

Criminal

Senate adopts bill to 'help jurors suffering trauma following a trial'

By **Amanda Jerome**

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Bill S-206, (An Act to amend the *Criminal Code* [disclosure of information by jurors]), passed its third reading in the Senate on Dec. 8 without amendment and is awaiting first reading in the House of Commons.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Pierre-Hugues Boisvenu of Quebec, "seeks to remove the legal barriers in the *Code* limiting access to medical support for jurors who wish to consult a health-care professional when suffering from trauma following their participation in a criminal trial," a news release from the senator's office explained.

Currently, the release noted, a juror "divulging information acquired during a trial at any point in his lifetime, including when in need of psychological assistance, remains an offence under the *Criminal Code*."

Sen. Lucie Moncion, of Ontario, said "juries are an integral and essential part of the Canadian judicial system and as parliamentarians, we must be concerned with their well-being."

"I am convinced that the House of Commons will recognize once more the importance of this bill and will carry it promptly. I congratulate Senator Boisvenu for this achievement, and I commend the resilience shown by the former juries who

fought relentlessly for their rights throughout the legislative process," she added in a statement.

Sen. Pierre Dalphond, of Quebec, also supported the bill and said "juries fulfil an essential role in our judicial system. Society must offer them the necessary support, including psychological assistance, following their participation in a trial."

According to the release, the bill will be "sponsored by Michael Cooper, Conservative Member of Parliament for St. Albert-Edmonton, in the House of Commons."

In October 2018, the release noted, Cooper "introduced Private Member's Bill C-417 on the same topic." However, the "draft legislation died on the Order Paper when Parliament was prorogued for the 2019 federal election."

"I am very pleased to learn that Bill S-206 passed through the Senate with unanimous consent," Cooper said in a statement.

"I look forward to championing this bill in the House of Commons and working with my colleagues from all political parties to see that it is passed expeditiously. Canadian jurors play an integral role in the administration of justice and deserve nothing less," he added.

If you have any information, story ideas or news tips for The Lawyer's Daily please contact Amanda Jerome at Amanda.Jerome@lexisnexis.ca or call 416-524-2152.