



Understanding Recent Calls for Parole Reform and How to Respond

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Recently, certain actors have found alarming success making demands to the federal government to enact legislative reform related to the justice system. These reforms have passed, despite significant evidence demonstrating that codifying longer, harsher forms of incarceration will make Canada less safe, and more dysfunctional. This was demonstrated most strongly in recent bail and sentencing reforms. More recently, on July 27, 2026, the Canadian Police Association publicly backed the Toronto Police Association's call for the federal government to put parole reform on Parliament's Fall 2026 legislative agenda through the release of a statement. The statement was copied to the Ministers of Public Safety and Justice and expressly invokes the Bill C-14 bail and sentencing process as the model to follow.

Why are parole reforms being lobbied for by the police? An individual who killed a police officer in 1994 had a parole hearing, which resulted in his fourth denial. The police associations' public grievances, sent to federal Ministers, are rooted in that they were not given an adequate period of victim notification to prepare for participation in the hearing. However, the scope of changes they ask for are much broader and pose significant impact to all federally sentenced people.

Why this matters: A police union calling to influence Canada's legislative agenda is neither new nor surprising. However, making wide-sweeping claims about the needs of all victims, and referencing recent reforms (which were sped through the legislative process and which ignored the perspectives of most experts in the field) represents a politicization of law and legislative process. Canadians should be alarmed that legislative changes have conceded to this strategy, all of which have made the Canadian prison system more restrictive. Many Canadians do not know that Canada's system of parole is already incredibly restrictive and harmful. Where concerns about hearing notice and scheduling are real, solutions belong with the Parole Board and the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime, not in legislative reform that would significantly impact the entire Canadian legal and prison system.

Importantly, two of the reform requests would change the law in ways that make federal sentences more restrictive than they are, and promote longer, harsher versions of incarceration in Canada. Yet, on the government's own evidence, keeping people in prison longer would make the public less safe. The other two describe administrative problems that require no legislation at all. The specifics are outlined in detail later in this document.

This is a new pattern that needs to be addressed: The police recently followed this formula to enact bail and sentencing reform. We can glean from this that their asks to the government will be broader than the public asks they have made thus far. On the Bill C-14 record, the bill that arrives was substantially broader than the public case made for it.



What has already been legislated: On June 18, 2026, three days after Bill C-14, Bill C-16 received Royal Assent under the short title the Protecting Victims Act. It amends the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to enhance the disclosure of information to victims, and it amends the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights to give victims information without their having to request it.

There is a narrow window of influence: The fall legislative agenda is set in August and early September. Material that lands after the House returns is not likely to make a material difference, while actions taken in August will be more likely to be influential. The time to act is now.

What you can do:

- Write to your member of Parliament (template provided in information package)
- Post publicly against this on social media and tag the Ministers



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Recent Trends in Legislative Process

Understanding how Canada’s justice system is being regressively reformed through politicization, led by public interest groups

On July 27th, 2026, the Canadian Police Association, a police union and lobbying group, amplified the Toronto Police Association’s recent calls for parole reform, following their participation in a parole hearing relating to a man convicted of killing a Toronto Police Officer in 1994. In the police union’s request, they push the federal government to follow “bail and sentencing reform” and ask the government to “bring that same approach to parole reform.” We are greatly concerned with this. The legislative process through which Canada’s systems of bail and sentencing were reformed was heavily dominated by parties who called for harsher, longer approaches to incarceration in Canada.

The reintegrative sector, legal organizations, and public safety supporting organizations whose mandates are to work in the Canadian prison system called vocally against these changes. Joined by researchers, legal scholars and subject matter experts, ample evidence was advanced that harsh prison systems do not improve public safety. Our evidence was categorically ignored. Now, the same process is at risk of occurring relevant to Canada’s parole system.

In the remainder of this document, we provide a summary of the legislative process that led to bail and sentencing reform, as well as detailed information about what the police are now asking for, and how these requests actually interact with and will impact Canada’s system of parole (and Canada’s prison system broadly). We then provide tangible steps that can be taken by individuals to call against the reforms. Summarizing recent legislative change patterns achieved through Bill C 14 aims to illustrate how demands for parole reform are only the most recent instance of public opinion and special interest groups successfully influencing Canadian law in the face of evidence against their desires.

While we do not disagree that public interest groups should inform the legislative process, it is a process of careful decision making by law-makers informed by evidence which should set the legislative agenda, not a mob rule approach demanding specific laws that actually serve to undermine public, community, and individual safety, as evidenced by national and global research consistently.

We caution that without swift action, there is real risk to the government reforming Canada’s parole system in the same regressive manner that they did bail and sentencing reform. It is the unfortunate truth that many of the agents calling for restrictive reforms actually have very little insight into the consequences of what they are calling for. This is why we were most surprised when the government drafted omnibus legislation related to bail and sentencing reform as they did. However, we are optimistic that if enough people express their concerns with their elected officials about Canada’s recent surge in failed ‘tough on crime’ policy, the government will not pursue harmful and regressive parole reform.

How Bill C-14 became law

Stage	Date	What it tells us
Public demand from police associations and provincial Premiers	Through 2025	Public calls for reform were amplified through political and media strategy and it was repeated that legislative reform was necessary. Advocacy organizations warned against, and requested meetings with government to provide evidence and insight.
First reading	October 23, 2025	Legislation was drafted which ignored the substantive contributions of most experts. Consultation after the tabling of the proposed legislation shaped amendments, not the architecture of the bill itself.



Stage	Date	What it tells us
Second reading	November 18, 2025	Second reading passes without opposition.
House committee	January 28 to February 9, 2026	The Bill is with committee.
Report stage and third reading	February 13, 2026	Both completed on the same day.
Senate second reading	March 12, 2026	The Senate became the only remaining venue for substantive change.
Senate committee	March 12 to May 26, 2026	Order of reference March 12. Hearings held March 26, April 22, April 30, May 5 and 7. The committee agreed to pause other work to prioritize the bill. Reported May 26 with amendments and observations.
Senate third reading, with amendments	May 28, 2026	The Senate amended the bill.
House considers Senate amendments; concurrence	June 10 to 12, 2026	The House disposes of the Senate's amendments.
Senate does not insist	June – July 15, 2026	The Senate did not push back, and the bill then came into assent on June 15, and into full force on July 15, 2026.

Source: LEGISinfo, Bill C-14 (45th Parliament, 1st Session), An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Youth Criminal Justice Act and the National Defence Act (bail and sentencing). Royal Assent 15 June 2026; S.C. 2026, c. 11.

What Bill C-14's process can teach us about the proposed parole reforms:

LESSON ONE: IF IT IS ON THE AGENDA, IT'S TOO LATE

The outcome was decided for Bill C-14 before its first reading. Roughly eight months elapsed between tabling and Royal Assent, but the content of the bill was fixed before October 2025. Everything after tabling was a negotiation over amendments.

LESSON TWO: THE SENATE IS CONSTRAINED

The Senate is the only chamber that materially resisted, and ultimately was not able to constrain or augment the bill. The Standing Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs held hearings across roughly two months and reported the bill with amendments and observations; the Senate amended it at third reading on May 28. Eighteen days later the Senate did not insist on its amendments and the bill received Royal Assent. Bill C-16 carried coordinating amendments to Bill C-14 and moved through Parliament alongside it. It received first reading in the Senate on June 11, 2026 and Royal Assent on June 18. Its Senate committee study was authorised by motion on June 9, while the bill was still before the House. Where the Senate had roughly two months to study Bill C-14, it only have a week to study Bill C-16.

LESSON THREE: THE GOVERNMENT RESPONDS TO PUBLIC OUTCRY – WE NEED SPEAK OUT



The police associations (along with several of Canada’s provincial Premiers) urged for bail and sentencing reform publicly with a short, named, concrete list of demands. The Federal government responded and augmented their legislative agenda, quickly drafting law. Our sector arrived later and were told directly by the government that “no one cared” for the rights or wellness of incarcerated people. Certainly, the current government is responsive to public outcry, and public calls against these policy changes matter.

Under the current timeline: Why acting now matters

Period	What is happening	What it means for us
August 2026	Departmental and ministerial planning for the fall sitting. Public Safety and Justice officials prepare options and advice. Cabinet planning sessions.	Now is an influential window. The federal government is extremely responsive to public pressure. Calls against this should be made now, while public stances against parole legislative reform will be most influential.
Early September 2026	Fall agenda consolidates. We assume Ministers' offices will be discussing and developing Fall's legislative agenda.	Window narrows for meaningful public outreach to ensure parole reform is not on the legislative agenda.
Mid-September 2026	House returns. Any announced intention becomes public.	Were parole reform to be advanced, the strategy would move from prevention to containment.

DON'T WAIT

Coalition and individual letters should be signed and delivered, and individual organisational letters sent, by **mid August** at the latest.

Understanding the big picture - what is actually happening

What police associations are asking for:	Why legislative change is not needed:	Challenging the ask:
Clearer notice and scheduling requirements that meaningfully consider the availability of victims who wish to attend or present a statement.	This concern is really about how the Parole Board administers its own hearing calendar. No amendment to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) is required, or even relevant, to fix it.	If the Parole Board's scheduling and notice practices are failing people who have been harmed, that is a matter for the Board's own administration and, failing that, for the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime. It does not become a reason to open the CCRA.
Greater transparency and access to parole decisions, hearing records and information required for meaningful victim participation.	Access to decisions and records is already governed by the CCRA and victims have broad access to information about federally sentenced people.	Information access is a live and legitimate issue and increased and unfettered access to information by victims is leading to greater vulnerability and harm for federally sentenced people. Simultaneously, Bill C-16 recently addressed this call and increased victim access to information.



What police associations are asking for:	Why legislative change is not needed:	Challenging the ask:
Longer intervals between reviews following the denial or revocation of parole.	This would be a statutory restriction on liberty, changing how long a person waits for a hearing after a parole denial, potentially by years. There is no evidence to support that this would make people in Canada safer.	Longer intervals between reviews following the denial or revocation of parole contradicts the gradual, structured release principle in the CCRA. It also defeats the purpose of conditional release as understood internationally and pushes people onto statutory release, or indefinite incarceration. This is contrary to the goals and legislated purpose of the Canadian prison system.
An explicit requirement that the CCRA be interpreted and administered consistently with the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.	A reordering of the interpretive framework of the entire CCRA is the most broadly consequential of the four demands. There is no evidence to support that this change needed or will make people in Canada safer.	Section 4 of the CCRA requires that victim considerations be taken into account, and the Correctional Service of Canada and the Board already operate under extensive victim notification and participation requirements. There is no gap for legislative reform to fill here.

Source: Canadian Police Association, "CPA supports call for victim-centred parole reform," 27 July 2026.

Calling against politicized legislative overhauls is not saying victims do not matter

If people harmed by crime are receiving twenty days' notice of a hearing on the other side of the country, that is an issue of the Parole Board's administration. It has a remedy, and the remedy is not legislative. The Board can change its scheduling and notice practices without Parliament. The Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime exists to additionally press it to do so.

Framing victims and federally sentenced people as opposing groups whose needs are at fundamental odds is a harmful frame that obscures the lived realities and harms experienced by those who occupy both positions simultaneously.

When the public thinks about victims, they are often thinking about individuals who have been harmed – however there are instances where police associations themselves have either been given standing as victims or have presented themselves as acting on behalf of all victims. Who are we talking about when we are talking about victim's rights?

A note on the weaponization of victims by police associations

Victims of crime are not a monolithic constituency asking for punishment. Justice Canada's own 2023 National Justice Survey found that 86% of people in Canada agree a victim should be given the opportunity to communicate with the person who harmed them, and majorities supported restorative processes even in cases involving homicide (68%), intimate partner violence (63%) and sexual assault (58%). British research has found that being a victim of crime does not generally make people more punitive.

Some victims do want retribution, and that is neither surprising nor shameful. It is a human response to harm. But a justice system cannot be organised around delivering vengeance, and in fact, our whole criminal legal system has developed to mediate, and to provide fair, objective and socially productive responses to harm.



Fact: The case that initiated these calls from the Police Associations ended in a parole denial

On July 30, 2026, the Parole Board denied parole for the fourth time, stating the applicant had not demonstrated sufficient insight. Whatever else is true, the Board did not release someone the police associations believe should be detained. What is left of the grievance concerns notice, scheduling and participation — matters entirely within the Board's own administration. There is no outcome in this case that supports a statutory restriction on release, and none that requires Parliament at all.

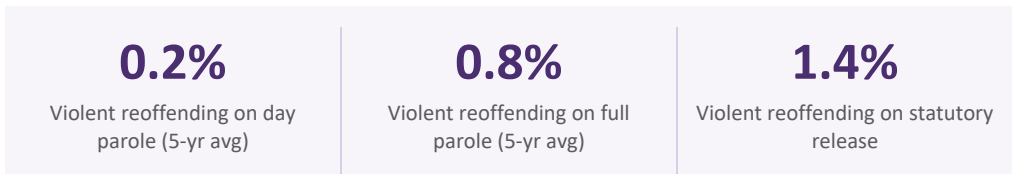
LEGISinfo, Bill C-16 (45th Parliament, 1st Session), An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to criminal and correctional matters (child protection, gender-based violence, delays and other measures), short title Protecting Victims Act. Royal Assent 18 June 2026; S.C. 2026, c. 19.

Fact: Parole is the point of the Canadian prison system, and it is already restrictive.

- Full parole is granted in **32.4%** of reviews. Roughly two in three applications are refused.
- Day parole supervision periods are completed successfully **91.6%** of the time; full parole, **88.5%**. Most failures are breaches of conditions, not new offences.
- Statutory release — the automatic pathway to release — is completed successfully **59.8%** of the time.
- Violent offence convictions among people on federal conditional release **fell 39.5% over the decade** to 2022–23.
- Over that decade, **83.1%** of violent convictions among people under supervision occurred on statutory release, not on parole.

Public Safety Canada, 2024 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, Figures D3, D8, D9, D11, D12.

A snapshot of risk of violent recidivism in Canada



Public Safety Canada, 2024 Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview, Figures D8, D9, D11, D12.

- Most people on parole do not reoffend and so police-led reforms will not make Canadians safer. Eliminating risk entirely is not possible in society, and harsh systems of incarceration are proven to weaken public safety.
- Restricting parole at a legislative level is not the solution to the complaints of the police.
- Canada's parole system is already incredibly restrictive, with practices that create immense barriers to social and economic participation.
- Adding further barriers at a legislative level moves more people from accessing the supervised, graduated, Board-assessed pathway onto parole and moves Canada away from its commitments to being a system focused on peoples' reintegration.

Fact: Victim participation is not being obstructed at a legislative scale, it is only arguably under-resourced

- In 2023–24 victims made **320 presentations at 192 hearings**, out of several thousand Parole Board hearings.
- **80.6%** of victim presentations were delivered remotely; 19.4% in person.
- There were **117 applications** for financial assistance to attend a parole hearing in 2023–24.

This is the shape of a problem that scheduling practice, notice periods and a better-used travel fund can solve, all of it within the Parole Board's existing authority. It is not a problem that requires legislative change.

Public Safety Canada, 2024 CCRSO, Figures F2, F3, F5.



Remember: Assume that the *public* asks made by police associations will not represent everything that legislation would hold:

The four proposals in the Canadian Police Association's statement should be treated as a public summary, not as the full scope of what legal changes would follow if parole reform reached the legislative agenda. Their statement itself says so: it refers to “detailed reform proposals” put forward by the Toronto Police Association that “deserve serious consideration”.

What was asked for publicly with Bill C-14, and what was then changed in legislation (not inclusive of the *additional* legislative changes made through Bill C 16):

The public case:	What Bill C-14 actually contained:
Stricter bail for repeat violent offending, following a triggering incident and sustained pressure from police associations and premiers. That was the pitch, and it is a narrow one.	Bail provisions, as advertised — direction on the principle of restraint, surety restrictions, and expanded reverse onus for motor vehicle theft, extortion, break and enter of a dwelling, human trafficking and smuggling, third or subsequent violent indictable offences, and choking, suffocation or strangling. But also, in the same bill:
—	Sentencing changes related to crimes connected to poverty and addiction New aggravating factors for retail theft, theft, mischief to property, and assaults on public transit employees and first responders. New consecutive sentence provisions. A requirement that courts give primary consideration to denunciation and deterrence for repeat motor vehicle theft, repeat break and enter, and organised crime offences.
—	Restrictions on conditional sentences Conditional sentence orders restricted for sexual assault and sexual offences involving victims under 18 — a direct narrowing of community sentencing, nowhere in the public bail case.
—	Serious criminalization of petty crime The retail sector's priorities (retail theft and mischief aggravating factors) were carried inside a bill sold as a response to violence against police. The Retail Council of Canada publicly welcomed the result.
—	Forced through The House adopted time allocation on Bill C-14 on June 12, 2026, limiting debate at the final stage.

Sources: published summary of Bill C-14 as assented to; LEGISinfo; House vote on time allocation, 12 June 2026; Department of Justice statements describing the legislative programme; Retail Council of Canada statement of 16 June 2026. Over 80 clauses in total.

WHAT YOU CAN DO, AND HOW IT HELPS!

There are three things we are asking people to do before mid-August. Please do as many of them as you can, as an individual and through any organisation you are part of. Each one reaches a different place, and the government has told us and shown us plainly that it responds to public pressure.



1. Write to your Member of Parliament

Find your MP at www.ourcommons.ca/members/en/search by entering your postal code, and email the constituency office. Attach your letter to the email, include your home address so the office can see you live in the riding, and copy Gary Anandasangaree, Minister of Public Safety, and Sean Fraser, Minister of Justice. We have provided a template letter that you are welcome to change into your own words. Ask for a written reply telling you what position your MP will take.

Why this helps. Constituency mail is counted and reported upward. Members' offices track what their riding is writing about, and ministers' offices are told when a subject is generating correspondence. The fall agenda is being decided in August and early September, so a letter that arrives now helps shape a position instead of reacting to one that has already been taken. A request for a written reply also puts your MP on the record, which is useful to all of us later.

2. Post publicly, and tag the Ministers

Post your concerns on social media, and tag the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Public Safety. Say that you do not support parole reform, or their tough-on-crime agenda.

Why this helps. This government has said repeatedly that it is receptive to public opinion, and it acts accordingly. When our sector came late to bail and sentencing reform, we were told directly that no one cared what we thought. The lesson is not that submissions are useless. It is that submissions arriving without visible public opposition behind them do not carry. Public opposition also matters much later in the process: senators hold amendments when there is outside support giving them cover, and Bill C-14 showed us what happens when that cover is not there. Your words matter and the government tracks them.

Tips for responding to calls for parole reform

1. Express that you did not vote for a tough on crime agenda, and state that you expect that there will no parole reform bill in the fall legislative agenda.
2. Make individual and organizational posts on your social media and tag the ministers of Justice and Public Safety. This government continually expresses that they are very receptive to public opinion.
3. Communications should state on the record that you are concerned not just with the proposed reform, but by the procedure through which legislative reform is being enacted. Use the process throughout Bill C-14 and C-16 as evidence. This prevents a later claim that we (as individuals or as a sector) were consulted on the proposed reforms.
4. Warn and speak against parole reform now, not later. Send direct emails to your constituency offices and cc the federal ministers.

A NOTE ON THE POLICE ASSOCIATIONS CALLS IN THE NAME OF ALL VICTIMS OF CRIME

Victims of crime are not a monolithic constituency asking for punishment. Justice Canada's own 2023 National Justice Survey found that 86% of people in Canada agree a victim should be given the opportunity to communicate with the person who harmed them, and majorities supported restorative processes even in cases involving homicide (68%), intimate partner violence (63%) and sexual assault (58%).

Some victims do want retribution, and that is neither surprising nor shameful. It is a human response to harm. But a justice system cannot be organised around delivering vengeance, and in fact, our whole criminal legal system has developed to mediate, and to provide fair, objective and socially productive responses to harm.

