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Foster father charged

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Sex charges have been laid against a former Foster Family of the Year award winner who has cared for up to 55 children over the past two decades.

In June 2009, police received information that Garry Prokopishin, a director for the Calgary and District Foster Parents Association, was allegedly offering troubled teens in his care money for sexual acts.

This has prompted an immediate review by Alberta Children and Youth Services.

"This is very disturbing, especially given the fact there were up to 55 children in his care," police spokesperson Kevin Brookwell said.

Police have only been able to locate 13 of the 55 boys that have lived in the Prokopishin home.

According to Brookwell, the foster kids were typically high-risk teens with drug and alcohol problems. The boys ranged in age from 14 to 17, and up to five teens lived at the home at a time.

Yvonne Fritz, children and youth services minister, said she was saddened by the allegations.

"My responsibility is to ensure the safety of our children. When the review is completed, we will review the recommendations," she said, adding a tougher screening process could be proposed.

Martin Durocher, president of the Calgary and District Foster Parents Association, declined to comment, but a pastor at St. Luke's church, which the Prokopishins attended, spoke to Metro.

"I can confirm Garry and his wife attend the church, and our love and support goes to them," the pastor said, declining to give his name.

Prokopishin and his wife have, in the past, been recognized as Foster Parents of the Year by the Alberta Foster Parent Association.

Prokopishin, 51, is charged with one count of luring a child via a data device, three counts each of obtaining or attempting to obtain sex from a person under 18 years of age, and sexual contact with a youth by a person in authority.

Metro Edmonton