

Jail campaign launched by Oliver, Galt

By Cecilia Nasmith

Cramahe Township Reeve Stuart Oliver and Northumberland MPP Doug Galt are calling for an all-out lobby effort to secure one of the new provincial "super jails" for the county.

A site in the township just north of Colborne was short-listed last week with sites near Millbrook and Lindsay.

"We've got to pull out all the stops here, and try to get it," Mr. Oliver said, and Dr. Galt echoed the sentiment in an interview over the weekend.

Mr. Oliver is asking supporters of the project to forward their comments to the Cramahe Township office, which would in turn fax them to the solicitor general's office in support of their campaign.

One thing that could kill the proposal quicker than anything else, Dr. Galt said, would be second-guessing of the project within Northumberland.

"The ministry is not particularly interested in forcing it into a community that doesn't want it," he explained.

"If they have a community that wants it and has the right facilities, they are going to be in front."

The 81-hectare (200-acre) parcel of land the township has put forth for consideration is located on the northeast corner of the Highway 401-Percy Street interchange.

Among the criteria for consideration by the ministry is access to major highways. Other considerations on the decision, to be announced in the fall, include site size and access to medical and emergency services.

Although the site is presently without water and sewer services — which the province has indicated must be in place by the start of 1999 — Colborne Reeve George Boycott estimated the village could provide sewer service for between \$4- and \$5-million and water service for more than \$1-

million.

"It's a question of how much water and sewers, and do we have the capacity, and how could we gain that extra capacity," said Mr. Boycott.

"Anything's feasible if you have the money to throw at it."

Mr. Boycott says the village is "basically in support" of Cramahe's

application.

"In the public process, when it gets to that stage, we will have some input," he added.

Mr. Oliver believes the benefits of hosting the site would range far beyond Cramahe Township.

"I don't think a lot of people realize the size of it. This will be built for 1,200 (inmates)," he said. "There
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will be in the neighbourhood of 300 jobs — permanent jobs. This is after it is built."

"There's going to be multi-millions of dollars spent in the construction of it. That will be money for the county, for everyone — all businesses, suppliers, the construction end."

The jail will house people awaiting sentencing and those with a sentence less than two years long, said Dr. Galt. Escapes are extremely rare.

"I think (having the facility) is more of a perceived concern than a real concern," he said.

"Certainly, people around Brookside Youth Centre in Cobourg feel comfortable with that facility. Even the Cobourg jail — it can hold about 75 inmates — I don't think people who live right around it feel uncomfortable."

"It doesn't matter what industry you bring in for jobs," he said; "there's a little negative of some sort. I think with a correctional facility, (the negative) is about as minimal as you can get."

The jail would serve the region from Ajax to Brighton, and north to include Peterborough, Victoria and Haliburton counties.

"The only concern that I see that (the province) is struggling with is that Millbrook is closer to the demographic centre of this region," Dr. Galt said.

"Other than that, (Cramahe) has Highway 401 going for them. That was one of the things that kept the Cobourg jail open for quite a while."

This access to a major highway could be vital, he said, and is something Lindsay can't offer.

Hope Township is closer to the demographic centre of the region than Cramahe, which is why Dr. Galt was encouraging that municipality to consider hosting the facility last fall.

The township council decided against becoming a candidate.

Reiterating his support for Cramahe's campaign, Dr. Galt said he had been discussing the matter with Solicitor General Bob Runciman's staff, and hopes to have discussions with the minister as soon as possible.