

Liberals ask about probation review

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— Telegram file photo



Justice Minister Felix Collins said the upcoming review of the province's probation system is not intended to discipline probation officers.

Liberal justice critic Kelvin Parsons wanted to know more about a review into the province's adult probation system in the House of Assembly on Monday.

The review was announced Friday by Justice Minister Felix Collins, after he revealed the Labrador man charged with a murder in Toronto earlier this month was on probation in this province, but had never checked in with his probation officer.

Levi Aggek, 33, was arrested at a Toronto homeless shelter Dec. 6 after the body of 26-year-old Spring Phillips was found in a downtown apartment in that city. He was later charged with second-degree murder.

Reports stated that Aggek had lived in Toronto for three months before the killing.

"Why was the individual recently apprehended in Ontario on a murder charge not being properly monitored by our probation system?" Parsons asked Collins in the House.

The minister started by saying the review wasn't to discipline probation officers.

"This is a review to examine the whole probation system to determine if there are systemic challenges or concerns in the probation system that we can work on, improve, to make conditions better for the probation officers,"

Collins said.

Parsons said the Liberals brought concerns about probation officers' workload and of inadequate monitoring before the House in May, following another tragic death.

In that case, a 71-year old Boyd's Cove woman died after being forced off the road by drag racers.

One of the two men charged in relation to the accident was not supposed to leave his home because of a court order.

Media reports at that time stated the man was waiting to be sentenced for a crime committed in Ontario, and a court in that province allowed him to serve house arrest here in his home province while he waited to return to court.

Collins said adjustments were made to address staffing and caseload issues after the May incident. But he also said there will always be breaches of probation no matter how many officers the province employs.

"It's the nature of the business. Our attempt is to try and reduce it," Collins said.

"We're never going to completely eliminate violations of probation."

Parsons countered by saying it's the department's job to make sure the system is working properly.

Outside of the House, reporters asked Collins if the government is concerned it may be liable for Phillips' death, considering Aggek was under a probation order from this province.

"That's not a concern for us at the moment," he said.

Collins has yet to name who will conduct the independent review on the probation system, but he said that will happen in the coming days.