

Bentley defends progress on judicial system reform

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TARA WALTON/TORONTO STAR FILE PHOTO
Ontario Attorney General Chris Bentley.

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Attorney General Chris Bentley is rejecting suggestions the Liberal government is dragging its heels on implementing several reports on judicial reform.

"Public safety is always number one – always has been, always will be for our government," a defensive Bentley said yesterday.

In the Legislature, NDP MPP Andrea Horwath (Hamilton Centre) demanded to know why the Liberals have yet to do much in response to reports recommending improvements to the civil court system, to victims' services and to legal aid.

"We know that there are many, many government reports ... that have been commissioned and they only sit on shelves, gathering dust," said Horwath.

Even as she wondered why the government has failed to act on the crime victims' report authored by former chief justice Roy McMurtry in May, Horwath demanded to know when McMurtry's next study will be released.

Bentley would only say the government is "very much looking forward to the release of that report."

Outside the Legislature, the attorney general insisted he has not been standing still when it comes to reforming the justice system.

"Right now, we have a criminal justice reform initiative under way, a civil justice reform initiative under way, improved access to Ontarians to justice with Justice Ontario under way, improvements to our victims of crimes approach ... under way," he said.

Progressive Conservative MPP Bob Runciman (Leeds-Grenville) scoffed at Bentley's claim that public safety trumps other concerns, adding it was ironic Bentley keeps blaming others for the failings of the system he's responsible for.