

## Alouette gets max beds; The Maple Ridge women's jail will house open, medium-, and maximum-security inmates by end of year.

Women prisoners in the Lower Mainland will soon be able to be housed all in one place, as Alouette Correctional Centre for Women is adding 104 maximum security cells to their facility.

A spokesperson for the Public Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, confirmed the addition that is part of the province's capital expansion of correctional facilities.

This is the first time that the Alouette Correctional Centre will house maximum security inmates. The addition of 104 cells could provide 208 additional inmates, said Dean Purdy, chairman of the Corrections and Sheriff's Services Unit of the B.C. Government Employees Union, depending on if the prison decides to "double-bunk" the cells.

"Up to this time, [the prison] has only been open and medium security," he said.

Despite the addition of more than 100 inmates, Purdy said he is not too concerned about the impact on the prison guards working at the facility, even though it now means working with maximum security inmates.

"I think our correctional officers will adapt," he said. "Our guards are very professional and do a good job."

Purdy explained that this addition to Alouette will free up space at the Surrey Pretrial Centre, where the maximum security inmates are currently being held. "This will allow us to house all female inmates in one place," he said.

"The number of cells they're putting in will be able to house the number of inmates at Surrey quite comfortably," he added.

The only other female prison in B.C. is located in Prince George, and it is a much smaller facility. According to Correctional Service Canada, a maximum security prison houses offenders who pose a serious risk to staff, other offenders, and the community.

The addition is set to be complete by the end of this year.

Alouette Correctional Centre was opened in April 2004, and is one of two prisons in Maple Ridge - the other being Fraser Regional Correctional Centre. The prison offers three core programs for its inmates, including substance abuse management for women, emotions management for women, and relationship skills for women.

This facility is also one of the prisons that is still housing some Tamil migrants, after the MV Sun Sea docked in Esquimalt last August.

To date, 353 migrants have been released, and 90 remain in custody, with six being women.