

Female youth detention unit in View Royal to close doors

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Seventeen correctional officers have been served notice that their jobs at the Victoria Youth Custody Services Centre will be axed.

B.C.'s Ministry of Children and Family Development announced Wednesday that female incarceration units within the View Royal and Prince George youth custody facilities will be centralized at the Burnaby Youth Custody Services Centre, starting Feb. 6.

The "redesign" of the province's youth custody services will see \$2.5 million directed to other youth programs, Children and Family Development Minister Mary McNeil said.

It's reflective of a nearly 75-per-cent drop in the number of jailed youth in B.C. since 1995, from 400 to 105 in 2011-12.

Six workers will also be laid off in Prince George. The employees will be offered work elsewhere in the public sector, said Alan Markwart, senior executive director of Youth Justice Services in B.C.

The news "blindsided" union officials, said Dean Purdy, chair of the corrections and sheriffs component in the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union.

"We think that with proper consultation and a heads up on this we could have achieved this through attrition and other means months ago."

Did you know?

An average of 4.7 females, between 12 and 17 years old, are held at the View Royal location, which also houses males.