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**THE GLOBE AND MAIL** 

## **Justice behind closed doors for those facing G20-related charges**

By Anna Mehler Paperny  
From Saturday's Globe and Mail

### **Public, reporters forced to watch proceedings by video feed**

People being tried on G20-related charges will appear in court behind closed doors: Anyone wanting to check out the proceedings will have to watch via video feed.

Having the public in the courtroom would be a security risk, court staff say. But several lawyers argue refusing the public entry undermines basic principles of an open-court system.

A "multiple-accused, high security" courtroom on Finch Avenue in Toronto's northwest has been designated as a remand court for G20-related charges.

Reporters covering the appearance of Toronto artist Kristen Peterson, who is charged with possessing explosives and dangerous weapons, weren't allowed into the courtroom where she appeared briefly before being remanded to police custody. Instead, they were obliged to watch via video-feed from an adjoining room, where they couldn't see the accused or hear much of what was said.

"The decision to restrict access to the limited seating was made by the judiciary on the advice of court security staff," said Valerie Hopper, a spokeswoman for the Ontario Attorney-General's office. "This was not requested by the Crown."

Court staff are working to improve that for the Saturday bail hearing of Ms. Peterson and her husband Byron Sonne, setting up a second camera that will focus on the accused and allow courtroom artists to do their sketches.

But that's not good enough, argues Toronto-based criminal lawyer Gerald Chan. "The presumption is the courts are public, and anyone who wants to close the courtroom has to satisfy a very high burden to show it's necessary.... It seems to me a bit too reactionary."

"There doesn't seem to be a good reason to have reporters excluded from the courtroom and be subjected only to a video and audio feed, which has proven to be faulty in the past," said Globe and Mail lawyer Peter Jacobsen.

"Our open-court system requires as much transparency as possible, and this intrusion on the media's constitutional rights does not appear to be justified."

But York University lawyer Alan Young said making the public watch from an adjoining room isn't all that unreasonable. What's more worrisome, he said, is that authorities are anticipating such a glut of

G20-related charges that they've set a special courtroom aside to deal with all of them.

"It concerns me they think there'll be so many people they're bringing in," he said. "It's sort of an overzealous approach.... It seems they're trying to send a message."

*With a report from Kirk Makin*