

Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Times
Investigation launched into death at Maple Ridge prison
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BC Corrections has launched an internal investigation following what is believed to be the drug-related death of a prisoner Tuesday night. Ridge Meadows RCMP was called to the Fraser Regional Correctional Centre in Maple Ridge at around 7 p.m. to attend to a 32-year-old male, said Cpl. Alanna Dunlop. The BC Coroners Service also attended and will be performing an autopsy to determine the exact cause of death.

A BC Corrections spokeswoman confirmed to The Vancouver Sun that a prisoner died on Tuesday but would not provide further details.

"Consistent with standard practice, BC Corrections will be completing an internal investigation of the circumstances of this individual's death," said Marnie Mayhew.

The investigation is expected to be completed within a month.

Dean Purdy, chair of corrections and sheriff services at the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union, said overcrowding has made it increasingly difficult to effectively monitor all prisoners.

Fraser Regional is also the temporary holding area for hundreds of Sri Lankan asylum-seekers who arrived aboard the MV Sun Sea in August.

"The Fraser Regional Correctional Centre is a maximum security jail that was built for 254 inmates," said Purdy. "With the addition of the Tamil migrants, the count is over 800, so you can imagine the conditions that our correctional officers have to deal with."

He estimated there is a ratio of 40 prisoners to one staff member at Fraser Regional.

"Conditions within our jails are bad enough with overcrowding and inmate-to-staff ratio," he said.

"When you add drugs and other contraband into an already tense situation, it makes the conditions that our correctional officers work under very difficult."