

In support of the *Canadian Victims Bill of Rights*, the province has established a Community Impact Statement Program so that statements describing the impacts of a particular offence on the community can be admitted in court and considered by the sentencing Judge during the sentencing of a convicted offender.

What is the Community Impact Statement Program?

The Community Impact Statement Program of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General (CSCP) has been designated by a provincial order-in-council as the program responsible for developing procedures for preparing a Community Impact Statement in British Columbia. A designated Community Impact Statement (CIS) program needed to be established in order to make CISs admissible in court.

What is a Community Impact Statement?

A Community Impact Statement is a statement, written by an individual on behalf of a community, that describes the harm or loss that an offence has caused to a community. If such an individual chooses to submit a community impact statement, the Court must take it into account when it sentences an offender, assuming it meets the *Criminal Code* requirements for admissibility. Whether these requirements have been met in a particular case will be for the sentencing Judge to decide. How much weight the Community Impact Statement will be given, once admitted, is also up to the Judge to decide.

Who may complete a Community Impact Statement?

An individual on behalf of a community may complete a Community Impact Statement. For example, representatives of local organizations, cities, religious organizations, and First Nations communities may prepare community impact statements on behalf of the people who live and work in the affected community.

What can be included in a Community Impact Statement?

A Community Impact Statement must be prepared using the [Community Impact Statement Form](#). The individual may describe how the offence has affected members of the community emotionally, physically and financially as well as any fears that community members may have for their safety or their family and friends' safety. The community representative may include a drawing, poem or letter to express how the offence has affected the community.

A statement must not include:

- any statement about the offence or the offender that is not relevant to the harm or loss suffered by the community;

- any unproven allegations;
- any comments about any offence for which the offender was not convicted;
- any complaint about any individual, other than the offender, who was involved in the investigation or prosecution of the offence; or
- except with the Court's approval, an opinion or recommendation about the sentence.

Does a community have to complete a Community Impact Statement?

Completing a Community Impact Statement is not mandatory.

How does a community complete a Community Impact Statement?

The [Community Impact Statement Form](#) is available on the B.C. Government website. Individuals can call 1-844 660-5343 if they have questions about how to complete the form or they can ask a Victim Service worker for assistance.

Is help available if there are questions about the Community Impact Statement?

Individuals can call toll free 1-844 660-5343 if they have questions about how to complete a Community Impact Statement or they can ask a Victim Service worker for assistance. To find a Victim Service worker in your community, call VictimLink BC at toll-free: 1-800-563-0808 or you can call TTY at 604-875-0885 or you can email VictimLink BC at VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca

Can a community update the Community Impact Statement?

Yes, the individual preparing the statement on the community's behalf may update their Community Impact Statement by submitting a new Community Impact Statement form with "UPDATED INFORMATION" written at the top. The updated form will be placed in the court file along with the previous version of the Community Impact Statement.

Can a Community Impact Statement include information about economic loss?

The Community Impact Statement can describe how the offence has affected the community financially. Economic impact on a community could include, but not limited to:

- any reduction in the number of visitors or tourists to the region;
- the value of any property that was lost or damaged and the costs of repairs or replacement; and
- any costs or losses that are not covered by insurance.

Will a community receive compensation for the financial impacts described in the Community Impact Statement?

The Community Impact Statement is not an application for compensation or restitution.

Does the Court have to consider a Community Impact Statement?

The *Criminal Code* specifies that the court “shall” consider a community impact statement filed with the court. The Judge determines what weight to give to the statement.

When is a Community Impact Statement considered?

A Community Impact Statement may only be considered by a court after an offender is found guilty.

How will the Community Impact Statement be used?

The offender and/or their lawyer, Crown Counsel and the Judge receive a copy of the completed Community Impact Statement form upon a finding of guilt. The individual who has prepared the Community Impact Statement may be questioned in court on the contents of the statement.

Can an individual who has completed the Community Impact Statement present their statement in court by reading it?

The *Criminal Code* has provisions to enable an individual to read their Community Impact Statement in Court, upon request.

Where an individual has indicated they wish to read their impact statement in Court, the Court Clerk will advise the Judge. If there is a finding of guilt, when directed by the presiding judge, Court Registry staff, to the best of their ability, will make reasonable attempts to contact the individual to make arrangements for reading their statement.

To facilitate arrangements, individuals wishing to read their statement in Court must provide phone and email contact information on the [Community Impact Statement Coversheet](#) to the Court Registry when they submit their completed Community Impact Statement form. It is up to the Judge whether to grant an adjournment to arrange for an individual to read their Community Impact Statement in Court.

As sentencing can happen quickly, individuals should monitor the status of the court case.

How do I keep updated on the status of the court case?

You can monitor court proceedings through [Courts Services Online](#) or by phoning the [Court Registry](#) for updates.

Where and when should I send my completed Community Impact Statement?

When you have finished completing the Community Impact Statement, sign it and attach it to the cover page, date it and mail, fax or bring all of the pages to the [Court Registry](#) at the court

location responsible for the case. **Community Impact Statements should not be submitted to Crown Counsel.** It is important to give your Community Impact Statement to the Court Registry as soon as possible so it is placed in the court file before an accused is sentenced.

Victim Services

If you would like information about available victim services, please contact:

VictimLink BC

Call toll-free: 1-800-563-0808

Call TTY: 604-875-0885

Call collect: use Telus Relay Service: 711

Text: 604-836-6381

Email: VictimLinkBC@bc211.ca

www.victimlinkbc.ca