



PRESS RELEASE

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CORRECTIONAL FACILITY 'FACT FINDING' MISSION A SUCCESS

For Immediate Release
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Penticton, B.C. – After two days of site tours and intensive meetings with correctional facility operators across the lower mainland a team of City of Penticton staff and elected officials have a greater understanding of the challenges and benefits of a proposed correctional facility which may be built in the South Okanagan.

"It was extremely beneficial to speak directly to RCMP officials and correctional centre staff in order to get a full, first hand account of the implications this proposed facility could have on our community," says Mayor Dan Ashton, who attended the tours with Councillors Andrew Jakubeit, Mike Pearce, John Vassilaki and Garry Litke. *"The financial upside in terms of jobs and economic spin off are significant,"* says the Mayor, who notes that the initial projections by the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General designated \$200 million for the construction of the facility an annual direct payroll of \$17-\$20 million, 240 full time jobs within the facility and many more indirect jobs created. *"We have to balance the strong financial opportunity with any potential negative impact to our community and come to a clear and definitive decision that's in the best interest of our entire city."*

The proposed facility will accommodate persons remanded to trial and those individuals with sentences less than two years.

"In my 18 years of experience in a jurisdiction with a number of provincial and federal penal institutions I have found that there is a net positive effect on the community due to the law abiding, family oriented type of people these facilities employ," says Ridge Meadows RCMP Superintendent Dave Walsh.

Councillor Pearce says the experience was eye-opening, *"it was more than apparent that there is a significant economic benefit and the potential and perceived negative impact to the communities with these facilities was actually less than a similarly sized business. As we move through this process the opportunity for our region was even more evident and the misconceptions about the risks made more apparent by looking at a number of regions who were able to tell and show us that having these facilities have had a positive overall impact on their communities."*

In touring the North Fraser Pretrial Centre, Fraser Regional Correctional Centre and Alouette Correctional Centre for Women on the second day of the tour, Mayor Ashton noted how unobtrusive the facilities appeared. *"I was amazed that these institutions appeared from the outside to be office buildings, they were not invasive into their surroundings. Seeing the actual facilities, how they were run and how they were situated within the various communities allayed many of my concerns."*

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“Correctional Facility Tour...”

Information from the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General indicates that approximately 20 acres of land would be required for the proposed new four-storey facility that would house 360 cells and 10 living units. Individuals held at the proposed facility would represent a wide range of offense types with an average length of stay ranging from 30 to 56 days.

Other communities with similar facilities – Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops and Nanaimo – have experienced vast community benefits. Community benefits associated with the proposed Okanagan facility include:

- **Significant job creation** – Approximately 240 correctional staff would be employed at the proposed centre, as well as additional contracted staff such as nurses, doctors, dentists, food service workers, trades personnel and counselors. The project will likely generate 400-500 direct construction jobs as well as 66 indirect construction jobs.
- **Economic spinoffs** – The proposed new facility would generate a payroll in excess of \$17 million per year, which would primarily be spent in the local community. According to a recent study done for Terrace, BC (for a similar sized correction centre in that area), the construction of a new correctional facility would provide economic impacts over the next 20 years of approximately \$862 million.
- **New tax revenue** – The Province pays grants in lieu of taxes to municipalities with correctional centres in amounts ranging from \$500,000 to \$1.5 million. The Province would also typically contribute to local government infrastructure improvements and would pay development cost charges applicable to the proposed facility.

The proposed facility would offer a number of programs focused on community work (supervised), education, and spirituality/culture with the aim of helping inmates to make positive changes in patterns of thinking and behaving that may contribute to a criminal lifestyle. There is no evidence that the introduction of a provincial correctional centre affects local crime rates.

The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General indicated to Okanagan municipalities in December that it wishes to identify a site for a secure custody correction centre in the Okanagan Valley to accommodate remanded individuals awaiting trial and those sentenced to fewer than two years. Penticton City Council responded with an interest in exploring the possibility and asked for further information on the proposed facility, including its operational details, potential economic impacts and land requirements.

For more information, visit www.penticton.ca.

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