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# Warkworth prison could close

*Local municipalities fear major economic impacts, while MP says he's exploring options to save facility*

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**NORTHUMBERLAND** - A recommendation to the federal government to close the Warkworth prison is causing serious worries for local municipalities.

"It's very concerning," said Brighton Mayor Christine Herrington. "There's the loss of jobs, tax revenue and the impact on the local economy."

A Correctional Service Canada Review Panel report on strengthening public safety included a consultant's report in the appendix on building a super jail in Kingston and closing six older facilities to save money. One of the prisons the report recommended closing was the Warkworth Institution.

The prison, opened in 1967, lies just inside the Brighton border and is a major financial contributor to the municipality. The federal prison does not technically pay property taxes, but the government gives the amount in a grant to the municipality. The Warkworth Institution gives Brighton \$602,000 each year, which is almost 16 per cent of the municipality's budget. The jail also gives Northumberland County a grant of \$168,500.

"That would be a huge hit to the budget," said Brighton CAO Gayle Frost.

The possible closing of Warkworth Institution would also put 320 people — many of whom live in Northumberland — out of work. The loss of well-paying jobs would hurt the county, which has already been rocked by several plant closings and industrial job losses. Many local businesses could also be hurt if laid-off residents aren't spending.

"It would be a large blow to the local economy," said Mayor Herrington.

The financial implications of closing Warkworth prison would ripple outside Brighton to the rest of the county. The jail is the biggest



Peg McCarthy/Northumberland News

**The Warkworth Institution was included in a consultant's report that stated some jails should be closed and amalgamated into a super jail in Kingston. Over 300 people — many of whom live in Northumberland County — could lose their jobs if it goes forward.**

customer of the Campbellford Water Plant. Trent Hills Mayor Hector Macmillan said he has no doubts his town would feel the pinch if the prison is closed.

"It'll be devastating," said Mayor Macmillan. "The impact to Northumberland will just be the biggest thing to happen, and not for the better."

Northumberland-Quinte West MP Rick Norlock was quick to stress the proposed closure of Warkworth Institution is only a consultant recommendation.

"The government at this time has no intentions — is not contemplating — closing any facility," said Mr. Norlock.

The panel report was released in April

2007. So far, the only major recommendation to be implemented by the government is stiffer regulations for granting parole, the MP said.

"The report came back and it made something in the vicinity of around 190 recommendations," said Mr. Norlock.

He said a new minimum, medium and maximum security prison on one site was recommended by the consultants as a way to avoid big infrastructure costs at older federal prisons.

Mr. Norlock said the proposal to build a new super jail could actually be an opportunity to expand the Warkworth Institution, which sits on 400 acres of land. The MP is

developing a business case to convince the Minister of Justice that the Brighton-area site, much closer to Toronto, is the perfect spot for expansion.

"I'm looking at growing Warkworth, not shutting it down," said Mr. Norlock.

A staff report on the recommended closure of Warkworth prison will be brought to Brighton council on Monday, July 14, and to county council later that week. It will recommend that Mr. Norlock be invited to Brighton and county councils to discuss the local concerns about the future of Warkworth prison.

"The starting point is to get as much information from our MP as possible," said Mayor Herrington.

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