

Correctional centre needed

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B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) wants to see another correctional facility in the Interior and they wouldn't be opposed if that meant re-opening Bear Creek Correctional Center near Clearwater.

That was the word from Dean Purdy, representative for corrections officers and sheriffs in BCGEU.

"Anything that can alleviate the pressure that our workers are under right now would be good news," he said.

"In 2002 the government closed nine jails in the province, including Bear Creek. About 550 staff were laid off," the union representative recalled.

Now the remaining facilities are overcrowded but the provincial government is not doing any planning for such a facility and has not allocated any funds for a future jail, according to the union.

Purdy noted that Kamloops Regional Correctional Center was built in 1989 to accommodate 168 inmates. At times that facility has housed up to 389, he said.

The overcrowding results in increased violence toward staff and between inmates, Purdy charged.

In January 2008 the government cancelled a news conference that was expected to provide details on a new correctional facility in Kelowna. No announcement has been made since then.

Bear Creek Correctional Center was a minimum-security facility built to hold about 60 inmates. Although a small sawmill has been dismantled, the main buildings remain. Several private owners have held the property since closing.

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