

Community support required

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Bill Huitema, in "MLA shouldn't be pushing for jail in Lumby" (June 1), presents an unfair characterization of the facts.

Community support for a new jail in the Interior is a prerequisite. It is vitally important local governments and citizens be a part of selecting a site for this secure custody centre. It is for this reason that we've asked local governments to forward recommendations so that we can ensure we find the best site -- a site that has community support and meets all of the project criteria.

The majority of Lumby residents have not lost sight of the benefits that would be created and have voted in favour of the province building the proposed Okanagan Correctional Centre within their municipality.

Lumby councillors also voted in favour of it and submitted their recommended site to B.C. Corrections for consideration. Lumby is one of five local governments that have submitted site suggestions for consideration.

Let me be clear, it is local government that ultimately makes the decision to proceed with an application. This is precisely what happened in Lumby.

All proposals are being assessed in accordance with the site selection criteria. Considerations include community support, environmental conditions, capacity of available utilities, expedient zoning, size, and proximity to key locations, such as courthouses and police detachments.

A new and secure centre will address the growing need for inmate space in the region, reduce pressure on local police lockups, and improve access for lawyers, police, social services, and the families of those in custody.

I can assure you that the concerns of local communities are always considered.

Shirley Bond,
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and Solicitor General,
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