

# Mentally ill inmates at HMP an 'unfortunate reality,' Kennedy says

*Liberals question government about medications in prison*

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THE TELEGRAM

The case of a young man who recently attempted suicide for the second time at Her Majesty's Penitentiary (HMP) came up in question period at the House of Assembly on Monday.

Liberal Justice critic Kelvin Parsons said a mother recently asked a judge to intervene after her jailed son was taken off his medication and placed in segregation at HMP.

He then asked Justice Minister Jerome Kennedy what was happening with that case.

Kennedy said a review of the penitentiary was ongoing and that health treatment was part of that review.

"This prison review is being conducted by individuals outside the province," said Kennedy. "They will look at all aspects of what's going on at Her Majesty's Penitentiary at present."

Kennedy admitted that two recent deaths at HMP highlight the need for the review.

Parsons said he is aware of the review but said it will take some time to complete.

"In this particular case involving this individual and his mother, the individual in question attempted to commit suicide twice in a period of five weeks and the parents weren't notified until more than a day after the second suicide attempt had taken place," said Parsons.

The inmate in question is Andrew Dunne, a 22-year-old whose mother Susan Cooper made an impassioned plea in provincial court last month. She feared her son would try to commit suicide again if he didn't get the medications he'd been prescribed by a Waterford Hospital psychiatrist.

Parsons then asked Kennedy if



Jerome Kennedy



Kelvin Parsons

there was a specific investigation of the man's case.

Parsons also wanted to know why the man wasn't sent to the Waterford Hospital instead of being kept at the Pen.

Kennedy said he already stated to the media that if the parents want to contact him, he would put them in contact with the people conducting the review.

"At this point, Mr. Speaker, I'm staying away as the minister of Justice from the investigation that's ongoing," he said.

Kennedy said some people with mental illness do end up at the Pen and that it was an "unfortunate reality."

Parsons said the individual went through a 30-day assessment and was placed on medication at the Waterford. But, when he ended up at HMP, he was taken off his medication by another psychiatrist.

Parsons asked Kennedy why that

happened.

Kennedy said he's received numerous complaints from the Pen.

"I am not like the honourable member across the way. I do not set myself up as judge and jury," he said.

The minister again said the issue will be examined through the review and action will be taken if needed.

Parsons also had questions for the health minister about psychiatric assessments for young offenders who end up at the youth detention centre at Whitbourne.

According to Parsons, there is an existing secure unit at the Janeway Children's Hospital which should be doing those evaluations, but he said the government hasn't funded support staff for the unit. He then asked minister Ross Wiseman why that's the case.

Wiseman said the issue is being re-evaluated.