance company, trust company or any similar corporation whose business includes lending money to members of the public, or
- (b) the client is a related person as defined in section 251 of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada) and the lawyer is able to discharge the onus of proving that the client's interests were fully protected by the nature of the matter and by independent legal advice or independent legal representation.

Commentary

[1] Whether a person is considered a client within this rule when lending money to a lawyer on that person's own account or investing money in a security in which the lawyer has an interest is determined having regard to all circumstances. If the circumstances are such that the lender or investor might reasonably feel entitled to look to the lawyer for guidance and advice about the loan or investment, the lawyer is bound by the same fiduciary obligation that attaches to a lawyer in dealings with a client.

Certificate of Independent Legal Advice

3.4-32 A lawyer retained to give independent legal advice relating to a transaction in which funds are to be advanced by the client to another lawyer must do the following before the client advances any funds:

- (a) provide the client with a written certificate that the client has received independent legal advice, and
- (b) obtain the client's signature on a copy of the certificate of independent legal advice and send the signed copy to the lawyer with whom the client proposes to transact business.

3.4-33 Subject to rule 3.4-31, if a lawyer's spouse or a corporation, syndicate or partnership in which either or both of the lawyer and the lawyer's spouse has a direct or indirect substantial interest borrow money from a client, the lawyer must ensure that the client's interests are fully protected by the nature of the case and by independent legal representation.

Lawyers in Loan or Mortgage Transactions

3.4-34 If a lawyer lends money to a client, before agreeing to make the loan, the lawyer must:

- (a) disclose and explain the nature of the conflicting interest to the client;
- (b) require that the client receive independent legal representation; and
- (c) obtain the client's consent.

In Rules 3.4-34.1 and 3.4-34.3

"related persons" means related persons as defined in section 251 of the *Income Tax Act* (Canada); and

"syndicated mortgage" means a mortgage having more than one investor.

3.4-34.1 A lawyer engaged in the private practice of law in Ontario shall not directly, or indirectly through a corporation, syndicate, partnership, trust, or other entity in which the lawyer or a related person has a financial interest, other than an ownership interest of a corporation or other entity offering its securities to the public of less than five per cent (5%) of any class of securities

- (a) hold a syndicated mortgage or loan in trust for investor clients unless each investor client receives
 - (i) a complete reporting letter on the transaction,
 - (ii) a trust declaration signed by the person in whose name the mortgage or any security instrument is registered, and
 - (iii) a copy of the duplicate registered mortgage or security instrument,
- (b) arrange or recommend the participation of a client or other person as an investor in a syndicated mortgage or loan where the lawyer is an investor unless the lawyer can demonstrate that the client or other person had independent legal advice in making the investment, or
- (c) sell mortgages or loans to, or arrange mortgages or loans for, clients or other persons except in accordance with the skill, competence, and integrity usually expected of a lawyer in dealing with clients.

Commentary**ACCEPTABLE MORTGAGE OR LOAN TRANSACTIONS**

[1] A lawyer may engage in the following mortgage or loan transactions in connection with the practice of law

- (a) a lawyer may invest in mortgages or loans personally or on behalf of a related person or a combination thereof;
- (b) a lawyer may deal in mortgages or loans as an executor, administrator, committee, trustee of a testamentary or inter vivos trust established for purposes other than mortgage or loan investment or under a power of attorney given for purposes other than exclusively for mortgage or loan investment; and
- (c) a lawyer may collect, on behalf of clients, mortgage or loan payments that are made payable in the name of the lawyer under a written direction to that effect given by the client to the mortgagor or borrower provided that such payments are deposited into the lawyer's trust account.

[2] A lawyer may introduce a borrower (whether or not a client) to a lender (whether or not a client) and the lawyer may then act for either, and when rule 3.4-14 applies, the lawyer may act for both.

Disclosure

3.4-34.2 Where a lawyer sells or arranges mortgages for clients or other persons, the lawyer shall disclose in writing to each client or other person the priority of the mortgage and all other information relevant to the transaction that is known to the lawyer that would be of concern to a proposed investor.

No Advertising

3.4-34.3 A lawyer shall not promote, by advertising or otherwise, individual or joint investment by clients or other persons who have money to lend, in any mortgage in which a financial interest is held by the lawyer, a related person, or a corporation, syndicate, partnership, trust or other entity in which the lawyer or related person has a financial interest, other than an ownership interest of a corporation or other entity offering its securities to the public of less than five per cent (5%) of any class of securities.

Guarantees by a Lawyer

3.4-35 Except as provided by rule 3.4-36, a lawyer must not guarantee personally, or otherwise provide security for, any indebtedness in respect of which a client is a borrower or lender.

3.4-36 A lawyer may give a personal guarantee in the following circumstances

- (a) the lender is a lending institution, financial institution, insurance company, trust company or any similar corporation whose business includes lending money to members of the public, and the lender is directly or indirectly providing funds solely for the lawyer, the lawyer's spouse, parent or child;
- (b) the transaction is for the benefit of a non-profit or charitable institution, and the lawyer provides a guarantee as a member or supporter of such institution, either individually or together with other members or supporters of the institution; or
- (c) the lawyer has entered into a business venture with a client and a lender requires personal guarantees from all participants in the venture as a matter of course and
 - (i) the lawyer has complied with the rules in Section 3.4 (Conflicts), in particular, rules 3.4-27 to 3.4-36 (Doing Business with a Client), and
 - (ii) the lender and participants in the venture who are clients or former clients of the lawyer have independent legal representation.

Testamentary Instruments and Gifts

3.4-37 If a will contains a clause directing that the lawyer who drafted the will be retained to provide services in the administration of the client's estate, the lawyer should, before accepting that retainer, provide the trustees with advice, in writing, that the clause is a non-binding direction and the trustees can decide to retain other counsel.

3.4-38 Unless the client is a family member of the lawyer or the lawyer's partner or associate, a lawyer must not prepare or cause to be prepared an instrument giving the lawyer or an associate a gift or benefit from the client, including a testamentary gift.

[New – October 2014]

3.4-39 [FLSC - not in use]

Judicial Interim Release

3.4-40 Subject to Rule 3.4-41, a lawyer shall not in respect of any accused person for whom the lawyer acts

- (a) act as a surety for the accused;
- (b) deposit with a court the lawyer's own money or that of any firm in which the lawyer is a partner to secure the accused's release;
- (c) deposit with any court other valuable security to secure the accused's release; or
- (d) act in a supervisory capacity to the accused.

3.4-41 A lawyer may do any of the things referred to in rule 3.4-40 if the accused is in a family relationship with the lawyer and the accused is represented by the lawyer's partner or associate.

[New – October 2014]

SECTION 3.5 PRESERVATION OF CLIENT'S PROPERTY**Preservation of Client's Property**

3.5-1 [FLSC - not in use]

3.5-2 A lawyer shall care of a client's property as a careful and prudent owner would when dealing with like property and shall observe all relevant rules and law about the preservation of a client's property entrusted to a lawyer.

Commentary

[1] The duties concerning safekeeping, preserving, and accounting for clients' monies and other property are set out in the by-laws made under the *Law Society Act*.

[2] These duties are closely related to those regarding confidential information. A lawyer is responsible for maintaining the safety and confidentiality of the files of the client in the possession of the lawyer and should take all reasonable steps to ensure the privacy and safekeeping of a client's confidential information. The lawyer should keep the client's papers and other property out of sight as well as out of reach of those not entitled to see them and should, subject to any rights of lien, promptly return them to the client upon request or at the conclusion of the lawyer's retainer.

[3] [FLSC - not in use]

[4] If the lawyer withdraws from representing a client, the lawyer is required to comply with the rules in Section 3.7 (Withdrawal from Representation).

[Amended – October 2014]

Notification of Receipt of Property

3.5-3 A lawyer shall promptly notify the client of the receipt of any money or other property of the client, unless satisfied that the client is aware that they have come into the lawyer's custody.

Identifying Client's Property

3.5-4 A lawyer shall clearly label and identify the client's property and place it in safekeeping distinguishable from the lawyer's own property.

3.5-5 A lawyer shall maintain such records as necessary to identify a client's property that is in the lawyer's custody.

Accounting and Delivery

3.5-6 A lawyer shall account promptly for a client's property that is in the lawyer's custody and upon request shall deliver it to the order of the client or, if appropriate, at the conclusion of the retainer.

3.5-7 If a lawyer is unsure of the proper person to receive a client's property, the lawyer shall apply to a tribunal of competent jurisdiction for direction.

Commentary

[1] The lawyer should be alert to the duty to claim on behalf of a client any privilege in respect of property seized or attempted to be seized by an external authority or in respect of third party claims made against the property. In this regard, the lawyer should be familiar with the nature of the client's common law privilege and with relevant constitutional and statutory provisions such as those found in the *Income Tax Act (Canada)* and the *Criminal Code*.

[2], [3] and [4] [FLSC - not in use]

[Amended – October 2014]

SECTION 3.6 FEES AND DISBURSEMENTS**Reasonable Fees and Disbursements**

3.6-1 A lawyer shall not charge or accept any amount for a fee or disbursement unless it is fair and reasonable and has been disclosed in a timely fashion.

3.6-1.1 A lawyer shall not charge a client interest on an overdue account save as permitted by the *Solicitors Act* or as otherwise permitted by law.

Commentary

[1] What is a fair and reasonable fee will depend upon such factors as

- (a) the time and effort required and spent,
- (b) the difficulty of the matter and the importance of the matter to the client,
- (c) whether special skill or service has been required and provided,
- (c.1) the amount involved or the value of the subject-matter,
- (d) the results obtained,
- (e) fees authorized by statute or regulation,
- (f) special circumstances, such as the loss of other retainers, postponement of payment, uncertainty of reward, or urgency,
- (g) the likelihood, if made known to the client, that acceptance of the retainer will result in the lawyer's inability to accept other employment,
- (h) any relevant agreement between the lawyer and the client,
- (i) the experience and ability of the lawyer,
- (j) any estimate or range of fees given by the lawyer, and
- (k) the client's prior consent to the fee.

[2] The fiduciary relationship between lawyer and client requires full disclosure in all financial dealings between them and prohibits the acceptance by the lawyer of any hidden fees. No fee, reward, costs, commission, interest, rebate, agency or forwarding allowance, or other compensation related to professional employment may be taken by the lawyer from anyone other than the client without full disclosure to and the consent of the client or, where the lawyer's fees are being paid by someone other than the client, such as a legal aid agency, a borrower, or a personal representative, without the consent of such agency or other person.

[3] A lawyer should provide to the client in writing, before or within a reasonable time after commencing a representation, as much information regarding fees and disbursements, and interest as is reasonable and practical in the circumstances, including the basis on which fees will be determined.

[4] A lawyer should be ready to explain the basis of the fees and disbursements charged to the client. This is particularly important concerning fee charges or disbursements that the client might not reasonably be expected to anticipate. When something unusual or unforeseen occurs that may substantially affect the amount of a fee or disbursement, the lawyer should give to the client an immediate explanation. A lawyer should confirm with the client in writing the substance of all fee discussions that occur as a matter progresses, and a lawyer may revise an initial estimate of fees and disbursements.

[4.1] A lawyer should inform a client about their rights to have an account assessed under the *Solicitors Act*.

[Amended – October 2014]

Contingency Fees and Contingency Fee Agreements

3.6-2 Subject to rule 3.6-1, except in family law or criminal or quasi-criminal matters, a lawyer may enter into a written agreement in accordance with the *Solicitors Act* and the regulations thereunder, that provides that the lawyer's fee is contingent, in whole or in part, on the successful disposition or completion of the matter for which the lawyer's services are to be provided.

[Amended – November 2002, October 2004]

Commentary

[1] In determining the appropriate percentage or other basis of the contingency fee, the lawyer and the client should consider a number of factors, including the likelihood of success, the nature and complexity of the claim, the expense and risk of pursuing it, the amount of the expected recovery and who is to receive an award of costs. The lawyer and client may agree that in addition to the fee payable under the written agreement, any amount arising as a result of an award of costs or costs obtained as a part of a settlement is to be paid to the lawyer. Such agreement under the *Solicitors Act* must receive judicial approval. In such circumstances, a smaller percentage of the award than would otherwise be agreed upon for the contingency fee, after considering all relevant factors, will generally be appropriate. The test is whether the fee in all of the circumstances is fair and reasonable.

[New - October 2002, Amended October 2004, October 2014]

[2] [FLSC - not in use]

Statement of Account

3.6-3 In a statement of an account delivered to a client, a lawyer shall clearly and separately detail the amounts charged as fees and as disbursements.

Joint Retainer

3.6-4 Where a lawyer is acting for two or more clients in the same matter, the lawyer shall divide the fees and disbursements equitably between them, unless there is an agreement by the clients otherwise.

Division of Fees and Referral Fees

3.6-5 With the client's consent, fees for a matter may be divided between licensees who are not in the same firm, if the fees are divided in proportion to the work done and the responsibilities assumed.

3.6-6 A lawyer who refers a matter to another licensee because of the expertise and ability of the other licensee to handle the matter and the referral was not made because of a conflict of interest, the referring lawyer may accept and the other licensee may pay a referral fee provided that

- (a) the fee is reasonable and does not increase the total amount of the fee charged to the client, and
- (b) the client is informed and consents.

3.6-7 A lawyer shall not

- (a) directly or indirectly share, split, or divide their fees with any person who is not a licensee, or
- (b) give any financial or other reward to any person who is not a licensee for the referral of clients or client matters.

[Amended - April 2008, October 2014]

Commentary

[1] This rule prohibits lawyers from entering into arrangements to compensate or reward non-lawyers for the referral of clients. However, this rule does not prohibit a lawyer from:

- (a) making an arrangement respecting the purchase and sale of a law practice when the consideration payable includes a percentage of revenues generated from the practice sold;
- (b) entering into a lease under which a landlord directly or indirectly shares in the fees or revenues generated by the law practice;

(c) paying an employee for services, other than for referring clients, based on the revenue of the lawyer's firm or practice.

(d) [FLSC - not in use]

[New - May 2001, Amended – October 2014]

Exception for Multi-discipline Practices and Interprovincial and International Law Firms

3.6-8 Rule 3.6-7 does not apply to

- (a) multi-discipline practices of lawyer and non-licensee partners where the partnership agreement provides for the sharing of fees, cash flows or profits among members of the firm; and
- (b) sharing of fees, cash flows or profits by lawyers who are
 - (i) members of an interprovincial law firm, or
 - (ii) members of a law partnership of Ontario and non-Canadian lawyers who otherwise comply with the rules in Section 3.6.

[Amended – June 2009]

Commentary

[1] An affiliation is different from a multi-discipline practice established in accordance with the by-laws under the *Law Society Act*, an interprovincial law partnership or a partnership between Ontario lawyers and foreign lawyers. An affiliation is subject to rule 3.6-7. In particular, an affiliated entity is not permitted to share in the lawyer's revenues, cash flows or profits, either directly or indirectly through excessive inter-firm charges, for example, by charging inter-firm expenses above their fair market value.

[New - May 2001]

Payment and Appropriation of Funds

3.6-9 [FLSC - not in use]

3.6-10 A lawyer shall not appropriate any funds of the client held in trust or otherwise under the lawyer's control for or on account of fees except as permitted by the by-laws under the *Law Society Act*.

Commentary

[1] The rule is not intended to be an exhaustive statement of the considerations that apply to payment of a lawyer's account from trust. The handling of trust money is generally governed by the by-laws of the Law Society.

[2] Refusing to reimburse any portion of advance fees for work that has not been carried out when the contract of professional services with the client has terminated is a breach of the obligation to act with integrity.

3.6-11 If the amount of fees or disbursements charged by a lawyer is reduced on an assessment, the lawyer must repay the monies to the client as soon as is practicable.

3.6-12 [FLSC - not in use]

[Amended – October 2014]

SECTION 3.7 WITHDRAWAL FROM REPRESENTATION**Withdrawal from Representation**

3.7-1 A lawyer shall not withdraw from representation of a client except for good cause and on reasonable notice to the client.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] Although the client has the right to terminate the lawyer-client relationship at will, the lawyer does not enjoy the same freedom of action. Having undertaken the representation of a client, the lawyer should complete the task as ably as possible unless there is justifiable cause for terminating the relationship.

[2] An essential element of reasonable notice is notification to the client, unless the client cannot be located after reasonable efforts. No hard and fast rules can be laid down about what will constitute reasonable notice before withdrawal and how quickly a lawyer may cease acting after notification will depend on all relevant circumstances. Where the matter is covered by statutory provisions or rules of court, these will govern. In other situations, the governing principle is that the lawyer should protect the client's interests to the best of the lawyer's ability and should not desert the client at a critical stage of a matter or at a time when withdrawal would put the client in a position of disadvantage or peril.

[3] Every effort should be made to ensure that withdrawal occurs at an appropriate time in the proceedings in keeping with the lawyer's obligations. The court, opposing parties and others directly affected should also be notified of the withdrawal.

[4] When a law firm is dissolved or a lawyer leaves a firm to practise elsewhere, it usually results in the termination of the lawyer-client relationship as between a particular client and one or more of the lawyers involved. In such cases, most clients prefer to retain the services of the lawyer whom they regarded as being in charge of their business before the change. However, the final decision rests with the client, and the lawyers who are no longer retained by that client should act in accordance with the principles set out in this rule, and, in particular, should try to minimize expense and avoid prejudice to the client. The client's interests are paramount and, accordingly, the decision whether the lawyer will continue to represent a given client must be made by the client in the absence of undue influence or harassment by either the lawyer or the firm. That may require either or both the departing lawyer and the law firm to notify clients in writing that the lawyer is leaving and advise the client of the options available: to have the departing lawyer continue to act, have the law firm continue to act, or retain a new lawyer.

[Amended – October 2014]

Optional Withdrawal

3.7-2 Subject to the rules about criminal proceedings and the direction of the tribunal, where there has been a serious loss of confidence between the lawyer and the client, the lawyer may withdraw.

Commentary

[1] A lawyer may have a justifiable cause for withdrawal in circumstances indicating a loss of confidence, for example, if a lawyer is deceived by their client, the client refuses to accept and act upon the lawyer's advice on a significant point, a client is persistently unreasonable or uncooperative in a material respect, there is a material breakdown in communications, or the lawyer is facing difficulty in obtaining adequate instructions from the client. However, the lawyer should not use the threat of withdrawal as a device to force a hasty decision by the client on a difficult question.

[Amended – October 2014]

Non-payment of Fees

3.7-3 Subject to the rules about criminal proceedings and the direction of the tribunal, where, after reasonable notice, the client fails to provide a retainer or funds on account of disbursements or fees, a lawyer may withdraw unless serious prejudice to the client would result.

[Amended – October 2014]

Withdrawal from Criminal Proceedings

3.7-4 A lawyer who has agreed to act in a criminal case may withdraw because the client has not paid the agreed fee or for other adequate cause if the interval between a withdrawal and the date set for the trial of the case is sufficient to enable the client to obtain another licensee to act in the case and to allow the other licensee adequate time for preparation, and the lawyer

[Amended – June 2007]

- (a) notifies the client, preferably in writing, that the lawyer is withdrawing because the fees have not been paid or for other adequate cause;
- (b) accounts to the client for any monies received on account of fees and disbursements;
- (c) notifies Crown counsel in writing that the lawyer is no longer acting;
- (d) in a case when the lawyer's name appears on the records of the court as acting for the accused, notifies the clerk or registrar of the appropriate court in writing that the lawyer is no longer acting; and

- (e) complies with the applicable rules of court.

[Amended – October 2014]

Commentary

[1] A lawyer who has withdrawn because of conflict with the client should not indicate in the notice addressed to the court or Crown counsel the cause of the conflict or make reference to any matter that would violate the privilege that exists between lawyer and client. The notice should merely state that the lawyer is no longer acting and has withdrawn.

3.7-5 A lawyer who has agreed to act in a criminal case may not withdraw because of non-payment of fees if the date set for the trial of the case is not far enough removed to enable the client to obtain another licensee or to enable the other licensee to prepare adequately for trial and an adjournment of the trial date cannot be obtained without adversely affecting the client's interests.

3.7-6 In circumstances where a lawyer is justified in withdrawing from a criminal case for reasons other than non-payment of fees, and there is not sufficient time between a notice to the client of the lawyer's intention to withdraw and the date set for trial to enable the client to obtain another licensee and to enable such licensee to prepare adequately for trial:

- (a) the lawyer should, unless instructed otherwise by the client, attempt to have the trial date adjourned;
- (b) the lawyer may withdraw from the case only with the permission of the court before which the case is to be tried.

[Amended – June 2007, October 2014]

Commentary

[1] Where circumstances arise that in the opinion of the lawyer require an application to the court for leave to withdraw, the lawyer should promptly inform Crown counsel and the court of the intention to apply for leave in order to avoid or minimize any inconvenience to the court and witnesses.

Mandatory Withdrawal

3.7-7 Subject to the rules about criminal proceedings and the direction of the tribunal, a lawyer shall withdraw if

- (a) discharged by the client;

- (b) the client's instructions require the lawyer to act contrary to these rules or by-laws under the *Law Society Act*; or
- (c) the lawyer is not competent to continue to handle the matter.

[Amended – March 2004, October 2014]

Manner of Withdrawal

3.7-8 When a lawyer withdraws, the lawyer shall try to minimize expense and avoid prejudice to the client and shall do all that can reasonably be done to facilitate the orderly transfer of the matter to the successor legal practitioner.

3.7-9 Upon discharge or withdrawal, a lawyer shall

- (a) notify the client in writing, stating
 - (i) the fact that the lawyer has withdrawn;
 - (ii) the reasons, if any, for the withdrawal; and
 - (iii) in the case of litigation, that the client should expect that the hearing or trial will proceed on the date scheduled and that the client should retain a new legal practitioner promptly;
- (b) subject to the lawyer's right to a lien, deliver to or to the order of the client all papers and property to which the client is entitled;
- (c) subject to any applicable trust conditions, give the client all information that may be required in connection with the case or matter;
- (d) account for all funds of the client then held or previously dealt with, including the refunding of any remuneration not earned during the representation;
- (e) promptly render an account for outstanding fees and disbursements; and
- (f) co-operate with the successor legal practitioner so as to minimize expense and avoid prejudice to the client; and
- (g) comply with the applicable rules of court.

[Amended – June 2009, October 2014]

Commentary

[1] If the lawyer who is discharged or withdraws is a member of a firm, the client should be notified that the lawyer and the firm are no longer acting for the client.

[2] If the question of a right of lien for unpaid fees and disbursements arises on the discharge or withdrawal of the lawyer, the lawyer should have due regard to the effect of its enforcement upon the client's position. Generally speaking, the lawyer should not enforce the lien if to do so would prejudice materially the client's position in any uncompleted matter.

[3] The obligation to deliver papers and property is subject to a lawyer's right of lien. In the event of conflicting claims to such papers or property, the lawyer should make every effort to have the claimants settle the dispute.

[4] Co-operation with the successor legal practitioner will normally include providing any memoranda of fact and law that have been prepared by the lawyer in connection with the matter, but confidential information not clearly related to the matter should not be divulged without the written consent of the client.

[5] A lawyer acting for several clients in a case or matter who ceases to act for one or more of them should co-operate with the successor legal practitioner or practitioners to the extent required by the rules and should seek to avoid any unseemly rivalry, whether real or apparent.

[Amended – June 2009, October 2014]

Duty of Successor Licensee

3.7-10 Before agreeing to represent a client, a successor licensee shall be satisfied that the former licensee approves, has withdrawn, or has been discharged by the client.

[Amended – June 2007]

Commentary

[1] It is quite proper for the successor licensee to urge the client to settle or take reasonable steps towards settling or securing any outstanding account of the former licensee, especially if the latter withdrew for good cause or was capriciously discharged. But if a trial or hearing is in progress or imminent or if the client would otherwise be prejudiced, the existence of an outstanding account should not be allowed to interfere with the successor licensee acting for the client.

[Amended – June 2007]