

News

**Bloc, Conservatives teaming up to abolish accelerated parole; Two sides say they are still negotiating details**

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The Harper government and the Bloc Quebecois teamed up yesterday, urging the other opposition parties to support their effort to adopt legislation that would prevent financial fraudsters and other non-violent criminals from getting parole after serving only one-sixth of their sentences.

But despite claims made over the weekend by an anonymous government source, the two sides said they are still negotiating details about the final legislation.

"What I can say is that I understand from my discussions with the House leader and from members of the Bloc that they have agreed in principle to support our bill to eliminate accelerated parole," Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said outside the House of Commons. "We are in fact looking at what details have to be worked out in respect of that in-principle agreement and see how we can make that a reality."

Both sides noted it would be up to the Liberals and the New Democrats to ensure the legislation, originally introduced as Bill C-39, gets fast-tracked through Parliament in time to apply to future cases.

Those would include former Montreal financial consultant **Earl Jones**, who was sentenced a year ago to 11 years in prison for a massive **Ponzi** scheme that defrauded 158 investors out of \$50 million. Under the current laws governing non-violent crime, Jones could be eligible to get out of jail after serving 22 months of his sentence.

Accelerated parole allows nonviolent offenders serving their first sentence to secure day parole after serving one-sixth of their sentence and full parole after one-third, unless there is reasonable grounds to believe they will re-offend.

The last version of the bill to end accelerated parole died when Prime Minister Stephen Harper prorogued Parliament in December 2009. It was introduced again in June 2010. The Tories have pledged for years to make parole harder to get for all offenders.

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