

## Opposition reacts to child protection bill

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Yvonne Jones

Much of question period in the House of Assembly Monday was devoted to a new child protection bill, formally introduced later in the afternoon.

Afterwards, Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones shared some of her thoughts on the bill with reporters.

"No doubt, we think it's a good piece of legislation," she said. "It certainly goes farther in protecting the interests of children than what we currently have."

She said a number of the details which are known about the proposed act so far are quite good.

But Jones also said there are some areas where the legislation could have been stronger when it comes to the delivery of protection services.

Jones said she still sees gaps in



Lorraine Michael

investigations and the way cases are followed up and how individuals can appeal decisions when they feel their children have been taken away unjustly.

"We raised issues ... around children that are in care that are being housed in apartment buildings and other rental facilities and being provided care by people who don't always have the level of training or certification to deal with the complex needs of these children," continued Jones. "That was not addressed in this legislation."

When Jones raised that issue in the House, Child, Youth and Family Services Minister Joan Burke said that matter will be dealt with through changes in regulations outside the act.

Even though she has some concerns, Jones confirmed the Liberals will support the bill, but may propose some amendments as debate continues in the House.

NDP Leader Lorraine Michael also gave reporters her thoughts on the proposed legislation.

"It's an improvement over what we've had," she said. "There are some things in the new bill that I know people on the front lines have been asking for."

But Michael said what's on paper in the proposed act may not be realistic if staff levels and other resources aren't put in place by government.

She also said unless the justice system is prepared for the changes, it may not be able to handle the improvements as proposed.

Michael would have also liked to see the legislation come in more quickly than sometime next year.