



## Entering a Plea and Plea Agreements

The trial process begins when the accused person, prosecutor, and defence appear in court for the first time. The accused person is told what offence he or she is accused of and enters a plea of either guilty or not guilty. If the accused pleads guilty, a trial is not necessary and the Court will sentence the accused person either immediately or shortly thereafter.

If a plea agreement is involved, the Court is required to ask the prosecutor, after a plea of guilty has been accepted, whether he or she took reasonable steps to inform victims of the plea agreements for cases involving:

- murder or serious personal injury offences; or
- an indictable offence with a maximum punishment of 5 years or more.

In some cases, prosecutors are not able to tell the victim about the plea agreement before the plea is accepted by the Court. They must then take reasonable steps to inform the victim as soon as they can after that point.

If the accused person pleads not guilty, the Court will set a trial date. If the crime is an indictable offence, the Court may also set a date for a preliminary hearing (if one has been requested) to decide whether there is enough evidence to support sending the case to trial.