

Benefits still there

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The best thing that could happen to Penticton economically will be if the provincial correctional facility is located on land owned by the Penticton Indian Band.

After city residents voted two-to-one against locating a correctional facility here, Penticton City Council raised some eyebrows last week when it voted to support the next closest bid which will be the PIB lands. PIB Chief Jonathan Kruger is in support for a number of reasons mainly the economic and employment opportunities it will bring. Band members, we're told, voted overwhelming in favour of locating a prison there.

For Penticton residents hoping for a compromise, this could be it.

For those who fear that Penticton will be labeled a "prison town" or that their property values will decline overnight, the facility will not be located in Penticton.

Charlottetown is a tourist mecca even though other towns and cities in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia offer the same beauty and tranquility as Prince Edward Island's capital city. With the completion of the Confederation Bridge in 1997 (it too was controversial), there doesn't seem to be a shortage of tourists in Charlottetown and it hosts a prison.

Where the City of Penticton will benefit is through the purchase of homes, necessities and entertainment dollars. Workers' children will help fill our schools which have been hindered by declining enrollments. It's interesting to note that Princeton is one of only two areas in the entire province that's had an influx of new students. The reason: the new mine.

Then there's the spinoff dollars. While it's tough to anticipate where newcomers to the valley will choose to live, this will also be a shot in the arm for communities such as Oliver, Summerland and Okanagan Falls in addition to the PIB itself.

As assistant deputy minister Brent Merchant pointed out, many of the people who make their living through corrections are individuals who give back to the community whether it's through volunteer work, coaching or community activism. When we issued a challenge last week for those stating "we can do better" to volunteer with traffic control for the Peach City Beach Cruise, no one came forward.

As Coun. Mike Pearce points out, citizens are demanding more from their municipalities in the line of services.

What Penticton will miss out on is approximately \$1.5 million in revenue annually, which is certainly worth having but is a small figure in the overall scheme of things.

Best of all, it will keep some of our young people home. Students graduating from Grade 12 may consider attending college to become corrections officers.

This could be the win/win we rarely see.