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Perm's Governor Is Target of Critical Reports on State TV

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Federal television channels have aired a series of critical reports about Perm regional authorities, reminiscent of last year's campaign that resulted in the ouster of Mayor Yury Luzhkov, Kommersant reported Monday.

The Perm region was criticized in last week's episode of Eduard Petrov's show "The Honest Investigator" on Rossia-One, as well as several recent broadcasts on NTV, including the talk show "Honest Monday" by celebrity writer Sergei Minayev.

Reported problems included the stalled construction of several medical facilities, the funding of local projects by Moscow-based art critic Marat Gelman at the expense of local artists, rampant prostitution, and corruption cases against officials close to Governor Oleg Chirkunov.

Chirkunov dismissed the allegations on his blog Sunday, saying that while Perm has problems, it tries to solve them by bringing them into the open instead of hushing them up like many other regions. He said that was why the television channels were able to find

material for critical coverage.

The governor did not comment on what might have prompted the reports, but Kommersant said, citing analysts, that the reports might be the groundwork for Chirkunov's removal.

It said a possible reason for the Kremlin's disapproval of Chirkunov, in office since 2005, is low local support for the ruling United Russia party ahead of the State Duma elections in December.

State-controlled national television channels criticized Luzhkov in a similar way last summer. The Moscow mayor was removed by President Dmitry Medvedev over "a loss of confidence" in late September.

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