
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Justice

Lower Fraser Valley court expansion plans received

SURREY – The Lower Fraser Valley is projected to require up to 29 additional courtrooms by 2033 in a long-term court expansion plan received today by Attorney General and Minister of Justice Suzanne Anton.

The Lower Fraser Valley Regional Plan: Court Capacity Expansion project, developed by the five municipalities in the region, forecasts the need for additional courtroom capacity in Surrey, Abbotsford, Langley and Chilliwack as part of an overall plan to improve access to justice in one of the fastest growing regions in the province.

In April 2013, the B.C. government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Surrey, the City of Abbotsford, the City of Chilliwack, the City of Langley and the Township of Langley. On behalf of the consortium, Abbotsford was granted \$600,000 to fund the development of the 20-year court expansion plan. Working with the Ministry of Justice, the five municipalities have completed the plan and are presenting it to government to be considered for future capital funding.

The plan recommends a couple of high-priority capital projects be completed by 2018. They include:

- Expand Surrey Provincial courthouse by five Provincial courtrooms and update the facility's technological infrastructure.
- Construct a new 14-courtroom integrated courthouse with five Supreme and nine Provincial courtrooms in Abbotsford.

Long-term projects also recommended to be considered for funding approval include:

- A new five-courtroom Provincial courthouse in Langley.
- Further expansion of Surrey's courthouse by three Provincial courtrooms.
- Expansion of Chilliwack's courthouse by two Provincial courtrooms.

Quotes:

Suzanne Anton, Q.C., Attorney General and Minister of Justice –

“We are looking for the most efficient and economical ways to increase access to justice in the Lower Fraser Valley region and this plan provides a roadmap to help make that happen. The five municipalities in this region have worked hard to come up with a strategy that will improve court operations in the Lower Fraser Valley for decades to come.”

Michael de Jong, Q.C., Minister of Finance and MLA for Abbotsford West –

“I thank the mayors for developing this vision, which will help the provincial government as we map the priorities for the coming 20 years.”

Mayor of Abbotsford Bruce Banman –

“Abbotsford is extremely proud to be chosen as the lead municipality for this project. The long-term expansion plan will address the increasing need for access to court services in our region and will ultimately benefit all Lower Fraser Valley communities.”

Mayor of Chilliwack Sharon Gaetz –

“We are pleased to offer our support for this long-term plan for courtroom expansion in the Lower Fraser Valley that preserves and builds on our Supreme and Provincial courts in Chilliwack while offering the promise of enhanced access to justice services throughout the region.”

Acting Mayor of the City of Langley Ted Schaffer –

“Demands on the justice system due to system capacity shortfalls, including facilities, are of increasing concern in the City of Langley and the rest of the Lower Fraser Valley. Developing a long-term plan to expand court facilities will provide a roadmap that will guide strategic capital investment and help to ensure that timely and accessible justice services are available to the citizens of the Lower Fraser Valley now and in the future.”

Mayor of the Township of Langley Jack Froese –

“Providing enhanced court services and keeping up with growth is important. I appreciate the work the province has done in collaboration with the Township of Langley and our neighbouring municipalities to address the need to increase court services in the Lower Fraser Valley Region. Timely access to court services is paramount to an effective and efficient civil and criminal justice system.”

Mayor of Surrey Dianne Watts –

“Surrey fully supports the addition of 29 courtrooms south of the Fraser. This addition will most definitely improve access and reduce wait times. The expansion of courtrooms and the upgrading of technology infrastructure support the recommendations of our Crime Reduction Strategy.”

Learn More:

Lower Fraser Valley Regional Plan: Court Capacity Expansion project:

<http://www.ag.gov.bc.ca/public/courts/LFVCourtsCapacityExpansionProject.pdf>

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