



# Nowhere to Go: How Kamloops Is Abandoning People Who Want Help

By KCU-Kamloops Citizens United, July 25, 2025

Kamloops is becoming a provincial hub for the addiction crisis—without the leadership, infrastructure, or accountability to manage it. People are referred here for services or detox, only to meet chaos, mismanagement, and a system that treats them like paperwork instead of people.

## **Local nonprofits, Interior Health, the City, and the province are falling short—and people’s lives are the cost.**

A man from Vernon is told there’s a detox bed—then turned away over a clerical error. Days pass, and he finally enters detox, but after that? No treatment, no housing, no plan. Only a discharge back to the streets and a relapse waiting to happen. Another, from Vancouver Island, is trapped in a bureaucratic loop: denied addiction support until his mental health stabilizes, but his mental health can’t stabilize without addiction support.

And just a couple of days ago, a 17-year-old from Merritt died after being brought to a Kamloops shelter by MCFD workers. This tragedy could have been avoided if proper supports or a ride home to his family in the lower mainland were available.

**These aren’t isolated mistakes. They’re systemic barriers destroying chances for recovery—patterns repeated over and over by people surviving a broken system.** *When we speak of failure, it’s not about those showing up—it’s about systems that push good people toward burnout.*

People experiencing homelessness suggest that their actual numbers are much higher than the City’s Point-in-Time count states, and that at least half avoid shelters due to untrained staff, lack of respect/dignity, and absence of realistic recovery paths.

Kamloops has one of the few detox centres in BC—drawing people from across the province and Alberta. But without continuity of care and aftercare planning—people in crisis are moved between intake and discharge while agencies point fingers and call it a “system” or “support.”

The Belonging in BC Plan (2022–2025) committed \$2.1 billion—3,800 supportive housing units and \$520M toward complex care in 12 locations. Kamloops received disproportionately high per capita support—not based on need, but on its capacity to absorb. Yet without provincial mechanisms to ensure balanced distribution throughout BC—our infrastructure is overwhelmed, while other regions are spared.

**Transitional housing must be expanded.** A 2–3 month stay with proper supports after detox is essential.

Without it, recovery collapses.

Where is City Council? Where are Interior Health officials while people cycle through alleys, encampments, and shelters without support? Some efforts have been made, but far more is needed. Kamloops is in crisis.

**Enough is enough.** The platitudes about “increasing shelter and supportive housing capacity” must be replaced with real trauma-informed support systems—and outcomes that actually match the scale of investment.

We call on Kamloops City Council to act not only by taking bold steps within their own jurisdiction, but by demanding coordinated action from provincial and municipal governments:

- **Build policies for real success—with insight from those living the consequences, not just those speculating from safety.**
- **Guarantee a coordinated pathway from detox to treatment to housing—every time, for every person.**
- **Fund and prioritize frontline outreach—meeting people where they are with dignity, and connecting them to essential services.**
- **Remove ID-related barriers so individuals can actually access available transportation support to return home and reconnect with their communities.**
- **Prioritize an increase in transitional housing units to bridge detox and permanent stability.**
- **Require measurable outcomes from publicly funded nonprofits—their impact must be transparent.**
- **Ensure equitable distribution of services and supports across the province—not just in cities with large-scale non profits.**
- **Recognize that people don’t just need a bed. They need a plan. And they want a future.**

Until Kamloops demands more, we are complicit in sending people back to the streets—and calling it help.