

News

NDP balks at quick passage of parole bill; Tories blast stance as 'ill-thought out'

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The NDP says it won't give its consent to fast-track legislation restricting early parole for nonviolent criminals who have served a sixth of their sentence.

"The NDP believes it is essential to study this law in detail," said deputy leader Thomas Mulcair in the House of Commons. "This is our fundamental responsibility as parliamentarians."

Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said Mulcair's stance was an "ill-thought out position," urging him to reconsider to ensure such convicted fraudsters as former Montreal financial consultant **Earl Jones** do not benefit from early release.

"The New Democratic Party is standing in the way of reforms that would ensure individuals like that serve their debt to society and are not released back on the street to victimize other individuals," Toews said.

Jones was sentenced last year to serve 11 years in prison for a **Ponzi** scheme that defrauded 158 investors out of \$50 million.

Under current laws governing non-violent crime, Jones could be eligible for parole after serving 22 months of that sentence.

The Bloc Quebecois has agreed to work with the Conservatives to pass the legislation. The Bloc had argued that the delays in adopting the legislation allowed convicted fraudster Vincent Lacroix to secure his own release after serving only 15 months in jail following a scheme at an investment company that saw investors lose more than \$100 million.

But Mulcair said the Bloc and Tory co-operation was a "gimmick" concocted during a meeting behind closed doors between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe.

Mulcair noted that they have also failed to answer questions about the number of cases their proposal would affect, the costs of keeping people in jail, and whether retroactive application of the bill would be consistent with the Charter of Rights.

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