

Liberals won't let issue fade

Mental Health services for teens a priority

By DAVE BARTLETT

THE TELEGRAM

Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones had a lengthy meeting with the province's Child and Youth Advocate Friday to discuss mental health services for young people in the province.

"The advocate shares a lot of the concerns that we do in terms of what services and programs are out there for these young people and where the gaps are that need to be filled," said Jones.

The Liberals spent most of question period at the House of Assembly last week asking questions to Health Minister Ross Wiseman about those gaps.

Wiseman has told his staff to dust off a 2003 report on the issue to see if the province can meet some of the recommendations in that report.

The most important of those, according to Jones, is the need for a residential treatment program for young people.

"The money we're spending to put our children in programs outside of Newfoundland and Labrador could be spent to do the same thing right here at home," she said.

"We think there needs to be some serious actions taken to ensure that there is proper services (for youth)

and we'll continue to raise the profile of the issue ... while the legislature is open," said Jones.

Jones said she and the youth advocate, Darlene Neville, agreed on a couple of points Friday.

"There needs to be forensic psychiatry being provided to young people in the province," she said.

Jones said often when adults are charged with crimes they are sent for psychiatric evaluations, but she said that doesn't happen when young people are charged.

"We also feel there is a need for a medical detox program and (Neville) certainly expressed her concern for that as well," said Jones.

Jones had hoped to get some support from Neville on a statement of claim filed against Eastern Health by a family from Central Newfoundland who claims their son fell through the cracks of the mental health system.

But Jones said the young man is now in his 20s and is beyond the mandate of the child and youth advocate.

Jones said the Liberals will now be referring the matter to the office of the citizen's representative.

Neville wasn't available to speak with The Telegram Friday, but has agreed to do an interview on the issue this week.

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