





## Introduction

he *Criminal Code* gives the federal Minister of Justice the power to review a conviction under a federal law to determine whether there may have been a miscarriage of justice, or what is often called a "wrongful conviction." If a miscarriage of justice likely occurred, the Minister of Justice has the authority to order a new trial or refer the matter to the court of appeal for the province or the territory in question.

If you want your conviction reviewed, you must submit an application to the Minister of Justice. You can prepare the application yourself, or have a representative (e.g. your lawyer) prepare the application on your behalf.

### **Basic Principles**

The powers of the Minister of Justice to review convictions are set out in sections 696.1 to 696.6 of the *Criminal Code*. These sections of the *Criminal Code* appear at the back of this booklet (Appendix 1). The procedure that applies to conviction reviews is laid out in regulations that also appear at the back of this booklet (Appendix 2).

The Minister's power to correct a miscarriage of justice is an "extraordinary" one which can only be exercised in those exceptional cases where a person presents new and significant information that casts doubt on the correctness of that person's conviction.

The role of the Minister is not to second-guess the decision rendered by the courts or to substitute his or her opinion of the evidence or the arguments already considered by the courts. The Minister does not decide if a convicted person is guilty or innocent. That role is assigned to the courts.

## Conviction Review

### Who May Apply?

You may apply if you have been convicted of an offence under a federal law or regulation. For example, if you were convicted of an offence under the *Criminal Code* or the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, you are eligible to apply for a conviction review.

You may also apply for a review if a court has found you to be a dangerous offender or a long-term offender under the *Criminal Code*.

The Minister of Justice may review convictions both for indictable offences (e.g. murder, manslaughter) and for summary conviction offences (e.g. minor theft).

## When May You Apply?

You may apply for a conviction review when you have exhausted your rights of judicial review or appeal for your conviction or the court's finding that you are a dangerous or long-term offender. You may not apply for a conviction review if a judicial review or an appeal of your conviction is still before the courts.

Judicial review and appeals to higher courts are the usual ways to correct legal errors and miscarriages of justice. Therefore, convicted persons are expected to appeal their convictions where suitable grounds exist. A conviction review by the Minister of Justice is not a substitute for or alternative to a judicial review or an appeal of your conviction.

If you have not appealed your conviction, you may still be eligible to apply for a conviction review if the time for appealing has expired and you have since become aware of new and significant information that casts doubt on the correctness of your conviction. However, you should apply to the court of appeal for an order extending the time for appealing based on new information, where it is feasible to do so.

# What is New and Significant Information?

Your application for a conviction review must be based on **new and significant** information. Information will be considered **new** if the courts did not examine it during your trial or appeal or if you became aware of it after all court proceedings were over.

#### Information is **significant** if

- it is reasonably capable of belief;
- it is relevant to the issue of guilt; and
- it could have affected the verdict if it had been presented at trial.

The following are examples of information that might support a conviction review application if it were **both new and significant**:

- Information that establishes or confirms an alibi.
- The confession of another person to the crime.
- Information that identifies another person at the scene of the crime.
- Scientific evidence that points to another person's guilt or supports a claim of innocence.
- Proof that important evidence was not disclosed.
- Information that shows a witness gave false testimony.
- Information that substantially contradicts testimony given at trial.

A conviction review application is not meant to be another level of appeal or a mechanism that allows the Minister of Justice to substitute his or her decision for that of a court. Simply repeating the same evidence or legal arguments that were made in the trial and appeal courts does not amount to providing new and significant information.

### What Can the Minister Do?

On a conviction review application, the Minister of Justice does not decide whether you are guilty or innocent. That is a question only a court can decide.

If the information in your conviction review application satisfies the Minister that there has likely been a miscarriage of justice, the Minister can correct this injustice by granting any of the following remedies:

- ordering a new trial;
- ordering a new hearing for a person who was found to be a dangerous offender or a long-term offender; or
- referring a case to the court of appeal of a province or territory to be dealt with as if it were an appeal.

If the Minister is not satisfied that there has likely been a miscarriage of justice, your conviction review application will be dismissed.

In some cases, the Minister may wish to have the assistance of a provincial or territorial court of appeal in regard to a question arising from a conviction review application. The Minister has the power, in those cases, to refer one or more specific questions to the court of appeal for its opinion.

### Who Assesses the Application?

In most cases, lawyers with the Criminal Conviction Review Group (CCRG) will assess the conviction review application by conducting the preliminary assessment and the investigation, and by providing advice to the Minister on whether or not a remedy is warranted in a particular case. Most wrongful conviction applications are based on criminal matters where the prosecution was conducted by one of the provincial Attorneys General. However, if a wrongful conviction application is received as a result of a matter that was prosecuted by the Attorney General of Canada (e.g. drug cases or criminal matters prosecuted in the territories), all the various stages within the conviction review process will be conducted by lawyers from outside the CCRG.

# When Does the Assessment Begin?

An assessment of a conviction review application discussed below may begin only when a fully completed application form and all required supporting documents have been received by the CCRG.



## The Review Process

conviction review application is important both to the applicant and to society. It may be the last chance to correct a wrongful conviction. Each application is assessed conscientiously and thoroughly in recognition of this fact. There are four stages in the process:

- Preliminary Assessment
- Investigation
- Investigation Report
- Decision by the Minister

### **Preliminary Assessment**

When your conviction review application is received, it is first reviewed to ensure that it is complete. You or the person acting on your behalf (e.g. your lawyer) will be informed as to whether the application is complete or not. Once the application is complete, a CCRG lawyer will examine the information you have provided and compare it with trial and appellate court records.

If the application presents **new and significant** information that was not available at trial or on appeal and that could have affected the outcome of your case, you will be informed that the application will proceed to the next stage of the process.

In certain cases, the investigation stage may be bypassed, but only where the Minister is satisfied by the information in the application that a likely miscarriage of justice has indeed occurred and that there is an urgent need to grant you a remedy for humanitarian reasons or to prevent you from continuing to suffer from a blatant injustice.

If your application does not present **new and significant** information, you will be informed that your application will not proceed to the investigation stage. You will also be told that you may provide additional information in support of your application within one year. If you do so, the preliminary assessment will continue. If you provide additional information after the one-year period, a new preliminary assessment will be necessary.

### Investigation

At the investigation stage, a CCRG or outside lawyer will closely examine the new information you provided in your application to see if it is reliable (i.e. it is reasonably capable of belief) and relevant (i.e. it relates to guilt or innocence).

Depending on the type of information you provide, the investigation could involve any of the following:

- Interviewing witnesses to clarify or verify the information in the application.
- Carrying out scientific tests (e.g. DNA testing).
- Obtaining other assessments from forensic and social science specialists (e.g. polygraph examinations).
- Consulting police agencies, prosecutors who were involved in the original prosecution, and defence lawyers who were involved in the trial and the appeals.
- Obtaining other relevant personal information and documentation (e.g. your Correctional Service Canada file).

How long this investigation will take depends on the complexity of the case and the availability of the evidence.

If the investigation raises issues that you did not cover in your application, you may be asked to provide additional information within a specified time period so that everything that needs to be considered in the application can be dealt with at the same time.

In some cases, a witness may be able to give important information, documents or other evidence but refuses to do so. To aid the investigation of a conviction review application, the Minister of Justice has the power to subpoena such a witness and force him or her to testify under oath or hand over documents or other evidence. The Minister may delegate this special power to a CCRG or outside lawyer or other qualified person.

## **Investigation Report**

When the investigation is completed, the CCRG or outside lawyer will prepare an investigation report that summarizes the information gathered. You will be provided with a copy of this report and asked to provide comments on it within a prescribed period of time. Although you have up to one year to provide further comments, the sooner you do so, the sooner the application will proceed to the next step.

Your application will proceed to the next stage – a decision by the Minister – once your comments have been received and addressed, or the time for providing comments has expired (i.e. one year) and you have not provided any further information.

### Decision by the Minister

At this final stage of the conviction review process, the CCRG or outside lawyer will forward the following to the Minister of Justice:

- All the submissions that you have made.
- The investigation report.
- A memorandum of legal advice prepared by the lawyer who investigated the application.

The Minister will then review all of this material and decide whether, on the basis of the facts and the law, your application should be dismissed or allowed.

As mentioned earlier, in some circumstances, the Minister may refer a question or questions to a provincial or territorial court of appeal.

If satisfied by the information contained in the application that there is a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred, the Minister has the power to grant you a remedy (i.e., a new trial or hearing or a new appeal proceeding).

If the Minister is not convinced there has been a miscarriage of justice, the Minister will dismiss the application and inform you of the decision.

## How to Apply

Preparing a conviction review application will take some time and effort from you. The following steps will tell you how to proceed.

# Step 1: The Application Form (Form No. 1)

Form no. 1 is the application for a conviction review (i.e. *Application for Ministerial Review – Miscarriages of Justice*). You must use this form to apply for a conviction review. A letter or other document requesting a conviction review will not be accepted.

Fill out all parts of the application form. All of the information requested is important. If you fail to provide the information requested in the application form or provide incomplete or inaccurate information, the processing of your conviction review application will be delayed.

Make sure that your writing or typing is clear and can be easily read.

# Step 2: Consent to the Release of Personal Information (Form No. 2)

You must fill out all parts of the Consent to the Release of Personal Information (Form no. 2). Sign and date the form and have someone sign and date the form as your witness.

Privacy laws protect and limit access to your personal information. This form allows CCRG to:

- have access to your personal information that is relevant to your conviction review application (e.g. personal information held by other government departments), and
- disclose your personal information to another person or body in order to obtain information that is useful in assessing your application (e.g. obtaining a forensic report from an expert).



# Step 3: Waiver of Solicitor-Client Privilege (Form No. 3)

Fill out all parts of the Waiver of Solicitor-Client Privilege (Form no. 3). Sign and date the form. Have someone sign and date the form as your witness.

Solicitor-client privilege means that any lawyer who represented you at any time during the proceedings (e.g. preliminary inquiry, trial, appeal to the provincial court of appeal, appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada) must keep all information provided by you, or to you, completely confidential. Your lawyers cannot disclose any of this information without your permission.

The Waiver of Solicitor-Client Privilege gives your lawyers permission to disclose information that is relevant to your conviction review application to the CCRG.

## **Step 4: Supporting Documents**

You must submit a number of documents with your conviction review application. Before submitting your conviction review application, obtain the following documents:

- Copies of all documents from the pre-trial proceedings, including the information or indictment, motion material filed by the defence, motion material filed by the Crown, preliminary hearing transcript, and transcripts of other pre-trial proceedings.
- Copies of all documents from the trial proceedings, including the information or indictment, material filed by the defence, material filed by the Crown, trial transcript, and trial court's decision.
- Copies of all documents from the appeal proceedings, including fresh evidence applications, leave applications, appellant's factum(s), respondent's factum(s), court of appeal decision, and Supreme Court of Canada decision.
- Copies of any other supporting documents (e.g. statements from witnesses, affidavits from witnesses, transcripts of examinations of witnesses, letters, photographs, plans, drawings, technical and scientific reports).

Your trial lawyer and/or your appeal lawyer should have these documents or be able to assist you in locating them.

You should also note that you may be asked to submit additional information in response to questions that arise during the course of the review.

## Step 5: Submitting the Application

Send your application form, Consent to the Release of Personal Information, Waiver of Solicitor-Client Privilege, and all supporting documents to:

#### Minister of Justice

Criminal Conviction Review Group 284 Wellington Street Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H8

There is no fee for submitting a conviction review application.

### Checklist

Before sealing the envelope, be sure you have completed steps 1 to 5. Use the checklist below to ensure that your conviction review application is complete.

- 1. **Application (Form no. 1):** Ensure that all parts of the application have been filled out clearly, completely and accurately
- 2. Consent to the Release of Personal Information (Form no. 2): Ensure that you have filled out all parts of the form clearly, completely and accurately and that both you and your witness have signed and dated the form.
- 3. Waiver of Solicitor-Client Privilege (Form no. 3): Ensure that you have filled out all parts of the form clearly, completely and accurately and that both you and your witness have signed and dated the form.
- 4. **Supporting Documents:** Ensure that all required documents are included and/or that arrangements have been made to forward to us all documents not in your possession.

## Acknowledgement

When the Minister of Justice receives your conviction review application, you will be sent a written acknowledgement. If the application is incomplete, you will be notified as soon as possible. A preliminary assessment cannot begin until your application is complete.

## Appendix 1 Sections 696.1 to 696.6 of the Criminal Code (Part XXI.1)

#### **Application**

696.1 (1) An application for ministerial review on the grounds of miscarriage of justice may be made to the Minister of Justice by or on behalf of a person who has been convicted of an offence under an Act of Parliament or a regulation made under an Act of Parliament or has been found to be a dangerous offender or a long-term offender under Part XXIV and whose rights of judicial review or appeal with respect to the conviction or finding have been exhausted.

#### Form of application

(2) The application must be in the form, contain the information and be accompanied by any documents prescribed by the regulations.

#### Review of applications

**696.2** (1) On receipt of an application under this Part, the Minister of Justice shall review it in accordance with the regulations.

#### Powers of investigation

(2) For the purpose of any investigation in relation to an application under this Part, the Minister of Justice has and may exercise the powers of a commissioner under Part I of the *Inquiries Act* and the powers that may be conferred on a commissioner under section 11 of that Act.

#### Delegation

(3) Despite subsection 11(3) of the *Inquiries Act*, the Minister of Justice may delegate in writing to any member in good standing of the bar of a province, retired judge or any other individual who, in the opinion of the Minister, has similar background or experience the powers of the Minister to take evidence, issue subpoenas, enforce the attendance of witnesses, compel them to give evidence and otherwise conduct an investigation under subsection (2).

#### Definition of "court of appeal"

696.3 (1) In this section, "the court of appeal" means the court of appeal, as defined by the definition "court of appeal" in section 2, for the province in which the person to whom an application under this Part relates was tried.

#### Power to refer

(2) The Minister of Justice may, at any time, refer to the court of appeal, for its opinion, any question in relation to an application under this Part on which the Minister desires the assistance of that court, and the court shall furnish its opinion accordingly.

#### Powers of Minister of Justice

- (3) On an application under this Part, the Minister of Justice may
  - (a) if the Minister is satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred,
    - (i) direct, by order in writing, a new trial before any court that the Minister thinks proper or, in the case of a person found to be a dangerous offender or a long-term offender under Part XXIV, a new hearing under that Part, or
    - (ii) refer the matter at any time to the court of appeal for hearing and determination by that court as if it were an appeal by the convicted person or the person found to be a dangerous offender or a long-term offender under Part XXIV, as the case may be; or

(b) dismiss the application.

#### No appeal

(4) A decision of the Minister of Justice made under subsection (3) is final and is not subject to appeal.

#### Considerations

- **696.4** In making a decision under subsection 696.3(3), the Minister of Justice shall take into account all matters that the Minister considers relevant, including
  - (a) whether the application is supported by new matters of significance that were not considered by the courts or previously considered by the Minister in an application in relation to the same conviction or finding under Part XXIV;
  - (b) the relevance and reliability of information that is presented in connection with the application; and
  - (c) the fact that an application under this Part is not intended to serve as a further appeal and any remedy available on such an application is an extraordinary remedy.

#### **Annual report**

696.5 The Minister of Justice shall within six months after the end of each financial year submit an annual report to Parliament in relation to applications under this Part.

#### Regulations

696.6 The Governor in Council may make regulations

- (a) prescribing the form of, the information required to be contained in and any documents that must accompany an application under this Part;
- (b) prescribing the process of review in relation to applications under this Part, which may include the following stages, namely, preliminary assessment, investigation, reporting on investigation and decision; and
- (c) respecting the form and content of the annual report under section 696.5.

## Appendix 2

## Regulations Respecting Applications for Ministerial Review – Miscarriages of Justice

#### Interpretation

- 1. The following definitions apply in these Regulations.
  - "Code" means the Criminal Code. (Code)
  - "Minister" means the Minister of Justice. (ministre)

#### Application

- 2. (1) For the purposes of subsection 696.1(2) of the Code, an application for ministerial review under Part XXI.1 of the Code shall be in the form set out in the schedule and contain the following information:
  - (a) with respect to the applicant,
    - (i) the applicant's name, including any alias or former name,
    - (ii) the applicant's address, date of birth and, if any, the number assigned to the applicant under the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Automated Fingerprint Identification System,
    - (iii) the name, address and telephone number of the person making the application on the applicant's behalf, if any,
    - (iv) whether the alleged miscarriage of justice relates to a conviction on an offence punishable on summary conviction or on an indictable offence, or, in the case of a finding of dangerous offender or long-term offender under Part XXIV of the Code, particulars of the finding, and
    - (v) whether the applicant is in custody;
  - (b) with respect to any pre-trial hearings,
    - (i) the date of the preliminary inquiry, if any,
    - (ii) the court and its address, and
    - (iii) the number, type and date of any pre-trial motions, as well as the court decision on those motions;
  - (c) with respect to the trial,
    - (i) the date on which it started,
    - (ii) the court and its address, the plea entered at trial, the mode of trial and the date of the conviction and that of sentencing,
    - (iii) the names and addresses of all counsel involved in the trial, and
    - (iv) the number, type and date of any motions made, as well as the date of the court decision on those motions;
  - (d) particulars regarding any subsequent appeals to the court of appeal or the Supreme Court of Canada;
  - (e) the grounds for the application; and
  - (f) a description of the new matters of significance that support the application.
  - (2) The application must be accompanied by the following documents:
    - (a) the applicant's signed consent authorizing the Minister
      - to have access to the applicant's personal information that is required for reviewing the application, and
      - (ii) to disclose to any person or body the applicant's personal information obtained in the course of reviewing the application in order for the Minister to obtain from that person or body any information that is required for reviewing the application;
    - (b) a true copy of the information or indictment;
    - $(c) \quad \hbox{a true copy of the trial transcript, including any preliminary hearings};$
    - (d) a true copy of all material filed by the defence counsel and Crown counsel in support of any pre-trial and trial motions;
    - (e) a true copy of all factums filed on appeal;
    - (f) a true copy of all court decisions; and
    - (g) any other documents necessary for the review of the application.

#### **Review of the Application**

- On receipt of an application completed in accordance with section 2, the Minister shall
  - (a) send an acknowledgment letter to the applicant and the person acting on the applicant's behalf, if any; and
  - (b) conduct a preliminary assessment of the application.
- 4. (1) After the preliminary assessment has been completed, the Minister

- (a) shall conduct an investigation in respect of the application if the Minister determines that there may be a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred; or
- (b) shall not conduct an investigation if the Minister
  - (i) is satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred and that there is an urgent need for a decision to be made under paragraph 696.3(3)(a) of the Code for humanitarian reasons or to avoid a blatant continued prejudice to the applicant, or
  - (ii) is satisfied that there is no reasonable basis to conclude that a miscarriage of justice likely occurred.
- (2) The Minister shall send a notice to the applicant and to the person acting on the applicant's behalf, if any, indicating whether or not an investigation will be conducted under subsection (1).
- (3) If the Minister does not conduct an investigation for the reason described in subparagraph (1)(b)(ii), the notice under subsection (2) shall indicate that the applicant may provide further information in support of the application within one year after the date on which the notice was sent.
- (4) If the applicant fails, within the period prescribed in subsection (3), to provide further information, the Minister shall inform the applicant in writing that no investigation will be conducted.
- (5) If further information in support of the application is provided after the period prescribed in subsection (3) has expired, the Minister shall conduct a new preliminary assessment of the application under section 3
- 5. (1) After completing an investigation under paragraph 4(1)(a), the Minister shall prepare an investigation report and provide a copy of it to the applicant and to the person acting on the applicant's behalf, if any. The Minister shall indicate in writing that the applicant may provide further information in support of the application within one year after the date on which the investigation report is sent.
  - (2) If the applicant fails, within the period prescribed in subsection (1), to provide any further information, or if the applicant indicates in writing that no further information will be provided in support of the application, the Minister may proceed to make a decision under subsection 696.3(3) of the Code.
- 6. The Minister shall provide a copy of the Minister's decision made under subsection 696.3(3) of the Code to the applicant and to the person acting on the applicant's behalf, if any.

#### **Annual Report**

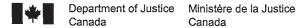
- An annual report submitted under section 696.5 of the Code shall contain the following information in respect of the financial year under review in the report:
  - (a) the number of applications made to the Minister;
  - (b) the number of applications that have been abandoned or that are incomplete:
  - (c) the number of applications that are at the preliminary assessment stage;
  - (d) the number of applications that are at the investigation stage;
  - $(\emph{e})~$  the number of decisions that the Minister has made under subsection 696.3(3) of the Code; and
  - (f) any other information that the Minister considers appropriate.

#### **Coming into Force**

 These Regulations come into force on the day on which section 71 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2001, chapter 13 of the Statutes of Canada, 2002, comes into force.

## Form No. 1

Application for Ministerial Review – Miscarriages of Justice



Canada

## APPLICATIONS FOR MINISTERIAL REVIEW **MISCARRIAGES OF JUSTICE**

## DEMANDES DE RÉVISION AUPRÈS DU MINISTRE **ERREURS JUDICIAIRES**

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alf (if any)		In Custody	/ Not In Custody
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	SUPREME COURT O	OF CANADA	
Date of Appeal Filed	Date of Hearing	Date of Decision	
Grounds for Application			
Glodinas for Application			
			Add another page if needed
Description of the New Matters of Significance that Support to	nis Application		
			Add another page if needed
SECTION C - REQUIRED DOCUMENTS (Mandato	ory)		
Applicant's Consent to the Release of Personal Info	rmation		
(if unable to provide any of the following, please explain PRE-TRIAL	why)		
True Copy of Information or Indictment	True	Copy of Motion Material Filed by Defence	
True Copy of Motion Material Filed by Crown	True 0	Copy of Transcript of Proceedings	
Explanation			
•			
TRIAL			
True Copy of Indictment		Copy of Material Filed by Defence	
True Copy of Material Filed by Crown	True C	Copy of Transcript of Proceedings	
True Copy of Decision			
Explanation			
APPEALS			
True Copy of Appellant's Factum	True C	Copy of Respondent's Factum	
True Copy of Appeal Court Decision	True C	Copy of Supreme Court of Canada Decision	
Explanation			
OFOTION D. OTHER SUPPOPULA TO THE	OPTIONAL		
SECTION D - OTHER SUPPORTING EVIDENCE (			
(Affidavits, letters, photographs, plans, drawings, technic	ai anu scientific reports, etc.)		

# Form No. 2

## Consent to the Release of Personal Information

Please Print	
I,	[name],
of	[city, town, municipality],
in the Province of	,
was convicted for	[name of offence]
in relation to	[specifics of offence]
on	[date of conviction].
designated representative of the Minister under sections 696.1 to 696.6 of the <i>Crim</i> I also consent to the disclosure to any per	ssion of or under the control of any person, body or institution, to an of Justice to assist in assessing my application for a conviction review nal Code.  son, body or institution of my personal information obtained in the er for the Minister to obtain from that person, body or institution any
information that is required for assessing	• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •
Applicant's Signature	Date
Witness's Signature	Date
Full Name of Witness	
Province	

## Form No. 3

## Waiver of Solicitor-Client Privilege

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By signing this document, I waive any solicitor-client privilege to which these counsel are subject. They may discuss any aspect of the case with any designated representative of the Minister of Justice while my application is being assessed.

I understand that waiving my solicitor-client privilege means that my counsel:

- are allowed to discuss anything about the case that is the subject of the application with any designated representative of the Minister of Justice, and
- are allowed to disclose all forms of communication between myself and them and to provide originals or copies of correspondence, documents or anything else that is related to the case that is the subject of the application to any designated representative of the Minister of Justice.

I sign this waiver voluntarily.

Applicant's Signature	_ Date
Witness's Signature	_ Date
Full Name of Witness	
Province	