

Harper's Delay of Crime Bills Has Put Our Community At Risk

I am absolutely furious by the way that the Conservative government is playing politics with crime, and with threats of an election being thrown around, I think that my constituents need to be made aware of some of the facts.

In recent weeks, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and several of his cabinet ministers have accused Liberal Senators of holding up the government's proposed Tackling Violent Crime Act, Bill C-2. Indeed, when I was at the memorial for the innocent gang shooting victims Ed Schellenberg and Chris Mohan, Abbotsford Conservative MP Ed Fast tried to turn the solemn occasion into an opportunity to slam the Senate. Audience members were aghast.

The Conservative government introduced a total of 13 Justice bills in 2006 and 2007. What the Conservatives fail to tell the public is that eight have already received Royal assent and become the law of the land. In fact, the majority of those bills passed with absolutely no amendments from the Senate, meaning they were completely acceptable to our Liberal members.

The remaining five have now been repackaged into Bill C-2, and the political deception that is currently clouding the debate is troubling.

The portion of the bill raising the age of consent from 14 to 16 was unnecessarily delayed by Stephen Harper. Our Liberal caucus had unconditionally supported it when it was Bill C-22 in the last session. We offered to fast track the process to pass this bill, but the government refused emphatically. This could have been law back in December 2006 and we would have had more than a year of better protection for our children if it were not for Harper's political games.

The reverse onus on bail for firearm-related offences component was originally introduced into first reading in the fall of 2006, and the Justice Minister waited almost another 5 months to move to second reading to advance it closer to becoming law. Once again, we pledged to fast track the bill. Then for the second time, our good faith gesture was turned down.

The newly designed Bill C-2 was passed by the House and sent to the Senate on December 12, 2007, only two days prior to the Christmas break. Parliament then resumed on January 28th, 2008, making last week's claim by the Prime Minister that Liberal Senators are delaying the bill an outright lie.

If, for the purposes of pure politics, the Conservatives are ready to spend in excess of \$200 million to fight an unnecessary election on this issue, then I am ready to tell this story to every resident of Newton-North Delta.

As far as I am concerned, falsely accusing Liberal Senators of stalling legislation, using the grief of the community for political gain, or triggering people's fears based on misinformation, is governance of the worst kind. These tactics only serve to reinforce the cynicism that continues to exist about the concern that politicians have for their constituents and the communities in which we serve.



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