

Meeting with the Parole Board: A Step toward Reintegration

Video brief – text version
Length: 10 min 58 sec

HOST

The Commission québécoise des libérations conditionnelles (parole board) decides on the conditional release of persons serving a sentence of six months to two years less a day. It contributes to maintaining a safe society while facilitating reintegration into the community.

Anyone who wishes to be granted a temporary absence in preparation for conditional release or a conditional release meets with members of the parole board for a sitting.

This video explains how a sitting unfolds, what questions may be asked, and what the rights and obligations of the offender are.

Analysis of the record

VOICEOVER

Before meeting with you, the members of the parole board will examine your record, in particular the assessments and reports concerning you, your correctional intervention plan, the legal documents and the recommendations made by correctional services.

The parole board is an independent decision-making body whose decisions are based on criteria provided for by law.

Hearing

VOICEOVER

You can attend the hearing alone. You can also be represented or assisted by the person of your choice, such as an attorney, a relative or an employer. That person may speak, at a moment determined by the members.

J. DUGRÉ

Hello, my name is Jean Dugré. I am a member of the Commission québécoise des libérations conditionnelles. I am accompanied by my colleague.

A. MARCOTTE

Annie Marcotte, board member. Hello.

J. DUGRÉ

We are the two board members who will be making a decision in your case today.

J. DUGRÉ

Before we begin, for the purposes of the recording of the hearing, please state your name and date of birth.

L. CÔTÉ

Luc Côté, March 23, 1968.

J. DUGRÉ

Mr. Côté, you are accompanied by Mtre. Florent Lachance. His role is to advise you during the hearing, and he will be allowed to address the board at the conclusion. If you want to speak with him privately, we will have a recess.

A representative of correctional services is also present. Please state your name.

D. MORIN

Danielle Morin, correctional services officer.

VOICEOVER

The members then tell you the substance of the information they have about you, including the offences that you were convicted of, your judicial record and the judicial measures applied to you.

The members will also talk to you about the conclusions of the assessments that were done, your behaviour while in the correctional facility and the steps you have taken with a view to your reintegration into the community.

A. MARCOTTE

Mr. Côté, you have been incarcerated since January 23. You were found guilty of breaking and entering a dwelling and assault. You were sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 20 months and two years probation.

This is the second time that you have received a jail sentence of more than six months.

According to the police reports, the parole board sees that the victim was awakened by the noise of the window breaking. You yourself were surprised to find that there was someone in the home, and you charged at the person. The victim succeeded in subduing you until the police arrived. Again according to the report, you were highly intoxicated. Mr. Côté, is that account accurate up to now?

L. CÔTÉ

Yes, but I would like to clarify something.

VOICEOVER

At this stage, the members verify the information they have about you. If you consider that a piece of information is not accurate, you can say so and provide clarifications.

J. DUGRÉ

Under the Act, the victim may be informed of the dates when you are eligible for various conditional release measures and the decisions rendered in your regard. The victim may provide written representations. In this case, the victim did not provide any written representations.

In your case, your judicial record dates back to adulthood, and includes the offences of narcotics possession, breaches of undertaking and thefts of under \$5000.

VOICEOVER

In rendering a decision, the members must weigh the protection of society as well as the risk of reoffending that you represent and your potential for reintegration. Therefore, the members will ask you questions to assess:

- the offences for which you were convicted;
- your awareness of your criminal behaviour and its consequences on the victim and on society;
- your judicial record and corrections history;
- your willingness to change your criminal behaviour;
- your behaviour during incarceration or under earlier measures;
- your ability to work and your social network;
- the appropriateness of the release plan that you prepared with your caseload officer, i.e. your reintegration plan.

A. MARCOTTE

Mr. Côté, this is not the first time that you have committed an offence. In your case, you are a re-offender. How do you explain your actions?

L. CÔTÉ

Look, I lost it, I was drunk, I didn't know what I was doing. But I never wanted to hurt that person.

J. DUGRÉ

Since your incarceration, what steps have you taken to resolve your delinquency problem?

L. CÔTÉ

I started to go to A.A. meetings, then . . . ummm . . . I did the programs that were offered in my sector.

A. MARCOTTE

Now, Mr. Côté, tell us about your release plan. What do you plan on doing for your reintegration into the community?

L. CÔTÉ

Well . . . I'm going to live with my girlfriend . . . I want to keep going to A.A. meetings. I've also signed up for therapy. I've been accepted. I'll be able to start . . . You'll see, I can comply with all of the conditions. I'll get it straight. You won't regret it . . . you'll see.

J. DUGRÉ

Mr. Côté, the parole board hears you. It is important to understand that we must render an impartial decision after assessing the risk of reoffending and the potential for reintegration.

A. MARCOTTE

Getting back to your release plan, Mr. Côté, you mentioned that you want to have therapy. Can you explain to us why you want to have therapy?

L. CÔTÉ

Going for therapy will enable me to stay sober once and for all. It will give me the tools to be able to do that.

I'd also like to go to A.A. meetings afterward, that way I'll be sure to stay sober. I also want to get back into the job market. My boss sent me a letter confirming that he's ready to rehire me as soon as I leave prison.

J. DUGRÉ

Who are the people you know who can help you with your reintegration?

L. CÔTÉ

There's my girlfriend. She works, and she's never been in trouble with the law. She doesn't drink, and she's ready to help me and encourage me in my efforts.

VOICEOVER

The release plan is prepared in cooperation with your caseload officer before the hearing, and must meet your needs and your delinquency problem, as described in your correctional intervention plan.

You must show that the plan can be implemented immediately when you are released and will ensure the public's safety. The necessary documents must therefore be provided, such as a letter of acceptance to a half-way house or therapy, a letter from an educational institution if you are going back to school, or a confirmation of employment.

A. MARCOTTE

Ms. Morin, you are here to supplement the information that we have about Mr. Côté. What would you like to say to us?

D. MORIN

Early in his sentence, Mr. Côté tended to deny responsibility and to isolate himself. He began to open up little by little, then when he started to participate in the various programs recommended to him, we saw that he really began to have greater awareness. Things are going better.

A. MARCOTTE

Thank you Ms. Morin. The parole board will now let Mtre. Lachance speak.

F. LACHANCE

Thank you. Allow me first of all to submit a letter written by my client's spouse. Unfortunately, she could not be here today, but she nevertheless wanted to address the members of the parole board.

I would mainly like to emphasize that Mr. Côté has changed a lot since he committed his offences. Moreover, he has participated in all of the programs that were offered to him at the correctional facility. Lastly, he had not committed any offences over the seven years preceding his incarceration.

J. DUGRÉ

Thank you, Mtre. Lachance. Mr. Côté, do you have anything else you would like to say?

L. CÔTÉ

No, I don't have anything to add.

J. DUGRÉ

Then, we ask that you please leave the room.

Deliberation

VOICEOVER

At this stage, the case is taken "under advisement", which means that the board members discuss it among themselves and must come to a unanimous decision. They then write up their decision, explaining their reasons.

Communicating the decision

VOICEOVER

Following deliberation, the members of the parole board inform you of their decision and provide you with a written copy.

If the parole board grants you a conditional release, the members will explain the conditions for your release. Those conditions must be met until the end of your sentence.

If your application is denied, and you believe that the parole board failed to comply with the law or that the decision was based on incomplete or erroneous information, you may file a written application for review.

HOST

You now have a good idea of how a sitting before the Commission québécoise des libérations conditionnelles unfolds.

Before you reach one third of your sentence, you will receive a notice of hearing for a sitting before the parole board.

However, if you want to have a temporary absence in preparation for conditional release at one sixth of your sentence, you must file an application with the parole board.

A folder explaining the steps and procedures to follow before meeting with the parole board is available from your caseload officer.

Credits

Host

Mtre. Maggie Moreau

Members of the parole board

Jean Dugré

Annie Marcotte

Offender

Benoit Leblanc

Attorney

Mtre. Pierre Gagnon

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