VICTIMS

Observing a Parole Hearing

Can a victim attend a parole hearing?

Yes. The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA) permits victims and other observers to attend Parole Board of Canada (PBC) hearings. This is to ensure the openness and accountability of the parole system, and to contribute to public understanding of the parole decision-making process.

How do I arrange to attend a hearing?

Complete a ***Request to Observe a Hearing*** form and submit it to the PBC office in the region where the hearing will be held. A security screening will be conducted before you are approved to attend a hearing. Applications should be sent to the PBC at least **30 days** before the hearing.

If you wish to attend a hearing as a victim in order to present a victim statement, you need to register as a victim with the PBC if you haven't already done so. To register, complete an ***Application to Receive Information as a Victim*** form. You do not need to register as a victim to observe a hearing.

Where does the hearing take place?

Hearings typically take place inside the penitentiary where the offender is held.

How do I find out the scheduled date for a hearing?

Registered victims will automatically be notified by the PBC of an offender's upcoming review dates for conditional release.

Can I receive financial help to attend a hearing?

The ***Department of Justice Victims Fund*** provides some financial assistance to attend a parole hearing. You may be eligible. For more information, call 1-866-544-1007, or go to **www.justice.gc.ca**.

Will I be escorted by a PBC employee at the hearing?

Yes. A PBC Regional Communications Officer (RCO) will contact you before the hearing. They will attend the hearing with you to explain the process and the decision, and to answer any questions you may have.

pbc-clcc.gc.ca

Victims Info-Line: 1-866-789-INFO (4636)

Observing a Parole Hearing

What happens at a parole hearing?

A hearing is a face-to-face meeting between Board members and the offender. Its purpose is to help Board members assess the risk that an offender may pose should they be granted conditional release, and if this risk can be managed in the community. PBC hearings typically proceed like this:

- The offender, parole officer, RCO, victim(s) and observers are guided into the hearing room;
- The Hearing Officer reads the procedural safeguards and asks the offender if their rights in the process have been followed;
- If a victim has chosen to read a victim statement at the hearing, Board members will invite them to read their statement at some point before coming to a decision;
- Board members ask the parole officer questions about the offender;
- If the offender has an assistant, the assistant may make a statement to the Board members;
- Board members ask the offender questions;
- So they may deliberate, Board members ask the offender, parole officer, observer, RCO and victims to leave the hearing room. The RCO, victim and observers wait in a separate area;
- Board members discuss the offender's file information and analyze what they heard and make a decision;
- The RCO escorts victims and observers back into the hearing room;
- Board members state their decision and reasons. If the offender is granted parole, Board members state any special conditions the offender must follow and the reasons for those conditions;
- Victims and observers are escorted from the hearing room by the RCO.

What should I do when I arrive to observe a hearing?

When you arrive at the penitentiary, go to the main entrance. An RCO will meet you there. You will need to sign in and out of the institution, provide photo identification, and go through a security check with a metal and drug scanner administered by CSC staff. Purses and bags will also be checked.

Are there items that should not be brought into the penitentiary?

Yes. Items such as cigarettes and matches, cellular phones, personal electronic devices, portable computers, cameras and audio/video recording equipment are not permitted in a penitentiary.

How long does a hearing last?

A hearing may vary; some may last several hours.

Can a hearing be postponed?

Yes. Under the law, offenders can postpone their hearing for a variety of reasons.

When a postponement is granted, the PBC makes every effort to tell victims who were scheduled to attend the hearing as soon as possible. Hearings are rescheduled as soon as is practical, and by law no later than three months following the postponement.

If an offender withdraws 14 days or less before the hearing date — unless it is for reasons beyond the offender's control — the PBC can go ahead with the review and make a decision on the case.

To get forms or more information, call the toll-free victim line or go to www.pbc-clcc.gc.ca. This fact sheet is part of a series designed for victims on Parole Board of Canada processes.