

**Submission to The House of Commons' Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights  
Re: Counselling and Other Mental Health Supports for Jurors**

Good day Committee Members,

I am reaching out to you as I have recently learned of this initiative to establish regulated support for jurors who struggle post-trial. I understand that this committee's work is well underway, but felt that I should reach out all the same. I do not plan to tell you things that you are already aware of, like the fact that jurors do not volunteer for this, or that we do not come into jury duty with any training or support. I won't stress the need for juror support or the need for a National standard that ensures jurors from all areas of Canada get the support they need. You all already know this, or this Committee wouldn't be here in the first place.

What I propose to do is offer you two suggestions that may make a difference at a grass-roots level to juries going forward, and let you know what I am taking upon myself to do. The first is the Daily Check-In, and the second is Coordinated Peer Support.

I recently served as a juror in a high-profile murder trial in St. John's, NL (Nov-Dec 2017). This was my first introduction to the full scope of the criminal justice process, and opened my eyes to many things I never thought I would ever experience. In my case, it was an armed robbery gone horribly wrong, and a Good Samaritan by the name of Larry Wellman lost his life tragically. I feel extraordinarily honored to have been selected for such an important role, and still believe it to be a vital part of our society. I would do it again.

I now understand intimately the effect that serving as a juror can have on one's well-being. As a society, we are desensitized by the level of violence seen on television and in the media. However, as jurors, we did not have the luxury to change the channel. Instead, we were repeatedly shown video and audio recordings of one good man's attempts to diffuse a volatile situation, his wife's pleas to stop and step back, and a masked gunman's yells for money, followed by gun shots, haunting screams and the view of an innocent man bleeding to death – these are not the things of television. These are the things that jurors like myself are tasked with viewing, analyzing, and forming judgements on.

I know my jury's situation is representative of most criminal trials in that the first day is the day that everything gets thrown at you. All of the heaviest, most traumatic, violent and emotional evidence and testimony is presented, and as a jury, this is one of the most impactful points of the entire process (especially if the prosecution has done a "good job"). At the end of that first day, when the court adjourns for the day, the jury goes back to chambers, they collect their things, and they go home. That is precisely what we did as well.

That night was brutal. For me, I went home and cried in my shed for an hour. My husband didn't know what to do with me, and I couldn't tell him! Others on my jury didn't sleep, had awful nightmares, lost appetite and sadness. The next morning, when we first met for the day, I knew we had all been changed. To be exposed to what we were, and go home with those

thoughts and images to deal with alone was unacceptable in my mind, and it was then that I decided it wasn't going to happen like that again. At least not on my watch!

The very next day, I requested that the Sheriffs Officer give us all some time at the end of each day to "check in". I did not want myself or anyone else in that room to have to carry weight home like that again. The Sheriffs Officer was most accommodating, and gave us all the time we needed, every day from Day 2 onward. Some days we didn't need it, some days it was just a 60-second check-in, but other days... I was thankful to have the support of my fellow jurors, and I know they were, too.

I believe our Daily Check-Ins were instrumental in ensuring that all of us in that room were "ok". It was a simple idea that required zero resources, zero funding and zero legislative approval, which we implemented immediately, and which provided the initial and on-going support throughout the trial that we never would have otherwise received. This was a small activity that can be implemented immediately into any jury situation, and provide a level of on-going support throughout the trial, and beyond. It was just unfortunate that we didn't think to do that at the end of the first day, when we really needed it.

I propose that this Committee consider incorporating this recommendation of Daily Check-Ins into your report to the House of Commons in April. I am currently working the office of Provincial Dept. of Justice to make that recommendation to the Office of the High Sheriff in Newfoundland and Labrador, but would like to think it could be considered on a national level as well. While I don't mean to over-simplify, all a jury needs is to be offered the time at the end of the day, should they need it. If someone had thought to offer that to us on Day 1, it would have made a world of difference!

I am also currently seeking ways to initiate and facilitate a peer support program in the St. John's area to assist jurors as they come out of the trial process and return to "normal". While legislated programs are an ultimate goal, they can take a long time to work through our system and get put into practice. There are people right now, who are sitting on juries and going through what many of us have gone through, knowing that they will also come out with no support in place. I feel a strong sense of urgency to support those jurors right now who are coming out of trials, and need this. I am currently in conversation with a local organization that provides peer support to those with mental illness, and will hopefully be able to access training to become better equipped to facilitate and lead a peer support group specifically for former jurors. This I am taking upon myself to create.

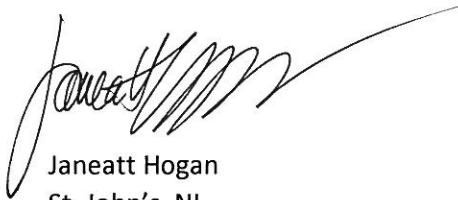
I believe the provision of peer support is a grass-roots initiative that should be closely considered. Who else but other jurors could completely understand what a juror fresh out of trial is going through? There is an intimate understanding that simply can not be found with in a clinical setting. This is not to diminish the importance of and need for professional help, but rather it is intended to assist jurors in absorbing their experience and returning to their regular worlds again, without the need for professional intervention. I believe that peer support can be a pre-emptive strike against possible PTSD and post-trial anxiety and depression.

It is my hope that my establishment of a peer support group in Newfoundland can provide the basis for similar such supports throughout all other jurisdictions in Canada as well.

In summary, I would like to indicate that I am not a mental health professional. I hold a Science Degree in Psychology, and a Masters in Business, but have no professional designation. I have, however, volunteered in various capacities over the years, including past work on a crisis intervention and suicide prevention hotline, and on-going speaking appearances at a local parent support group for those with children suffering from eating disorders. I have witnessed first-hand the powerful benefits of a peer support environment, and know that both of these recommendations could have a similar positive impact on the lives of our future jurors.

I loudly applaud the work of this Committee and offer my voice, my story and my recommendations to assist and further these efforts. Thank you for your time and your consideration of these recommendations.

Sincerely and with respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janeatt Hogan', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Janeatt Hogan  
St. John's, NL