



Kelowna rally draws attention to vital services at Crossroads Treatment Centre

About 80 people braved frigid temperatures in Kelowna today to protest the recently announced plan to close Crossroads Treatment Centre, the only comprehensive detox and addiction services program in the Okanagan.

The rally, which started at Liberal MLA Norm Letnick's constituency office, continued up the highway to Crossroads, where speakers included HEU members, NDP candidate Carole Gordon, BCGEU representative Mike Nuyens, and Crossroads clients.

"I could talk today about statistics or be angry with what's happening with the lack of funding and closure of this 37-year-old facility, but I personally am here today to raise awareness about the importance of addiction services, and to bring a light on a subject most people are afraid to talk about," said Sonia Nicholson, an HEU LPN working in detox for the past six years.

Nicholson spoke about the alarming increase in clients relying on Crossroads' services, and said she fears for their future.

"Last month, the number of clients who entered the doors of detox was in the triple digits," said Nicholson. "What will happen if our doors close? The second or third chances at life – that lay just beyond those doors – will be gone or lost to those clients... Recovery is not just about getting sober. It's about getting sober, getting treatment to stay sober, and getting support once you leave the program so it doesn't revolve."

On January 9, Crossroads Treatment Centre Society announced plans to phase out its detox and addiction counselling programs over the next three to six months despite high demand for those services.

The Society's board of directors cites inadequate funding from the Interior Health Authority (IHA) for the decision.

But HEU and BCGEU, the unions representing Crossroads employees, call the resulting gap in services unacceptable, and urge the Society's board and the IHA to resolve the underlying funding issues to keep the doors open.

That message was echoed by rally participants with placards reading: "Crossroads saves lives", "Without detox, people will die" and "One in four people suffer from mental illness. Addiction is one. We cannot heal alone."

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