

# City council takes prison tour; Council members visit Lower Mainland facilities, but tour is not an indicator Penticton is on short list for prison site

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Penticton council's tour of correctional facilities on the Lower Mainland does not necessarily mean the city has an inside track on obtaining the proposed Okanagan prison, says Public Safety Minister and Solicitor General Shirley Bond.

Following an invitation from B.C. Corrections, council members visited three correctional facilities Wednesday at Port Coquitlam, Maple Ridge and Alouette Lake.

Bond said in a telephone interview from her Victoria office the tour doesn't mean Penticton has been short-listed as a potential location for the 360-cell prison.

"No, in fact, a number of communities are still contemplating whether or not they are going to submit proposals," she said.

She noted Lumby has opted to hold a non-binding referendum on the prison issue April 30, before village council decides whether to make a submission.

"I've said clearly that it will be the end of April before we have a look at the next step in the process," she said. There will be a process put in place for an evaluation of whichever proposals we receive, but we still have some work to do before we move to that stage." The province wants to have the prison constructed by 2015. However, Bond said community consultation remains a key component of the decision-making process.

"Let's be clear, it is up to municipalities or communities to make those decisions about whether or not they want to be part of this process," she said. Bond said Penticton council's prison tour was presumably part of their desire to be well informed about correctional facilities, including their benefits or potential drawbacks.

"People tend to be very passionate about this issue, so I encourage communities to have that consultation and have a discussion about both the benefits and whatever issues the communities might have – and then make a well-informed decision before they make a proposal." Members of Summerland council were not involved in yesterday's tour, contrary to what Penticton Mayor Dan Ashton had stated at the close of this week's council meeting.

Summerland Mayor Janice Perrino said Wednesday although her council had been invited to attend, they decided against such a visit at this time.

"We completely understand that the timing might be perfect for Penticton," she said. "We just felt that it was somewhat premature for us." Perrino said B.C. Corrections had invited Summerland council to participate and were very co-operative. She emphasized council hasn't ruled out such a visit at a later date, if the community is short-listed as a potential site for the prison.

Penticton is submitting two proposed sites – behind Campbell Mountain and at the Cantex gravel pit. The only costs involved in Wednesday's tour were travel expenses for the participating council members.