



**CENTRE CANADIEN DE RESSOURCES POUR  
LES VICTIMES DE CRIMES**

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**THE CANADIAN RESOURCE CENTRE FOR  
VICTIMS OF CRIME**

# **CONSECUTIVE SENTENCING FOR MULTIPLE MURDERERS IN CANADA**

*DISCLAIMER: This paper is intended as a general guide for people who may be harmed by crime or for victims/survivors who are already involved in the criminal justice system. Please do not hesitate to contact our office if you require clarification, or for a referral to an agency in your community that may be able to provide support services to you. We encourage all victims to discuss the information provided in this paper with their local victim service provider prior to undertaking any action.*

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On December 2, 2011, the *Protecting Canadians by Ending Multiple Murders Act* was enacted. This *Act* ensures that individuals who are convicted of committing multiple murders serve their parole ineligibility period consecutively. This means the number of years allocated by a judge to be served without parole is now served one after another, not concurrently. Furthermore, judges are now able to impose consecutive 25-year parole ineligibility periods. The government's rationale is to allow one period of parole ineligibility for each victim, for offenders convicted of more than one first-, or second- degree murders.

Under the new legislation, it is not mandatory for a judge to impose consecutive parole ineligibility periods for offenders convicted of multiple murders. The individual judge maintains discretion in these cases. The judge may consider: the character of the offender, the nature and circumstances of the offence, and any jury recommendations before deciding on whether to impose consecutive 25-year parole ineligibility periods.

First-degree murder and two categories of second-degree murder carry a mandatory life sentence with a 25-year parole ineligibility period. The remaining categories of second-degree murder carry a mandatory life sentence with a 10 to 25 year period of not being eligible for parole.

In order to be sensitive to families and loved ones of victims, judges are required to state in writing or orally the basis for their decisions to either impose, or not impose, consecutive parole ineligibility periods for offenders convicted of multiple murders.

### **History**

Under the previous system, individuals convicted of multiple murders served their period of parole ineligibility concurrently. This meant that they were eligible to apply for parole after serving just one period ranging from 10 to 25 years, depending on their sentence. For example, Clifford Olson killed eleven children but was eligible for parole after serving 25 years of his first-degree murder sentence.

In 1976, the Federal government revoked the death penalty and introduced mandatory terms of life imprisonment for individuals convicted of first- and second- degree murder. First- degree and two categories of second- degree murder have a minimum parole ineligibility period of 10 years, to a maximum of 25 years. Under the previous system individuals convicted of multiple murders served their life imprisonment sentence concurrently, thus were only subjected to only one parole ineligibility period.

Families of victims in Canada have long argued that because life sentences for multiple murderers were served concurrently it devalued the life of each individual victim. In addition, they argue that it put Canadians at risk by allowing multiple murderers to be paroled earlier than deserved. The new legislation was enacted to ensure that individuals convicted of multiple murders serve a longer sentence in custody before they are eligible for parole.