



“Dedicated to Justice” • «Au service de la justice»

January 31, 2017

Harvey J. Cenaiko, Chairperson
Parole Board of Canada
410 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, ON K1A 0R1

Dear Mr. Cenaiko,

As you know, the Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime (CRCVC) is a national agency who works with victims and survivors of crime to provide support, resources, information and advocacy. We also address issues concerning federal corrections and parole.

We are writing to you with concerns we have about the current Parole Board of Canada decision-making in relation to escorted temporary absences (ETAs). In December of 2014, Bill C-483 was given royal assent, which made amendments to the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. In section 17.1 (d) of Bill C-483 it requires that, “a structured plan for the absence has been prepared” for offenders serving life sentences seeking ETAs. In Ontario, it seems CSC is able to apply for only one outing for a lifer (for example, a single 4-hour pass to volunteer at the food bank), whereas in other regions like Pacific, CSC must present a much more structured plan with several outings over the course of a six month period for the request to even be considered by the Board.

We are left questioning why each region is implementing the legislation so differently, when in reality, it is a federal law which must be applied consistently across the nation. Why is CSC permitted to “get around” the legislation in certain cases or regions and what is this teaching offenders? For some lifers, it is clear CSC would prefer for the Warden to approve a series of escorted passes, rather than bringing the whole plan for a number of outings forward to the Board. In presenting only one outing, perhaps CSC feels the Board is more likely to approve it, and then future ETAs revert to Warden authority anyway.

It is clear to us that if conditional releases are not consistently administered for lifers, it compromises the psychological well-being of their victims. Victims would perhaps feel more at ease with ETAs if they were presented with a gradual plan for offender progression. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,


Heidi Illingworth
Executive Director

Cc The Honourable Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness
Don Head, Commissioner, Correctional Services Canada
Sue O’Sullivan, Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime