



The Victims Fund

Financial Assistance for Victims to Attend National Parole Board Hearings

Over the past several years, the Government of Canada has worked to improve the experience of victims in the criminal justice system. One of the important entitlements of crime victims in Canada is the opportunity to attend hearings conducted by the National Parole Board (NPB). Victims may attend hearings as observers or to present a victim impact statement.

However, attending NPB hearings often involves travel and accommodation away from home. Since late 2005, the Victims Fund has been offering financial assistance to registered victims who wish to attend hearings for the offender who harmed them. Funding assistance allows victims to participate more fully in the criminal justice system.

As of April 1, 2007, financial assistance is also available for a support person to accompany registered victims to attend an NPB hearing or provide child or dependant care to enable victims to attend.

The Victims Fund is administered by the Department of Justice Policy Centre for Victim Issues (PCVI).

Who may apply for financial assistance?

Victims may apply to the Department of Justice for travel funding assistance if they:

- are registered with Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) or the National Parole Board;
- have been approved to attend NPB hearings; and
- wish to attend a hearing related to the offender who harmed them, either to observe or to present a victim impact statement.

Victims must attend the hearing to receive financial assistance.

A support person may also apply to the Department of Justice for travel funding assistance if he or she:

- will be traveling with a registered victim to an NPB hearing;



- will be attending an NPB hearing with a registered victim;
- will be providing child care in order for a registered victim to attend an NPB hearing; and/or
- will be providing dependant care in order for a registered victim to attend an NPB hearing.

Who is considered a support person?

An eligible support person must be an adult over the age of 18 years of age who is chosen by the registered victim. Support persons may include relatives, friends or victim service workers.

Which National Parole Board hearings are eligible?

Victims may apply for financial assistance to travel to any or all of the NPB hearings scheduled for the offender who harmed them.

Support persons may apply for financial assistance to travel to any or all of the NPB hearings that the registered victim they are supporting is scheduled to travel to.

What expenses are covered by the Victims Fund?

The Victims Fund can help cover the following expenses, to the limits indicated:

- travel costs, in accordance with Treasury Board, Government of Canada Travel Guidelines: gas mileage rates; air, bus or train travel at economy rates (receipts required)
- hotels, generally to a maximum of two nights at prevailing government business travel rates (receipts required)
- meals and incidentals, generally to a maximum of three days, in accordance with Treasury Board, Government of Canada Guidelines (currently approximately \$75 per day). “Incidentals” included in the daily rate are intended to cover such expenses as telephone calls and tips (no receipts required)
- costs of transportation (taxi, shuttle bus, ferry, other), if necessary, between airport, hotel and place of hearing (receipts required)
- airport surcharges (receipts required)
- costs for child care or dependant care to a maximum of three days (receipts required)

What expenses are not covered by the Victims Fund?

The Victims Fund does not cover:

- lost wages
- any other expenses not related to travel or accommodation (as described above)

What is the application process?

Step 1: Apply to Attend the NPB Hearing

Victims:

Victims who wish to attend a hearing, whether to observe or to make a victim impact statement, must submit a written request to the office of the NPB in the region where the hearing will take place. Application forms, a list of regional offices and other information about the parole process are available on the NPB Web site at: <http://www.npb-cnrc.gc.ca>.

Victims should apply to the NPB as soon as possible after receiving notice from CSC/NPB of potential hearing dates. A security screening must be conducted, as it is on all visitors before they are allowed into a penitentiary. The screening may take a number of months to process so victims are encouraged to apply early.

Support persons:

Support persons who wish to attend an NPB hearing with a registered victim, must submit a written request to the office of the NPB in the region where the hearing will take place, once the victim has received notice from CSC/NPB of potential hearing dates. A security screening must be conducted, as it is on all visitors, before they are allowed into a penitentiary.

If the support person is accompanying the victim to the hearing, but does not intend to attend the hearing, then a security screening is not required. Please note, however, that if the support person should need to enter the penitentiary, the security screening would be required.



Step 2: *Apply to the Department of Justice for Financial Assistance to Attend the Hearing*

Victims:

It is important to start the funding application process as far in advance of the scheduled hearing date as possible so financial assistance will be available when required. Applications may be submitted based on the most accurate information available; the information can be updated and finalized when the date and time of the hearing, as well as proposed travel arrangements and costs, are confirmed.

Victims who have applied to or been approved by the NPB to attend a hearing, and who seek financial assistance to travel to it, should apply to the Department of Justice for funding at least 30 days before the scheduled date of the hearing. Financial assistance application forms are available on the Policy Centre for Victim Issues Web site at: <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/voc/funding.html>

Where an application for funding is received less than 30 days before the scheduled hearing date, advance funding will likely not be possible. If the application is approved, eligible expenses will be reimbursed after the hearing when the Victims Fund Manager receives an expense claim with receipts. Confirmation by letter outlining the expenses to be covered will be sent to the applicant.

Where an application for funding is received after the hearing date, no retroactive financial assistance will be available unless the hearing has proceeded on short notice, or where the applicant who attended can show that he or she was not aware of the Victims Fund.

Support Persons:

A separate application is required for a support person, indicating the name of the registered victim that he or she will be supporting.

As with the victim, it is important to start the support person's funding application process as far in advance of the scheduled hearing date as possible so financial

assistance will be available when required. Ideally, the application for funding for the support person would accompany the application from the victim.

The Victims Fund application forms may be obtained:

- by writing to the Victims Fund Manager, Programs Branch, Department of Justice, 284 Wellington Street, 6th Floor, Ottawa, ON K1A 0H8
- by calling 1-866-544-1007 (toll-free number)
- on-line at <http://canada.justice.gc.ca/en/ps/voc/funding.html>

What if two or more victims travel together?

A separate application is required for each victim who seeks funding.

Where two or more victims travel together, each should apply for and claim his or her own expenses, and just one should claim the shared expenses, such as transportation (gas mileage) and accommodations. The application form must clearly identify which expenses cover both the applicant and other victims. The other victims would apply for and claim their own meals and incidentals and their own transportation if not shared (individual air, bus or train fare).

What is the approval process?

Applications are reviewed for completeness and eligibility for funding. Decisions on the eligibility of an applicant and the amount of funding he or she may receive are made as soon as possible after receipt of a properly completed application. Applicants are advised by letter of the decision, including confirmation of the expenses that will be covered.

When will approved funding be received?

Where applications have been submitted at least 30 days before the hearing, every effort will be made to provide the decision letter, as well as some funding to approved applicants, before the hearing date. Payment will generally be made in two instalments. The first instalment will represent about 70% of anticipated travel expenses, and will be issued before the hearing, where possible. The second instalment will be paid after the

