ATTACHMENT B

MPs approve principle judges' training bill

JOAN BRYDEN

OTTAWA — The House of Commons has unanimously approved in principle — for the third time — a bill that would require judges to commit to take training in sexual assault law.

Bill C-3 will now be scrutinized by the Commons justice committee, which could yet propose amendments.

The proposed legislation originated as a private member's bill from former interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose, which the Liberal government supported.

It was unanimously approved by the Commons but stalled in the Senate and died when Parliament was dissolved for last fall's election.

Ambrose blamed "the old boys' club protecting the old boys' club" for throwing up procedural roadblocks, while Conservative senators said they were prioritizing government legislation as the clock ran out.

The Liberals revived Ambrose's effort as a government bill in February. It won unanimous support in principle and was under study by the justice committee when the Commons was adjourned in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

That bill ultimately died when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau prorogued Parliament in August but has now been resurrected once again.

Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole had said his party would support the latest iteration of the bill but his MPs refused over the past few weeks to cut short opening debate on it, prompting some suspicions among the Liberals that not all Tory MPs were on side.

Those suspicions were further fuelled last week when Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner questioned the merit of mandating sensitivity training for judges about sexual assault.

"Why are we appointing people who need this training to begin with? This bill gets it wrong," she wrote on Twitter.

In the end, however, the bill passed at second reading Monday by a vote of 327-0 — with all Conservatives, including Rempel Garner supporting it.

Shortly before the vote, Justice Minister David Lametti urged O'Toole to "show leadership" and persuade all his MPs to support the bill.

"In the last Parliament, this bill had all-party support in the House. I have been discouraged to hear some Conservative members criticize C-3 as unnecessary," he said.



Gender Equality Minister Maryam Monsef says the bill is not just about correcting the behaviour of some 'bad apples' on the bench.

Gender Equality Minister Maryam Monsef said the bill is not just about correcting the behaviour of some "bad apples" on the bench.

"It will help all of us do right by survivors of gender-based violence," she said, adding that "even the best judges" can benefit from training aimed at exploding "deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs" about survivors of sexual violence.

Bill C-3 would require new federally appointed judges to agree to take training, including learning about rape myths and stereotypes and how to make sure biases about race, gender and other social factors do not influence their decisions. It would also require judges to put their reasons on the record when ruling on sexual assault cases.

Ambrose's original bill was sparked by some high-profile rulings, including Alberta judge Robin Camp asking a sexual assault complainant in 2014 why she couldn't keep her knees together and Halifax judge Gregory Lenehan ruling that "a drunk can consent" while acquitting a taxi driver of sexual assault on a passenger in 2017.

The Canadian Judicial Council has expressed concern that judicial independence will be compromised if the federal government passes a law mandating new judges to take training in sexual assault law.

— The Canadian Press



Liberal House leader Pablo Rodriguez calls the Tory move irresponsible and says the Liberals may deem the vote a confidence matter.

Liberals warn of 'consequences' over Conservative motion

STEPHANIE LEVITZ

OTTAWA — The Opposition Conservatives are setting Parliament up for another showdown that could trigger a snap election.

The Tories will press ahead today with a motion that calls for the creation of a special "anticorruption" committee of MPs that would scrutinize specific COVID-19 relief programs the Conservatives have flagged as being carried out unethically.

Liberal House leader Pablo Rodriguez called their move irresponsible and suggested the Liberals may in turn deem the eventual vote on the motion a confidence matter.

"The Conservative motion that is there on the table, if it was to be debated tomorrow, would send a clear message that there is no confidence in the government," Rodriguez told reporters Monday.

To style the committee as being focused on corruption, and to compel everyone from the prime minister to rank-and-file civil servants to testify, would stall the work of government at a time when everyone ought to be focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, Rodriguez said.

So the Conservatives' gambit can't be taken lightly, he said.

"They cross the line when they say that the ministers and the public servants will spend all their time working on this instead of working for Canadians," he said.

"So, you know, when you do things there are consequences." Conservative House leader Gérard Deltell called the effort to paint the Tory motion as a matter of confidence "ridiculous."

"That you are even entertaining such speculation demonstrates to me — as it would to all Canadians — the desperate ends to which the Liberal government will go to further its coverup of a very troubling scandal which reeks of corruption," Deltell wrote in a letter to Rodriguez Monday, a copy of which was obtained by The Canadian Press.

As political parties negotiated in public and behind the scenes Monday, the Tories had been coy about which of three potential motions they'd move forward with on their previously scheduled "opposition day" Tuesday, when they get to put a matter of their choice on the House of Commons agenda.

The first was the anticorruption committee. Among other things, it would probe a decision to hand a contract to run a student grant program to WE Charity, an organization with long ties to the Liberals, as well as a ventilator purchase agreement given to a firm run by a former Liberal MP.

The second motion was about China's national security law for Hong Kong and the third related to Chinese high-tech company Huawei.

Quebec Conservative MP Pierre-Paul Hus then let slip midday Monday that the anticorruption motion would be the one moving ahead; Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole is expected to lay out his rationale for that decision on Tuesday morning before debate begins.

The NDP had weeks ago proposed the idea of a special committee that would focus exclusively on pandemic-related spending, an idea the Tories' anticorruption probe would amp up.

The Liberals countered with their own proposal for a COVID-19 committee, detailing their pitch Monday in a letter to the House leaders of the other parties.

They're proposing one that focuses on pandemic-related spending, with six Liberal MPs and six members of the opposition parties. The Tories' version would have 15 MPs, with the opposition holding the majority.

The Liberals' approach is too broad, Deltell said.

"All Mr. O'Toole's motion would do is to establish a committee with a focused mandate to review the most troubling reports related to your government's pandemic response measures," he wrote in his reply to Rodriguez.

"This would allow the 24 standing committees of the House to focus on their usual mandates, and how they intersect with the COVID-19 pandemic, while ensuring Parliament discharges its primary purpose: to hold the government to account." NDP ethics critic Charlie Angus said earlier Monday he was concerned the Liberals would just stymie the work of a new committee much as they have done with existing ones, filibustering proceedings to avert votes.

He suggested, however, that to toss the country into an election over it would be folly.

Should the Liberal declare the eventual vote on the motion a confidence matter, how the NDP and Bloc Québécois vote would be crucial in determining whether the minority Liberal government fell.

"Our message to the Liberals is calm down, we have work to do," Angus said.

"Work with us."

More light was shed Monday on the interaction between WE Charity and the government with the release of dozens of pages of documents previously demanded by the finance committee, including details of fees paid to, and expenses covered for, members of the Trudeau family who participated in WE events.

The charity had previously said Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, the prime minister's wife, had been paid a $1,500 speaking fee for one appearance, and the documents released Monday also disclosed that the charity covered $23,940.76 in expenses for eight appearances between 2012 and 2020. The Commons' ethics committee has also demanded to know how much money Trudeau, and his family, had received in speakers' fees over the last several years. Trudeau released details of his own Monday — about $1.3 million — a figure and details previously disclosed when he ran for leadership of the party in 2013. But the Liberals said his family's records were off limits.

— The Canadian Press

Asbestos, Que., votes for new name

ASBESTOS, Que. — The Quebec town synonymous with the cancer-causing fibre asbestos has voted for a new name: Val-des-Sources.

During a livestreamed council meeting Monday night, Mayor Hugues Grimard announced that Val-des-Sources beat five other proposed names with 51.5 per cent of the vote after three rounds. "It's a name that represents our area, and especially, it's inspiring for the future," he said.

The 7,000-person town of Asbestos, located about 130 km east of Montreal, had been looking to shed its association with the toxic mineral. Political and business leaders in the town complained for years the name attracted ridicule and disgust in the rest of the country and internationally.

Asbestos, Que., helped make Canada one the world's leaders in asbestos exports. The Jeffrey mine, once Canada's largest, closed in 2012.

— The Canadian Press

