

Justice and Public Safety

April 04, 2017

The following statement was given today in the House of Assembly by the Honourable Andrew Parsons, Minister of Justice and Public Safety:

Government Partners with Local Experts on Bail Supervision Study

Mr. Speaker, since being appointed as Minister of Justice and Public Safety, I have envisioned a new approach to the justice system in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was clear, that in our department, we needed to find innovative ways to address the numbers of people incarcerated, to look at why they are incarcerated in the first place and to determine how to reduce reoffending.

To that end, I strongly believe in restorative justice. We are currently evaluating measures that genuinely help people. I am pleased to announce today that we are also partnering with two impressive women with expertise in the field of corrections, Memorial University graduate students, Hayley Crichton, and Pegah Memarpour, to conduct a feasibility study on a bail supervision program in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 50 per cent of our current inmate population are serving on remand awaiting trial. At our justice summit last week, we heard we need to look at bail supervision. A potential bail supervision program empowers judges with an option for robust supervision of remand inmates instead of simply imprisoning them. The aim would be to more effectively rehabilitate alleged offenders while reducing the burden on provincial institutions like Her Majesty's Penitentiary. It is a win-win.

This study will look to build policy from the ground up with a view toward the unique characteristics of Newfoundland and Labrador. The study will come at zero cost to the Provincial Government as part of an innovative approach to policy development by working with those in our community with a passion for the betterment of this province's justice system. Working with our post-secondary institutions and scholars is a resourceful way to build programs that help people involved with our justice system. This is just the first opportunity for partnerships like these to achieve innovative, top-notch policy in a cost-effective manner.

Thank you.

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1:55 p.m.