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Interior Assistant Secretary Ross Swimmer Thursday told Senator James McClure that every option will be examined before a final decision is made concerning the relocation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agency office in Lapwai.

“I assured Senator McClure that we would look at remodeling the present site; other sites in the area; or new construction. We will not make a decision until all of those have been considered,” Swimmer said.

Swimmer's action came about after press reports circulated earlier in the week that a move to Spokane, Washington was being considered because of structural and other problems with the present Agency headquarters owned by the local school district in Lapwai. Senator McClure asked Swimmer to reconsider the move out of the state and to examine every option that was available to the Agency that provides services to the Nez Perce, Coeur D'Alene and Kootenai Indian tribes.

Swimmer said that an asbestos problem in the building has been temporarily abated and that any further needed repairs will be discussed with the General Services Administration (GSA), the Federal agency responsible for filling the space needs of all Federal agencies. “Now that we have been assured by the school district that owns the building that we can remain there, we have asked GSA to look further for suitable space in Lapwai,” he said.

Swimmer said he would notify Senator McClure as soon as an evaluation is completed which is expected to take about 60 days.