



# Interpreter Handbook

**For Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security  
Review Tribunal Hearings**



Office of the Commissioner  
of Review Tribunals (CPP/OAS)

Bureau du Commissaire des  
tribunaux de révision (RPC/SV)

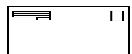
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## How to contact us

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### By mail:



**Office of the Commissioner of Review  
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P.O. Box 8250, Station T  
Ottawa ON K1G 5S5**

### By telephone:



**1-800-363-0076  
Free of charge in Canada  
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### By fax:



**1-866-263-7918  
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### By e-mail:



**[info@ocrt-bctr.gc.ca](mailto:info@ocrt-bctr.gc.ca)**

### Our website:



**[www.reviewtribunals.gc.ca](http://www.reviewtribunals.gc.ca)**

(For all inquiries, please direct them to the Director of Corporate Services.)

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## General Information on the Review Tribunal Process

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This information kit is a resource for professional interpreters who provide interpretation services at a Canada Pension Plan or Old Age Security Review Tribunal hearing.

The kit contains:

- Interpreter Handbook
- Brochure: “Appealing a Decision to a Review Tribunal under the Canada Pension Plan” - see Glossary for commonly used terms
- Brochure: Appealing a Decision to a Review Tribunal for an Old Age Security Benefit
- CD-DVD: "Your Best Shot" A fictional story about a person preparing for their Review Tribunal hearing. Total time: 30 minutes

You are also encouraged to browse the website of the Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals: [www.reviewtribunals.gc.ca](http://www.reviewtribunals.gc.ca)

### How to use this “Information Kit”

Please begin by reading the relevant Brochure (CPP or OAS) to familiarize yourself with the Review Tribunal appeal process. You may find it helpful to consult the glossary at the back of the brochure for the meaning of any unfamiliar terms that you may encounter.

Next, please read the Interpreter Handbook. This document explains our expectations and understanding of your role as an interpreter and provides specific guidelines for providing services at a Review Tribunal hearing.

If you have any questions while preparing for your next Review Tribunal assignment, please don't hesitate to contact Corporate Services at the Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals. If you have any questions during the hearing itself, please speak with the Chairperson of the Review Tribunal.

We would also welcome any comments or suggestions you may have about this Information Kit. Please send them to the attention of:

Director, Corporate Services  
Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals CPP/OAS  
P.O. Box 8250, Station T  
Ottawa ON K1G 5S5



## What is a Review Tribunal?

A Review Tribunal is a three-person panel that decides appeals from individuals who have been denied benefits under the Canada Pension Plan or the Old Age Security Act.

## What benefits are involved in an appeal?

Appeals under the Canada Pension Plan most often involve disability pensions, but can also involve benefits for children of disabled contributors, retirement pensions and pension sharing, death benefits, survivor's pensions, orphan's benefits, or the division of pension credits.

Appeals under the Old Age Security Act may involve old age pensions, the guaranteed income supplement, or 'allowances' for spouses, common-law partners and survivors.

## How are appeals decided?

The Review Tribunal holds an in-person hearing involving the parties and their witnesses. There are usually two parties - the person who has been denied a benefit (the 'Appellant') and a representative from the department that made the decision under appeal (the 'Departmental Representative'). The Appellant may also be represented by a lawyer or an advocate. Either party can

bring witnesses who will speak at the hearing.

The Review Tribunal and the parties will already have received documents related to the appeal. These are bound in a 'hearing file' that is often more than 100 pages. Although more documents may be provided to the Review Tribunal at the hearing, this is mainly the Appellant's opportunity to tell the Review Tribunal everything that relates to their claim for benefits. The process is very interactive and there is a lot of questioning by the Review Tribunal.

There is no decision given at the hearing. After everyone has had their say, the Chairperson will bring the hearing to an end. The members of the Review Tribunal will review all of the information and arguments, make a decision and prepare a detailed written rationale that the parties will receive by mail at a later date.

## Will I be sworn in?

The Chairperson will tell you at the start of the hearing if you are required to take an oath promising to interpret accurately and to the best of your ability. You will be asked to take an oath by answering a question like:



[sample]

"Do you solemnly declare to interpret accurately any statements made in the course of these proceedings to the best of your ability, from the ..... language into the (English or French) language, and from the (English or French) language into the ..... language?"

### Is the hearing recorded?

Review Tribunal hearings are not recorded. Microphones or other electronic equipment are not provided, unless one of the participants has special needs.

### What style of interpretation is used at Review Tribunal hearings?

In most cases, you will be performing consecutive interpretation while sitting beside the person who requires interpretation. There are rare occasions when interpretation services may be required during a telephone interview with a witness or when you will be asked to translate a document tabled at the hearing.



## Role of the Interpreter

### What is the OCRT's Policy Concerning Interpreters?

The Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals makes all the administrative arrangements for Review Tribunal hearings, including arranging and paying for interpreters. The OCRT's policy is to only use professionally accredited interpreters.

### What is your Role as an Interpreter?

Your role at a Review Tribunal hearing is to establish direct communication between the person requiring interpretation services and the other participants at the hearing. This is the 'transparency principle', meaning that your role is to be a conduit for communication rather than an active participant.



We expect that you will:

- Be well-prepared
- Be proficient in the language/dialect required
- Act impartially
- Interpret accurately
- Respect the confidentiality of the Review Tribunal hearing

## What is the best way to prepare for a Review Tribunal hearing?

We ask you to review the information kit and, where appropriate, to review or update your terminology. You may bring a dictionary to the hearing. You may also find it useful to bring a calendar if converting dates between countries is required.

When you arrive at the hearing, you should introduce yourself to the Chairperson and ask for (1) a quick briefing on the case, and (2) an opportunity to talk with the person who will need the interpretation services (usually the Appellant) in order to confirm the language/dialect required. You may find that the Appellant speaks a dialect that you are unable to interpret with the degree of professionalism required. It is important to resolve any misunderstandings of this kind at the earliest opportunity.

There have been rare occasions where an interpreter believes that cultural or gender issues may interfere with her/his effectiveness at the hearing. If you find

yourself in such a situation, please discuss it with the Chairperson as soon as you become aware.

## What is the best way to ensure impartiality?

Before the hearing begins, the Review Tribunal must be confident that you do not have a **conflict of interest**. If you have a personal or business relationship with one of the parties or their witnesses, you must immediately bring this to the attention of the Chairperson.

Your role is to be neutral and objective during the hearing. The best way to assure this is to maintain the **direct communication** style and to use the **first person mode of speech**.

Review Tribunal hearings are relatively informal. The OCRT staff and the Tribunal members do their best to help people to understand and feel comfortable with the process. However, there are many reasons why some people will feel intimidated or emotionally overwhelmed by the experience. For example, in a disability pension hearing, the Appellant will be asked to describe in detail their mental or physical condition and why it prevents them from working. This may be difficult for persons from cultural backgrounds where disability is regarded as shameful, or where a person is embarrassed about discussing intimate personal issues with strangers. It is not unusual at a Review Tribunal hearing for the Appellant or witnesses to become quite emotional.



Many Appellants are not represented by lawyers or other advocates. They may be unsure about what to do or say and ask for your assistance. Nonetheless, as a professional interpreter we expect that you will reproduce verbatim what is being said from one language into the other without explanation or omission.

To maintain impartiality, please do not share your impressions of the hearing with the Tribunal members or express opinions about the credibility of the Appellant or any witnesses.

### What about accuracy?

Your interpretation must be accurate in **meaning** and **style**. The **'first person'** mode of speech contributes to accuracy as well as impartiality.

A Review Tribunal is often under pressure to complete a hearing during the scheduled time. However, we encourage you to take the time necessary to fulfill your obligation to interpret accurately. If someone is speaking too fast, please ask them to slow down.

If you don't know a word, or realize that you have made a mistake, please tell the Chairperson immediately.

Please use the closest equivalent for a particular word or phrase. If you are going to use an approximation for a word because it does not exist in the other language, please point this out in order to give people an opportunity to ask for a definition or other clarification.

If your interpretation is challenged, you should ask the Chairperson how to proceed.

### What are the rules regarding confidentiality?

Review Tribunal hearings are highly confidential - the hearing is private and decisions are not made public. You must also respect the confidentiality of this process and ensure that you do not discuss the appeal with anyone, other than in the course of providing interpretation services at the hearing. This also means that you should avoid discussions outside the hearing room during breaks in the hearing.



You can expect the Review Tribunal to treat you respectfully and to do its best to provide an environment that allows you to do your job professionally.

The Chairperson is responsible for 'managing' the hearing, and you should take your directions from him or her. We expect that he or she will:

- Provide you with a quick briefing about the subject matter of the appeal and give you an opportunity to confirm the language/dialect to be interpreted
- Introduce you and all of the other participants at the hearing
- Clearly explain the hearing process and your role in it
- Facilitate the direct communication process by speaking 'through' you rather than to you
- Encourage all participants at the hearing to avoid using jargon, to define or explain difficult concepts, and to speak in short sentences at reasonable speed
- Not ask you to take on other tasks, such as showing documents or providing advice



If you have concerns or questions about your experience at a Review Tribunal hearing, we encourage you to contact Corporate Services at the OCRT.

### Personal Attire

Relaxed business attire is appropriate for the hearing. Please avoid wearing perfumes or scented personal products as participants in our hearings may be allergic to them. Please ensure that mobile communications devices are turned off during the hearing.

### Attendance

If you cannot attend a hearing, we ask that you notify Corporate Services as far in advance of the hearing as possible so that we can find a substitute. If you have an emergency (less than 48 hours before the hearing), please call the OCRT as soon as possible so we can notify the Review Tribunal.

### Punctuality

Please arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled hearing. If you are delayed, please call the Chairperson at the hearing location.

Some hearings take longer than anticipated and the Review Tribunal may decide to take a break. The Chairperson will let you know how long the break will be and whether you should be on 'stand-by' or return at a specific time.



