

# Lumby seeks new Okanagan jail

*Last Updated: Tuesday, December 7, 2010 | 1:10 PM PT*

[CBC News](#)



*The North Fraser Pretrial Centre in Port Coquitlam, B.C., is just one of several B.C. jails that are running at overcapacity. (CBC)*

The B.C. government is promising that it will build a jail in the Okanagan within the next five years, but it has not yet decided which municipality will get the jobs it will bring.

Solicitor General Rich Coleman says the province plans to open a new 360-cell facility somewhere in the region by 2015 to relieve crowding at other provincial jails.

Years ago, plans were drawn up and land purchased for a provincial jail in Winfield, located just outside Kelowna, but people who lived nearby balked at the idea and it was scrapped.

But this time round there could be several municipalities hoping the jail will be built in their towns, according to Lumby mayor, Kevin Acton, who says the jail would be a boom for his village, where jobs are hard to come by.

"It would be huge for our village and it would be huge for the areas around us. We're a small logging town that has no more mills left. We're down to one small operation. I know they pay pretty decent wages and provide a lot of jobs for residents," said Acton.

The province plans to consult with Lumby and 10 other municipalities, from Armstrong to Penticton, before there is a decision. Acton says he expects there will be a lot of competition.

"I must admit there's not one town or city on there that probably wouldn't benefit from it. However I think probably Lumby has probably been hit one of the hardest out of all these areas," he said.

## **More jails in the works**

The union that represents B.C. prison guards is happy the province has finally agreed to build a jail in the Okanagan.

Dean Purdy of the BCGEU says they've been lobbying for years to have one built, but now worry about the timeline.

"We're pleased with the announcement, although it's still four to five years away before anything can be finalized, so that is a concern for us," he said.

The announcement follows a federal promise to expand several federal prisons in the Lower Mainland last week. And last year the province announced plans to build a new 180-cell remand centre next to Surrey City Hall for the Lower Mainland.

But Purdy says another provincial jail is still needed in the Lower Mainland to ease overcrowding there.

Provincial jails are used to hold people sentenced to less than two years in jail, while federal prisons are used for those with sentences of two years or more.