

Louise Charette – Opening Statement

I was born and raised in a small francophone community in Eastern Ontario. This is where I have resided most of my life. I attended the University of Ottawa after graduating from high school and obtained bachelor's degree in social sciences (concentration criminology).

I then pursued a career in the criminal justice system. I was employed with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services for a number of years and held different positions during my employment with this Ministry. I initially worked within an institutional setting as a Corrections Officer then as an Electronic Monitoring/TAP Officer. I later also worked in community corrections as a Probation and Parole Officer. During my employment with MCSCS, I benefitted from ongoing professional training and as such was able to develop many different skills. I assessed offender suitability for programming, conducted client interviews and was responsible for the case management of files. I prepared comprehensive assessments of the risks and needs of offenders and pre-sentence reports both in English and in French. I supervised offenders in the community on probation, parole and conditional sentence. I enforced court orders and proceeded with breaches of non-compliance when necessary. I also liaised with community agencies and interacted with the public and victims of crime. I also worked with justice partners and did community presentations.

I then attended Law School in the year 2000. I graduated from the University of Ottawa French Common Law program. I started off my career working as a per diem Assistant Crown Attorney with the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) in my small community then later on also worked in other Eastern Ontario communities. As an Assistant Crown Attorney, I screened and managed court files, prepared court documents, appeared before different levels of courts, took positions on pleas and sentence and made decisions regarding the release of alleged offenders into the community on interim release. I also liaised with the court, justice partners, and community agencies and often interacted with witnesses and victims of crime as well as the public. As a per diem my work mostly involved appearing in bail court. As a per diem criminal Duty Counsel, I assisted unrepresented alleged offenders in court, interviewed potential sureties, negotiated interim releases into the community in bail court. I also conducted bail hearings when required, and at times participated in the resolution of criminal charges. I also liaised with the court, justice partners and community agencies. As a per diem my work consisted mostly of representing clients in bail court.

I also have experience as an adjudicator. I was first appointed as a member of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in January 2017. I was a part time member for this Board for approximately 5 years, until its recent dissolution in December 2021. As an adjudicator for CICB, I assessed the eligibility of applicants for financial compensation under the *Compensation for Victims of Crime Act*. I conducted oral and electronic hearings, and also adjudicated files by way of written hearings. In this role, I was required to possess the ability to listen actively and communicate effectively. I was also required to manage conflict when alleged offenders participated in the proceedings and maintain a fair process. I demonstrated organizational skills, and an aptitude for impartial adjudication. I also demonstrated the ability to work independently or as part of a panel. As a bilingual member, I conducted hearings in English and French and also prepared written decisions in both languages.

As a member of the Ontario Parole Board, I assess the suitability of applicants for a release in the community on parole or temporary absence. I conduct parole hearings, reviews and post-suspension hearings, and hearings for Temporary Absence applications. In this role am responsible for assessing an offender's risk to society and for making decisions regarding a return to the community. I am expected to apply relevant legislation and work independently or as part of a panel. As a bilingual member, I conduct hearings in English and French and also prepare written decisions in both languages.

In light of the above, I believe my educational background and work experiences would greatly assist me in this role with the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. My past work experiences with MCSCS have enabled me to acquire significant knowledge of the criminal justice system, and to also understand the important role each professional plays in the administration of justice. Throughout this career I demonstrated the ability to work with offenders, court agencies, justice partners, custody facilities, community organizations and most importantly the public.

As a lawyer, I have the ability to review, interpret and apply relevant legislation as well as court decisions. Working in criminal court has also enabled me to further develop a commitment to public interest and social justice. As an adjudicator, I gained skills and knowledge which I am hoping to transfer to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission if appointed. I am aware of the independent nature of the role of an adjudicator. I am also aware of the importance to render fair, unbiased and well-reasoned decisions.