

Liberals say government not following its own policy, again

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Danny Williams government is not following its own policy of releasing reports within 30 days, say the provincial Liberals. And it's not the first time. During question period Monday, Liberal Leader Yvonne Jones accused the government of hiding behind reviews and reports.

Opposition House Leader Kelvin Parsons also asked again for a report on the state of the province's prisons delivered to the Department of Justice Oct. 1.

The justice minister at the time, Jerome Kennedy, promised the report would be released before the House of Assembly opened for its fall sitting. That didn't happen. Kennedy was shuffled to finance Oct. 31, switching places with Tom Marshall.

Marshall told The Telegram two weeks ago the cabinet shuffle had delayed the release of the report which he called a priority. "We'll release it when we're ready," he said at the time. "It's not a question of doing it quickly, it's a question of doing it properly."

Monday, Jones asked Health Minister Ross Wiseman more questions about a 2003 report on mental health services for young people which he's reviewing.

"The minister and the department has been hiding behind the fact that they are conducting a review of a report that they've had for five years," said Jones. "The same department where every report must go to die on a shelf or not be read."

Jones asked Wiseman when he would finish the review.

"This minister, any minister in this government's cabinet doesn't hide behind any reports," replied Wiseman who said he hopes to have a response in a couple of weeks.

"They're not only hiding behind reports, they're not reading reports, they're not dealing with recommendations in reports, They're shelving them for up to five years in some cases," Jones told reporters outside the House. "It's not good enough for a department, every time there is a crisis to say we are going to go out and do a study or a review into this. We want to see real action and real results," she continued.

"In the last session of the House of Assembly we practically had to drag reports out of this government."

The 2003 Tory blueprint pledged, "A Progressive Conservative government will ... release to the public every government-commissioned report within 30 days of receiving it, indicate the action government will take on a report's recommendations within 60 days, and ensure prompt public access to all government reports."

That policy came under scrutiny last winter when Wiseman revealed at a news conference a 2005 report that detailed critical repairs needed at acute care facilities in St. John's.

When the 30-day policy was questioned at that time, Williams told The Telegram, "It is our policy of disclosing reports at the earliest available opportunity."