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## City's ready for a jail: McRae

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A federal prison could be in the offing for the Alberni Valley if city council has its way.

The city has tested the federal and provincial waters in an effort to solicit interest in building a prison here.

The announcement came at city council's Dec. 16 meeting after a short presentation by RCMP Inspector Gord Wellar.

Federal and provincial officials are looking at building new institutions, he said.

According to Wellar there are enough jails on the Island already.

"Until we lop up more criminals there just isn't the need for them," Wellar said.

But the city wants to float the idea of building one here nevertheless, Mayor Ken McRae said.

The city has talked to MP James Lunney about institutions that would house prisoners serving federal sentences two years or more in length, McRae said to councillors.

"Those discussions have started."

Nanaimo's Brannen Lake and Victoria's Wilkinson Road correctional facilities already incarcerate prisoners convicted of provincial offences.

So the city is trying to triangulate its way into the running for a federal institution.

A corrections facility would provide jobs through construction and administration, and also provide economic spinoffs, McRae said.

"They're also not impacted by the economy," he added.

The idea was pursued by a previous city council, and land around the Franklin River Road area was identified as a possible location for a facility.

The idea didn't auger well with residents then.

But that may have changed today.

"I've talked about it and haven't heard a peep," McRae said.

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