**RE: Steps you can take to minimize your legal cost**

I have written this letter because lawyer-client communication is often a significant proportion of legal costs, however it’s also the portion that is most within your control. As my business is based on referrals, I do my best to provide excellent customer service by keeping my clients informed, being responsive to client correspondence, being able to take steps to expedite matters, and by giving my clients the tools to be able to make informed decisions. However, most clients contact me more than is truly necessary to move towards a resolution.

Although I dislike billing for phone calls and emails, it is necessary that I do so, as I often spend the majority of my day on the phone and writing emails. Responding to correspondence can also take longer than most would expect, as I often have to spend time reviewing the file before or after we speak so that I can ensure that my advice is accurate, and then writing a memorandum to the file outlining our discussion. Whenever you ask me a question, I’m also often obliged to provide a comprehensive opinion that discusses the potential risks and outcomes, which can take a substantial amount of time to write. Although I am always happy to answer your questions, and to explain the legal process, please be aware that the quantity of our communication and number of new issues that you ask me to address will have a significant bearing on your total legal cost.

The following are some tips which you can follow if you are interested in minimizing your legal cost:

1. **Continue to resolve minor disputes with your former partner**. The legal process is largely designed to determine what should happen as the result of a single incident; it is not an efficient method to resolve parenting disputes, where arrangements are complicated and circumstances can change every week. Addressing each new dispute can add significantly to your total cost, and parents who rely exclusively on their lawyers tend to lose their ability to cooperate with their former partner, which in turn leads to more litigation. However, please contact me before you make any significant decisions. This advice is subject to any no-contact or restraining orders, undertakings, recognizances, and the *Criminal Code*.
2. **Condense multiple topics of discussion into periodic meetings**. Frequent correspondence can result in substantially higher legal costs. I recommend that we discuss your matter only when it’s time to take the next step, when there is an emergency, or when the circumstances change in a way that could affect any processes that are underway. We should however speak at least once per month.
3. **Utilize my assistant**. Unless my assistant spends an extraordinary amount of time on a matter or our retainer agreement states otherwise, we do not bill separately for my assistant’s time. There is little advantage in paying me to discuss financial disclosure, service, or billing questions, when my assistant can answer most questions.
4. **Be prepared for meetings**. If you make a list of items to discuss, our time will be spent more effectively, and you won’t have to contact me again to discuss items that were forgotten.
5. **Take notes.** Because notes can be reviewed before each of our meetings, taking notes during meetings and phone calls can help to ensure that you aren’t asking the same question multiple times. I will gladly provide you with a pen and paper upon request.
6. **Review past correspondence**. I often communicate important discussions by email or mail so that you can review my correspondence in the future to refresh your memory. I recommend reviewing this correspondence before we speak, so that we can focus on the path forward.
7. **Resist the urge to call for updates**. I make an effort to promptly update clients once circumstances change. I also set reminders to follow-up with third parties of whom we are awaiting a response. As such, calling for an update is usually unnecessary, and those calls often end up being longer than anticipated.
8. **Expedite only when necessary**. There are usually several options to move a matter forward when we are experiencing delay from a third party, such as filing a court application, writing frequent follow-up letters, setting a date for a Questioning, or scheduling a settlement meeting. I am always happy to discuss the various options to move a matter forward. However, all of these steps tend to increase your legal fees, and may not actually save you a lot of time, as many matters move when the opposing counsel has available time, when the other side pays their lawyer, when it is our time in a cue, when a deadline is approaching, or when both spouses are able to move past their emotions.
9. **Speak to a counsellor or psychologist**. Although supportive family and friends can be helpful, they are often unable to ensure that you are remaining objective, and maintaining objectivity can be challenging as a matter moves further through the legal process. I recommend starting to see a counsellor now, so that you are less likely to lose your objectivity if conflict intensifies. The legal system is also poorly equipped to address the emotional side of a dispute.
10. **Organize your documentation**. Preparing all of your documents in advance and organizing them in some sort of logical fashion means that you won’t need to pay us to spend a significant amount of time sorting through these documents. If there aren’t any impending deadlines, it can also be helpful to try to send all of these documents at once, so that you don’t have to pay me to piece together several emails or keep track of what I am still waiting for.

All this being said, it is very important that you advise me of all significant changes in your circumstances, and contact me before you make any significant decisions which could affect this matter.

I look forward to assisting you with this matter.