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National Parole
Board

Commission nationale des
libérations conditionnelles



National Parole Board

Vision 2020 - Public Safety, Public Service



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Front cover: The visual shows different pathways that individuals may take when interacting with the National Parole Board. The NPB delivers quality conditional release and pardon decisions as well as clemency recommendations, facilitates victim access to information and to hearings, and contributes to the protection of society by facilitating, as appropriate, the timely reintegration of offenders as law-abiding citizens.

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Note to the Reader

The National Parole Board (NPB) is an independent administrative tribunal responsible for making decisions about the timing and conditions of release of offenders to the community on various forms of conditional release. The Board also makes pardon decisions and recommendations for clemency under the Royal Prerogative of Mercy (RPM). Public safety is the paramount consideration in NPB decision-making.

Legislation governing the Board includes the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* (CCRA), the *Criminal Records Act* (CRA) and the *Criminal Code*. The CCRA empowers the Board to make conditional release decisions for federal offenders and for provincial offenders in the provinces and territories without their own parole boards. Provincial boards exist in Ontario and Quebec. The CRA authorizes the Board to issue, grant, or revoke pardons for convictions under federal acts or regulations. The Governor in Council or the Governor General approves the use of the RPM, following investigations by the Board and recommendations by the Minister of Public Safety.

1. Introduction

The 21st century introduced sweeping change to Canadian society. Technological advances, globalization, terrorist threat, economic crisis, and important demographic shifts are just some of the factors that are shaping Canadian culture, values, and public policy debate. Amidst so much change and uncertainty, Canadians will continue to expect government at all levels to work effectively to prevent crime and enhance community safety.

Conditional release is not often considered a strategy for public safety, but the reality is that good corrections and conditional release prevent crime. Research and Canadian experience demonstrate that the gradual and controlled release of offenders to the community based on appropriate correctional interventions, rigorous case-specific risk assessment and decision-making and effective community supervision facilitate the safe reintegration of offenders in the community. In fact, long-term information on the outcomes of release on parole indicates that nine in ten releases do not result in a new offence, and 99 in 100 releases do not result in a new violent offence. Further, over the past 10 years, annual convictions for violent offences by parolees have declined by 65%.

Canada has followed a path of rehabilitative corrections since the introduction of the *Ticket of Leave Act* in 1899. For more than 100 years, Canada has stayed this course, working constantly to improve the effectiveness of corrections and conditional release. The National Parole Board has played an important role in this process of improvement. Performance data on re-offending by parolees demonstrate this fact. Progress has been made, but more is required. To achieve progress, the Board is setting out a vision and strategic plan for public safety and public service—a vision and plan that will enhance quality in all aspects of program delivery and strengthen accountability and effectiveness in all aspects of resource management.

In 2009, as the Board marks its 50th anniversary, it will look to the future while learning from the past to introduce a vision for contributing effectively to public safety, and for meeting the highest standard of public service. In addition to this introduction, this document includes an environmental scan, a vision for the Board and corporate strategies that propose concrete action to achieve the vision.

2. Looking Back Over 50 Years

In 1959, the Parole Act replaced the *Ticket of Leave Act* and created the National Parole Board, launching the modern era of conditional release in Canada. The 50 years that followed immersed the Board in change, demanding effective response to shifts in the scope of NPB decision-making responsibilities, structural change and adjustments to decision processes. The Board's decision-making responsibilities expanded and contracted in response to government policy (e.g., abolition of capital punishment and parole eligibility for offenders convicted of murder), concerns for public safety (e.g., detention), new programs (e.g., pardons), and provisions for statute-based release to support offender population management (e.g., accelerated parole review, statutory release).

Structural change has been an important aspect of NPB evolution. In 1966, the Board, which included the National Parole Service, moved from the Department of Justice to the newly created Department of the Solicitor General. A decade later, responsibility for the Parole Service was transferred to the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) as a means of preserving the independence of the Board as a decision-making body. A year later, the *Parole Act* was amended to create regional offices and facilitate the appearance of offenders at parole hearings—a measure to promote fair and equitable treatment of offenders. The appeal function began to take shape in the early 1980s, leading to the establishment of the Appeal Division of the Board in 1984–85. In 2001, the Board opened a second office in the Prairies (Edmonton) to manage conditional release workloads. Six years later, the NPB assumed parole decision-making responsibility for provincial offenders in British Columbia, following the provincial decision to discontinue operation of its board of parole.

The *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, introduced in 1982, stimulated debate about the proper balance between individual rights and collective interests, universal and targeted programs, the primacy of Parliament, and the need for appropriate constraints on the powers of the State. The Charter and related jurisprudence demanded that criminal justice organizations operate fairly. For administrative bodies such as the Board, the duty to act fairly demanded open and accountable operations. In response, the Board developed decision policies and improved information sharing to ensure that there were no systemic barriers to fair and equitable treatment of offenders. Measures were also introduced to ensure that policies respect the needs of diverse groups, including Aboriginal people, visible minorities, and women. The introduction of decision policies was accompanied by the emergence of the Board's Executive Committee as the policy authority for the NPB, responsible for approving conditional release and pardons policy.

In 1992, the *Criminal Records Act*, the legislation governing NPB responsibilities with respect to pardons, was amended to provide the Board with the authority to issue or grant pardons. Also in 1992, the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* was introduced, creating the need for significant change in NPB policies, training and decision processes. The Act, which combined the *Parole Act* and the *Penitentiary Act*, entrenched public safety as the paramount consideration in parole conditional release decision-making and enhanced the openness and accountability of the Board through provisions for sharing of information with victims, observers at hearings and the Board's decision registry. The Act also recognized the importance of addressing the needs of special groups, including Aboriginal offenders and women offenders.

Following the CCRA, NPB involvement with victims grew steadily to the point where the Board now has more than 20,000 contacts with victims each year. Important steps were taken to provide victims with greater access to conditional release processes. In 2001, the Board introduced in policy the right for victims to read statements at hearings. In 2005, the Department of Justice, with NPB assistance, created a fund to pay the travel costs for victims to attend NPB hearings. Two years later, the government introduced the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime, whose job it is to advocate for victims and respond to their complaints. Recently, the Board has also begun to explore the use of video-conferencing to provide victims with easier access to NPB hearings. This work will proceed carefully to ensure that video-conferencing supports quality decision-making by the NPB and meets the needs of victims.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, raised fundamental questions about safety, national security, and Canada's capacity for responding to terrorist threats. A key element of the federal response was the creation of the Public Safety portfolio, of which the National Parole Board became a part. Creation of this new portfolio enhanced the government's capacity for dealing with public safety by integrating federal organizations responsible for policing, security, emergency preparedness, corrections, and conditional release.

3. The Environment – New and Emerging Challenges

For 50 years, the Board has operated in a dynamic environment characterized by heavy workloads, intense public scrutiny, and constant demands for effective parole and pardon decision-making in support of public safety. Factors such as the growing involvement of victims in the criminal justice system and issues related to Aboriginal people added complexity to program delivery. Looking to the future, the Board's challenges will be no less daunting.

Apprehension about economic security, health care, the environment, crime, and violence will continue to create a difficult public environment and stimulate vigorous competition for resources among government organizations. Demographic shifts, expanding Canadian diversity, and the growing involvement of Aboriginal people in the justice system present important challenges to which the Board must respond. The more difficult offender population, CSC's plans for transformation of federal corrections, and proposals for earned parole will all require thoughtful analysis and strategic response. Finally, the *Federal Accountability Act* will require the Board to maintain systems and processes that support effective and transparent management of critical resources—people, money and information.

Changing Demographics

Demographics will continue to provide an interesting backdrop for NPB operations. While the implications of demographics are difficult to determine, it is reasonable to expect that they will have an impact.

In the 20th century, world population increased fourfold, from 1.6 billion to 6.1 billion, while Canada's population increased sixfold, from 5.4 million to 31 million. Canadian population growth is expected to continue but at a slower pace, fuelled primarily by immigration.

The national population is expected to reach 35.5 million by 2017. Within the broader Canadian context, there will be above-average growth in Aboriginal populations. Higher Aboriginal birth rates and increasing life expectancies indicate that annual growth of this population will be more than double the Canadian average over the next ten years.

If the 20th century was an era of sustained population growth, the 21st century will be characterized by population aging. Aging is nothing new, but the significant “aging at the top” (i.e., older people living longer) is a phenomenon of the current century. The United Nations estimates that in the coming decades, aging will exceed any previous experience and will become an enduring phenomenon. Much media attention has been paid to the aging baby boomers and understandably so, as this segment of the population will have a profound effect on the next generations. It is also reasonable to expect, therefore, that younger generations will experience unprecedented change in areas such as education, employment opportunities, and family circumstances.

The aging baby boomer generation will influence public policy debate and intensify competition for resources in critical areas such as health care, environmental protection, crime, and safety. The aging of Canadian society is also expected to heighten public sensitivity to issues of crime and safety, reinforcing the need for the Board to disseminate information that demonstrates the effectiveness of parole and engages Canadians in discussion of measures for the safe reintegration of offenders in the community.

Growing Diversity

Canada’s ethno-cultural composition has changed markedly in recent decades and is expected to continue to do so, given immigration levels and the considerable shift toward immigration from Asian and Middle Eastern countries since the 1970s. Over this period, the number of ethnicities identified in Canada has increased fivefold, with over 200 enumerated in the most recent census. Growing diversity is noticeable throughout the country, but most visible in Toronto and Vancouver, where visible minorities are expected to represent 51% and 49% of populations respectively by 2017. Additional indications of increasing diversity are the rising shares of the Canadian population who are immigrants, allophones (mother tongue is neither English nor French), or observers of non-Christian religions.

Increasing diversity will be reflected in the fabric of Canadian communities and in the culture and ethnicity of offenders and victims of crime. In response, the Board must ensure that the Board (members and staff), consistent with section 105 of the CCRA, is representative of the community. Further, policies, training and decision tools must respect issues of diversity and gender and build understanding of the factors associated with risk and public safety for special groups of offenders and the communities to which they will return. The Board will also experience growing cultural diversity in the workplace, requiring the development of culturally respectful policies and training, and new management skills and approaches.

Crime Rates and Trends

In 2007, the national crime rate declined to its lowest point in 30 years. The drop (-7%) was fuelled predominately by decreases in non-violent offences, including theft under \$5000 and motor vehicle theft. Canadian police services reported approximately 2.3 million *Criminal Code* offences in 2007. About half (48%) were property related, 13% were violent offences, and 39% were categorized as other offences (e.g., mischief, bail violations).

Crime rates dropped in all provinces and territories but the Northwest Territories (+6%), Yukon (+3%) and Newfoundland and Labrador (+3%). The most substantial decreases were reported in Prince Edward Island (-12%) and Quebec (-10%). For the fourth consecutive year, Ontario and Quebec reported the lowest crime rates. The highest rates (30-year trend) were reported in the West. Saskatchewan had the highest rate, followed by Manitoba, British Columbia, and Alberta. Crime rates in the territories continued to be well above provincial rates.

Violent crime decreased by 3% in 2007, continuing a trend that began in the early 1990s. Decreases in common assaults, robbery, and sexual assault led the way. Other serious violent crime also decreased, including homicide, attempted murder, and abduction. The homicide rate fell for the second year in a row (-3%). Police reported 594 victims of homicide (12 fewer than 2006) for a rate of 1.8 homicides per 100,000 population. The homicide rate has been declining since the 1970s.

Police reported that property offences dropped by 8% in 2007 and reached their lowest level since 1969. Historically, property offences accounted for about two-thirds of all crime. Since the mid-1980s, however, the proportion has shifted to the point where property offences account for about half of all reported incidents. Drug crimes fall under the authority of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* and are not included in the overall crime rate. Drug crime rates tend to vary considerably from year to year as charging practices are influenced by local enforcement initiatives and available resources. In 2007, there were more than 100,000 drug offences reported to the police, up 4% from 2006. Possession of cannabis accounted for 6 in 10 drug offences. Over the past 25 years, British Columbia has consistently reported the highest rates of drug offences.

Crime rates and trends have important implications for the Board. Arrests and convictions influence offender populations and ultimately the Board's workloads associated with conditional release and pardons. For example, drug enforcement initiatives in the Prairies Region contributed significantly to a 39% increase in federal admissions for drug offences in recent years. Levels of crime and media reporting of criminal incidents have a significant impact on public perception of community safety and public confidence in all segments of the criminal justice system.

Public Attitudes and Perceptions

Information on victimization indicates that most Canadians are satisfied with personal safety, but some continue to express fear about walking alone at night, taking public transit at night, or staying home alone. Fear of crime and concerns for safety persist even though police-reported crime rates continue to decline and research demonstrates that Canada is a safe place to live. In fact, the public remains sceptical about declining crime rates, focusing instead on media reports of tragic incidents, which are frequently characterized as system failures. In this context, conditional release frequently evokes strong public reaction and rigorous public debate. Debate is, however, often set against a backdrop of limited understanding of the effectiveness of conditional release in contributing to public safety.

Public demands continue for greater effectiveness in assessing risk of re-offending, particularly for offenders with a history of violence. These demands are frequently accompanied by calls for more punitive approaches to crime, including greater use of incarceration, longer sentences, and more limited access to parole. These demands persist even though the findings of Canadian and international research indicate that incarceration is not an effective strategy for crime reduction. Canadians continue to call for governments to operate in an open and accessible manner and provide meaningful opportunities for public input to legislative and policy development, and for close scrutiny of operational performance. This is especially true for conditional release, where public safety is the top priority and the concerns of victims continue to gain prominence.

In this environment, the Board must ensure that its members have the policies, training and tools (e.g., case chronologies) necessary for effective risk assessment and decision-making. Working with its key partners, the Board must ensure that the best possible information is available for decision-making, and that appropriate processes and systems are in place to provide timely access to information by decision-makers. Limited understanding of conditional release, coupled with public expectations for meaningful debate of key public safety issues, create urgent pressures for the Board to engage communities in discussion of conditional release. Community engagement must be supported by clear and accurate information about the effectiveness of conditional release. The Board must also ensure that lessons learned from successes and failures regularly inform NPB policy development and training, and that this information is shared with the public, as required.

More Difficult Offender Population

CSC has documented the emergence of a more difficult federal offender population characterized by lengthier criminal histories, a greater prevalence of violence, more extensive gang affiliations, and more serious mental health and substance abuse problems. The more difficult offender population has been accompanied by shorter sentences, primarily as a result of credit given for pre-sentencing custody. For example, over the last 10 years there has been a 60% increase in the proportion of warrant of committal admissions involving sentences of less than three years. These trends, which have resulted in a more difficult offender population with less time to benefit from programs and treatment, have added greater complexity to conditional release decision-making and demand that:

- the Board has sufficient numbers of professional and experienced members available to deal with decision-making workloads in an effective manner;
- Board members have sufficient time to prepare for and complete conditional release reviews, either in hearings or by way of review of an offender's file;
- Board members are provided with the training necessary to enable them to carry out a rigorous review of cases in terms of public safety and the key factors associated with risk of re-offending; and
- there are sufficient numbers of NPB staff to support Board members in the full range of their decision-making responsibilities.

Heavy Workload Demands

Responding to the challenges of greater complexity in conditional release decision-making is made more difficult by heavy workloads that are beyond the Board's control. The CCRA is prescriptive, specifying when and how the Board conducts its business (e.g., when to hold hearings). Workloads are driven by the actions of offenders, victims and the community. In concrete terms, this means that the NPB must deal with 18,000 to 20,000 conditional release reviews per year, involving critical issues of public safety, in tight timeframes, amid intense public scrutiny. Recent data from CSC indicate that the federal offender population is increasing. The Board's workloads are expected to increase accordingly. The Board also makes parole decisions for provincial offenders in the Atlantic and Prairie regions and in British Columbia. Parole reviews for provincial offenders are increasing, primarily as a result of the Board's decision-making responsibilities for these offenders in British Columbia.

The openness and accountability provisions of the CCRA continue to present important challenges. In 2007–08, the Board had over 20,000 contacts with victims, almost 2,000 observers at hearings and distributed 6,000 decisions from its decision registry. Workloads in these areas are expected to continue to grow as the Board enhances information on its Web site and increases outreach to victims. As with conditional release decision-making, effective workload management in this area is critical given its implications for public safety and public confidence.

As a perceived world leader in risk assessment, parole decision-making, and open and accountable decision processes, the NPB is often called upon to provide information for other countries intent on developing more effective approaches to corrections and conditional release. This international dimension of the NPB's role, which involves dissemination of information on the Canadian approach and meeting with visiting dignitaries, is increasingly labour intensive for the Board.

Workload demands continue to generate serious challenges for the pardon program. Historically, the Board received 15,000 to 20,000 pardon applications per year, levels that have seriously taxed NPB resources. In recent years, however, application levels rose sharply, reaching 37,000 in 2008–09. The annual volume of applications is expected to continue to increase and could reach 50,000 in the near future. Factors contributing to this growth include greater scrutiny of potential employees by public, private and voluntary sector organizations; active advertising by private sector organizations involved in pardons; and the increasing number of people eligible to apply for a pardon—the current estimate is that 1.5 million people are eligible, and this grows by 60,000 per year.

Workloads pressures will demand that the Board plan and allocate resources effectively, based on rigorous analysis of key trends, a clear understanding of organizational priorities, and broader government priorities. Innovation and improvement must continue to characterize program delivery, but the Board must also take action to develop business cases for additional resources when existing budgets are insufficient to manage workload growth and public safety is at risk.

Victims of Crime

Victims continue to play a prominent role in shaping criminal justice and corrections. Victims and their advocates have worked successfully with police services, the media and government at all levels to bring victim issues to the forefront of public policy debate. This trend is expected to continue as measures to address the needs of victims have been identified as a priority for the federal government.

The Board has a longstanding and positive relationship with victims of crime. Victims have not always agreed with the Board's decisions, but they have consistently expressed a very high degree of satisfaction with the timeliness and quality of information and assistance provided by NPB staff. They have also indicated that they were impressed with the rigour and professionalism that Board members bring to parole decision-making. While victims have expressed satisfaction with current practice, they have also identified the need for further change, including access to the recordings of NPB hearings, access to NPB hearings through video-conferencing, greater NPB involvement in decisions to grant temporary absences for offenders serving life sentences for murder, and less frequent parole hearings for lifers.

Issues related to victims of crime will remain a priority. Moving forward, the NPB must respond effectively to heavy workload under current law and policy (e.g., contacts with victims). Effective response to these demands will require careful planning and collaborative efforts with CSC to ensure that victims receive the information to which they are entitled under the CCRA. The Board must also give careful consideration to proposals for expanding information sharing and access to NPB hearings for victims. In particular, proposals to share the recordings of NPB hearings with victims and to provide access to hearings via video-conferencing will require review of legislation and policy, training, resources, and operations to ensure that new approaches, if implemented, will support quality decision-making by the Board, meet the needs of victims, and respect the privacy and safety of all those involved.

Aboriginal People

Challenges related to Aboriginal people and the justice system have reached crisis proportions. Aboriginal people are significantly overrepresented in the justice system as victims and offenders. They are four times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be victims of violent crime, including homicide.

The arrest rate for Aboriginal Canadians is double the rate for non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people who are arrested are more likely to be denied bail and to spend more time in pre-trial detention. Rates of incarceration for Aboriginal people are six times the rates for non-Aboriginal people. As a result, they are significantly overrepresented in the correctional system, including federal corrections. While representing about 4% of the Canadian population, they account for 20% of the federal offender population, and over 50% of this population is in Western provinces. Aboriginal women represent 26% of women offenders under federal jurisdiction.

Aboriginal offenders are more likely than non-Aboriginal offenders to be incarcerated for a violent offence. Once incarcerated, they are more likely to be assessed by CSC as high risk. Aboriginal offenders are more likely to be released at two-thirds of sentence on statutory release (SR) as opposed to one-third of sentence on full parole, reflecting the fact that Aboriginal offenders are far less likely than non-Aboriginal offenders to come before the Board for a parole review. When Aboriginal offenders do come before the Board, they are just as likely as non-Aboriginal offenders to be granted day parole, but less likely to be granted full parole, perhaps reflecting their violent offence histories and their assessment as high risk. The frequent use of SR for Aboriginal offenders raises interesting issues. One point of view suggests that if SR were not in place, Aboriginal offenders would never be released to the community prior to warrant expiry. Another suggests that the inability of the system to engage Aboriginal offenders in the parole process reflects a system failure, a systemic default to the use of SR for Aboriginal offenders, resulting in longer periods of incarceration for this group.

In contrast with the non-Aboriginal population, which is aging and experiencing a decline in the birth rate, Aboriginal communities are experiencing a baby boom, with increasing numbers of Aboriginal youth approaching what are perceived to be the most crime-prone years. In addition, many Aboriginal youth are moving to urban centres in search of employment or alternate lifestyles. These trends could influence Aboriginal crime rates and patterns and perhaps exacerbate Aboriginal overrepresentation in the justice system. Proposed amendments to the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* could also have a significant impact on this situation.

The Board cannot resolve the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice system. It can, however, make sure that Aboriginal offenders, victims and communities are aware of their rights with respect to parole and pardons and that there are no systemic barriers to Aboriginal involvement in these areas. In this context, the Board must continue to provide policies and training that recognize the unique societal and cultural factors related to Aboriginal offenders and their communities, and continue to assess alternate models for parole hearings, including the use of Elders and community assistance. The NPB must strive to maintain a workforce that includes appropriate Aboriginal representation (Board members and staff), and work with CSC and Aboriginal communities to support the reintegration of Aboriginal offenders in the community and address the needs of Aboriginal victims.

Information Technology

The need for effective information sharing among criminal justice agencies continues to create pressures for the Board to exploit information systems and technology to the fullest extent. Historically, NPB technology initiatives have centred on the use of automated systems to collect, store and share information for conditional release and pardon decision-making.

The NPB must continue efforts to improve the use of systems and technology in support of quality decisions and quality decision processes.

There are also new challenges, new opportunities that the Board must consider. Victims, the media and the public are seeking easier access to information about the Board—so too are pardon applicants. In this context, the NPB must identify measures for optimizing its Web site as a source of timely and relevant information for interested groups. The Board must also explore the use of the Web site for more interactive processes, such as requesting to observe a hearing or applying for a pardon. Measures to address the confidentiality of information and the privacy of individuals are critical for these applications. Similarly, the Board must assess the use of video-conferencing for hearings to provide more flexible access for Board members and for victims. Progress in this area demands effective partnership with CSC and significant policy analysis and training to ensure that the approaches adopted by the Board support quality decision-making. Further, CSC has announced plans for the use of electronic monitoring as a supervision tool when the NPB imposes a special condition involving geographic limitations. The NPB must work closely with CSC as these plans unfold to ensure that the Board has a clear understanding of electronic monitoring vis-à-vis risk assessment and risk management.

In 2006, the NPB entered into a partnership in which CSC provides information technology services for the Board in return for an ongoing transfer of \$2.9 million per year. For the NPB to optimize benefits from systems and technology, this partnership must function effectively. The NPB must clearly identify strategic direction, priorities, and user needs for systems and technology. CSC must recognize NPB priorities and needs, and provide timely system and technology solutions that recognize the Board's unique roles and responsibilities.

Transforming Federal Corrections

In April 2007, the government commissioned the Corrections Review Panel to examine a wide range of issues related to CSC, including strategic and operational planning, human resource management, institutional safety and security, institutional infrastructure, program interventions for offenders, and community supervision. The Panel was also asked to examine issues related to victims of crime, the abolition of statutory release, and a shift to earned parole. The Panel reported in December 2007, tabling 109 recommendations designed to transform federal corrections. Key elements of the transformation agenda include:

- legislated emphasis on offender accountability and responsibility;
- elimination of drugs from penitentiaries;
- greater emphasis on offender employment and employability;
- a new approach to infrastructure modernization; and
- replacement of statutory release and accelerated parole review (presumptive release schemes) with earned parole.

The Board and CSC share a commitment to public protection and the safe reintegration of offenders in the community. Both organizations are linked by shared information needs and legislative responsibilities. Against this backdrop, the NPB must continue to assess Panel recommendations and provide CSC with advice that is strategic, emphasizing improvements that CSC could make to its policies, training, and operations to support improvement in the quality of NPB risk assessment and decision-making. The Board's approach must be proactive and supportive of CSC transformation, leading in turn to better information for NPB decision-making, better decision processes, and better decisions.

Government Initiatives

The government has announced plans to tackle crime and strengthen community safety, including transformation of federal corrections, and measures for reform of sentencing practices and correctional law. Effective support for these measures must be a focal point for the Board. For example, the Board must be prepared to support the implementation of mandatory minimum penalties for gun crime (*Tackling Violent Crime Act*) and for serious drug offences (National Anti-Drug Strategy). These penalties will lengthen periods of incarceration for certain groups of offenders. Longer sentences will increase NPB workloads, such as those related to conditional release reviews and contacts with victims of crime.

Proposals to repeal the "Faint Hope" clause and toughen young offender legislation could also increase the length of time offenders spend incarcerated and, therefore, generate workload and cost increases for the Board. Proposals to abolish accelerated parole review and statutory release and shift to "earned parole" present the most significant challenge, with the potential for a profound impact on the Board's public accountability, workloads, resource needs, and operations. To address these challenges, the Board must ensure that risk assessment tools and training reflect current knowledge and information, develop effective decision policies, and engage in partnerships that support the safe reintegration of offenders in the community. The Board's public information will have to be revised and information systems fine-tuned. Acquisition of additional resources will be essential for the Board to support implementation of earned parole.

Human Resource Management

The Board's human resource challenge has two dimensions. The first involves Board members who are Governor-in-Council appointees. The CCRA specifies that the Board shall comprise no more than 45 full-time members, who are usually appointed for five years. The Act also provides for the appointment of part-time members to help manage conditional release decision-making workloads. They are usually appointed for three years. Maintaining sufficient numbers of experienced Board members is an ongoing challenge because of their specified periods of appointment. The Board must also deal with the reality that following an initial orientation period of five weeks, newly appointed Board members require three to six months of on-the-job training and mentoring before they can manage the full scope of their decision-making responsibilities. In this context, the Board must ensure that it recruits sufficient numbers of qualified candidates for appointment as Board members and provides effective training to ensure that Board members have the knowledge they need to apply NPB policies and assess risk in decision-making.

The Board faces an equally challenging situation with respect to staff. Over the next five years, increasing numbers of senior and experienced staff at the Board will be able to retire without penalty to their pension. Anticipated departures will erode corporate memory and diminish critical knowledge of the law, policy, and training. For the Board, whose members are appointed for specified periods, staff provide the continuity of knowledge and information necessary for quality program delivery. For this reason, development and implementation of an effective human resource plan for dealing with staff turnover is essential.

4. A Vision for Public Safety and Public Service

The Board's environment presents complex challenges. Environmental pressures are diverse, reflecting divergent perspectives and differing ideological assumptions for crime and justice in Canadian society. Ultimate resolution of these issues lies beyond the control of the Board. The Board can, however, contribute to key decision processes in an attempt to manage change and, in the longer term, shape change in directions that reflect the NPB Mission and values and its enduring commitment to public safety. The vision for the Board is set in this context. It portrays the Board in an ideal state. In this vision:

- The Board, as a world leader in quality decision-making, works constantly to improve its ability to identify those offenders who will succeed in the community. Recidivism, particularly violent recidivism, continues to decline.
- The Board works within an enabling legislative framework, which allows it to apply its expertise in quality decision-making to the full extent. Quality case-specific risk assessment, based on the results of research, helps to ensure timely and safe reintegration of offenders in the community.
- The Board, as an inquisitorial body is, and is perceived to be, open and fair, respecting the duty to act fairly and the unique needs and circumstances of diverse groups in its decision policies and processes.
- The Board identifies highly qualified candidates for appointment as Board members and as staff—people who are knowledgeable about, and committed to, the safe reintegration of offenders. Excellence is sustained through continuous learning and effective succession planning.

- The Board is perceived to be a community board representing, and being representative of, diverse communities and their concerns, including the concerns of women, ethnic minorities, the elderly, and youth. Public understanding of the Board and parole is high, and there is confidence in parole as an effective strategy for community safety.
- The Board, in partnership with Aboriginal groups, develops innovative models for parole decision-making that address the unique needs and circumstances of Aboriginal offenders and the role of Aboriginal communities in the safe reintegration of these offenders.
- The Board forges community partnerships as a foundation for meaningful discussion of conditional release and the safe reintegration of offenders in the community. Information sharing and public consultation characterize all aspects of the Board's work.
- The Board develops innovative decision processes that meet the information needs of victims of crime in an effective manner, consistent with the provisions of the CCRA and the duty to act fairly. The Board works in close partnership with CSC in meeting the information needs of victims.
- The Board works effectively with its key partners, including CSC, the voluntary sector, community groups, and other levels of government to promote an effective criminal justice system focussed on a common goal of protection of society, and characterized by balanced systems and processes.
- The Board processes most pardon applications within weeks. The pardon program is self-sustaining. There is widespread public recognition of a pardon as a long-term indicator of rehabilitation, and pardon recipients receive better service for fees paid.
- Working within an effective information technology partnership with CSC, the Board derives maximum benefit from information systems and technology. The NPB's longstanding priorities related to information for conditional release and pardon decision-making are addressed in a timely manner. Emerging priorities (e.g., video-conferencing) are also addressed.
- The Board has sufficient resources to do its work. Resource levels are determined by application of appropriate assessment tools and provide sufficient flexibility to address workload growth, new government priorities, continuous learning, and innovation.

■ 5. Corporate Strategies

The vision for the Board presents the key elements of an ideal state. Corporate strategies outline concrete action that the Board will take to make progress toward the ideal state; that is, they provide a framework for continuous improvement.

Commitment to Quality

All aspects of the Board's work must reflect a commitment to professionalism, fairness, public safety, and public service. The Board must strive constantly for the highest quality in conditional release and pardon decision-making based on effective training, policy development, research, statistical analysis, and ethical management. Quality decisions must recognize issues of cultural diversity and ethnicity in the offender population and in the community. In this context, quality decision-making must be guided by an effective framework for national consistency in policy and training, while recognizing the need for regional flexibility to address the different needs and concerns of offenders and communities. The Board's commitment to quality provides the foundation for pursuit of continuous improvement in decision-making for conditional release and pardons.

Continuous Learning

Quality decision-making demands the latest knowledge and information about risk and about how risk can best be managed in the public interest, as well as information about the law and NPB policies. The Board must ensure that decision-makers and the staff who support them have access to this information through a process of continuous learning and development. The Board must enhance its national training program, which sets out priorities and standards, and ensure that the results of research and new information are integrated regularly in the training curriculum. The Board anticipates considerable turnover among members and staff in the coming years. In this context, effective succession planning is essential to ensure the level of knowledge transfer among Board members and staff necessary to support continuous learning and quality decision-making.

Openness and Accountability

In response to demands for governments to be more open, responsible, and subject to greater public scrutiny, the Board must continue to implement measures that promote an environment of openness and accountability. In this context, the Board must provide timely access to decisions and reasons for its decisions through the decision registry, and ensure that victims receive the information and support they are entitled to receive under the law and that they participate in decision processes as prescribed by law. The Board must share information and consult openly with the public, and provide access to meaningful information about its performance—successes and failures. The Board must also explore technological innovations (e.g., video-conferencing) as a means for enhancing accessibility and accountability.

Citizen Engagement/Community Outreach

The public has expressed strong interest in more effective discussion of crime and public safety. Citizens want to be engaged in the public policy debate, as opposed to being informed of policy direction that has been set. The reality is, however, that misinformation often surrounds public debate of parole, impeding meaningful discussion of criminal justice policy. To address these issues, the Board must develop and implement plans to share information with communities, to meet with community groups (Board members and staff), and to provide meaningful opportunities for them to express their positions on policy issues operations. Information sharing and discussion must serve as a foundation for building understanding of parole as an effective strategy for public safety and recognition of the important role that communities play in the safe reintegration of offenders.

Sustainability for the Pardon Program

For many years, the pardon program has experienced heavy workload demands that often exceeded process capacity. More recently, pardon workloads have increased dramatically, creating severe resource pressures and challenges for application processing. To address long-standing workload and resource issues, the Board must continue to implement its plan for establishing long-term sustainability for pardons. Key elements of this plan include policy refinement, process streamlining, productive use of information systems and technology, effective human resource planning, meaningful service standards for applications processing, and an increase in the user fee for pardons to cover direct costs for the processing of applications.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Workload demands and limited resources require constant efforts to strengthen resource management and improve NPB operations. Effective and efficient operations will enhance the Board's commitment to public safety and public service. In this context, the Board must continue to develop policies and design processes and systems that improve the quality of conditional release and pardons decision-making, streamline and add value to the work effort, and eliminate needless constraints and duplication. The Board must ensure that it makes productive use of technology for information sharing, that its key operating systems are designed to support quality decision-making, and that system design is accompanied by appropriate training and hardware to support system implementation.

6. Conclusion

For fifty years, the Board has been involved in a process of change and improvement. Throughout this process, the Board has remained committed to the goals of public safety and public service. In recent years, the Board and its key partners have made considerable progress toward these goals by enhancing the quality of decision-making and by addressing issues of fairness and equity, inclusion for victims of crime, and public accountability. In the coming years, the Board will face new challenges and new opportunities in an environment that is more complex than ever before. This vision acknowledges issues of complexity and the need for innovation and continuous improvement to support the Board's commitment to parole and pardons as effective strategies for public safety. In this context, the vision challenges all members and staff of the Board to work in partnership to ensure quality decision-making and program delivery for parole and pardons. Through these efforts, the Board will continue to contribute to public safety while respecting diversity and the rights of the individual.

7. Glossary of Terms

Administrative tribunal

An independent decision-making body created by law that makes decisions free from outside influence that affect an individual's rights and liberties.

Conditional Release

Day parole

A form of conditional release granted at the discretion of the National Parole Board for a period of up to six months to prepare the inmate for full parole or statutory release. The offender must return to a penitentiary, a provincial correctional facility, or a halfway house each night.

Full parole

A form of conditional release granted at the discretion of the National Parole Board that allows an offender to live in the community, subject to conditions, providing him or her with an opportunity to demonstrate that he or she can be a law-abiding member of society.

Statutory release

By law, most offenders who are serving determinate sentences and who have not been granted parole must be released on statutory release automatically after having served two-thirds of their sentence. Statutory release does not require a decision by the National Parole Board. The Board may, however, impose special conditions.

Detention

A decision by the National Parole Board ordering an offender to remain in custody until the end of sentence rather than being released on statutory release at the two-thirds point of a determinate sentence. An offender may be detained only if the case has been referred by the Correctional Service of Canada and if the National Parole Board is satisfied that the offender is likely to commit an offence causing death or serious harm, a sexual offence against a child or a serious drug offence prior to the expiry of the sentence.

Decision registry

The *Corrections and Conditional Release Act* requires the NPB to maintain a repository of decisions and allow access to decisions by the public under specific circumstances. For the registry, the NPB includes decisions and reasons for the decisions.

Determinate sentence

A sentence of fixed length imposed by the court. A determinate sentence has an expiry date at which time the offender is completely free.

Eligibility

The date when an offender is entitled to be considered for some form of conditional release, such as temporary absence, work release, day parole, or full parole.

Eligibility for Conditional Release-Federal

Based On 72-Month (Six-Year) Sentence

Admission	Eligibility for Escorted Temporary Absences (ETA)
12 Months	Eligibility for unescorted temporary absences (UTA) or work release, Day Parole (APR)
18 Months	Eligibility For Regular Day Parole
24 Months (one-third of sentence)	Eligibility For Full Parole
48 Months (two-thirds of sentence)	Statutory Release (Detention)
72 Months	Warrant Expiry (End Of Sentence)

Indeterminate sentence

A life sentence for offences that may not otherwise carry a minimum sentence of life. By law, offenders designated by the court as “dangerous offenders” receive automatic indeterminate sentences. Although offenders serving an indeterminate sentence may not spend their entire lives in prison (i.e., they may eventually be paroled), they will remain under sentence, subject to control and supervision, for the rest of their lives. Parole eligibility in these cases is set, by law, at seven years.

Life sentence

Offenders serving life sentences remain under sentence for their entire lives. Although “lifers” may not spend their entire lives in custody (i.e., they may eventually be paroled), they remain subject to control and supervision for the rest of their lives. A first-degree murder conviction carries automatic twenty-five year parole eligibility. For second-degree murder, the court may set the eligibility anywhere between ten and twenty-five years.

Long-term offender

A designation by the court under section 753.1 of the *Criminal Code*. Offenders designated as long-term offenders receive a community supervision order that follows warrant expiry date (or earliest release date for a provincial sentence) for a period not exceeding ten years.

Long-term supervision order

An order imposed by the court. The offender who has received such an order is supervised in accordance with the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*. The long-term supervision order commences when the offender has finished serving all sentences for which he or she has been convicted. The period of supervision to which the offender is subject at any time must not total more than ten years. The National Parole Board is responsible for imposing special conditions on the release of offenders under a long-term supervision order.

National Parole Service

The National Parole Service was the organizational component of the National Parole Board responsible for preparing cases for decision by Board members for supervising offenders released to the community and for notifying the Board of changes in risk associated with offenders in the community. This organization was transferred to the Canadian Penitentiary Service, to CSC, in the 1970s.

Revocation

A decision made by the National Parole Board to end an offender’s release because of a violation of a condition or conviction for a new offence. A decision to revoke results in the offender’s return to custody.

Special conditions

In addition to the standard conditions of release provided by law, the National Parole Board may impose special conditions (i.e., abstinence from all intoxicants) as considered appropriate to further reduce the risk and to prevent the offender from returning to criminal activity.

Temporary absences

Escorted Temporary Absences (ETA): Provide an opportunity for an offender to be absent from an institution, for a limited duration, accompanied by a trained escort (CSC staff or other) for the following purposes: medical, administrative, community service, family contact, personal development for rehabilitative purposes, or compassionate reasons, including parental responsibilities.

Unescorted Temporary Absences (UTA): Provide an opportunity for an offender to be absent from an institution, for a limited duration, for the following purposes: medical, administrative, community service, family contact, personal development for rehabilitative purposes, or compassionate reasons, including parental responsibilities. UTAs form part of the offender's correctional plan and allow the offender to demonstrate his/her progress in meeting the objectives of the plan.

Warrant of committal (WOC) admission

A warrant of committal admission is a new admission to federal institution from the courts for a new offence.

Pardons and Clemency

Clemency (Royal Prerogative of Mercy – RPM)

The RPM is a discretionary power to apply exceptional remedies under exceptional circumstances (e.g., in cases of undue hardship) when all other avenues available under the *Criminal Code* have been exhausted. The power to exercise the RPM for federal offences is vested in the Governor General by virtue of the Letters Patent. In addition, the *Criminal Code* authorizes the Governor in Council to grant free or conditional pardons and to order remission of fines, pecuniary penalties, and forfeitures.

Pardon

A formal recognition that a person who was convicted of a criminal offence and has completed a sentence has demonstrated law-abiding behaviour in the community over a period of time.

