

Ontario proposes amendments to Christopher's Law, aimed at giving police more tools

Written By SAM ODROWSKI

The Ontario government is soon introducing amendments to Christopher's Law.

If passed, these amendments will strengthen Ontario's Sex Offender Registry by giving police more tools to better monitor and supervise registered sex offenders.

The government is also proposing changes that would prevent sex offenders from legally changing their names in Ontario. This is aimed at eliminating the possibility of sex offenders attempting to hide their identities.

"Decades ago, Ontario led the way with Canada's first sex offender registry, and today we're making it stronger," said the Province's Solicitor General Michael Kerzner.

"By introducing changes to make Christopher's Law more effective, we're giving police new tools to prevent, investigate, and solve egregious sex crimes to protect those most vulnerable, especially our children."

The proposed changes would help to maintain Ontario's high reporting compliance rate for registered sex offenders and high-risk child sex offenders in several ways.

The changes would require sex offenders to report to a police service within a prescribed period after being ordered to serve a conditional sentence

They would also mandate that sex offenders must report to a police service within a prescribed period after receiving a passport or driver's licence

The proposed amendments also require offenders to report when they are starting to use or make changes to email addresses, social media usernames and other digital identifiers.

Another key change is adding new strict travel notification requirements. These include requiring registered sex offenders to provide 14 days advance notice if they intend on traveling for seven days or more and requiring that registered child sex offenders provide advance notice if they will be out of Canada for any length of time.

The provincial government is also proposing to amend the Change of Name Act which would prohibit sex offenders from changing their names while they have reporting obligations to the Ontario Sex Offender Registry. While there are safeguards currently in place, this proposed change would make it easier for police to monitor sex offenders and prevent them from using a new identity to commit new crimes, says the Province.

"Banning convicted sex offenders from legally changing their name in Ontario will improve public safety," said Todd McCarthy, Ontario's Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery and Procurement. "By strengthening the Change of Name Act, we are closing a legal loophole that allowed these offenders to live in anonymity."

As of September 2024, there are over 14,000 registered sex offenders on the Ontario Sex Offender Registry with active reporting obligations.