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IH and RCMP expanding crisis response partnerships

KELOWNA/KAMLOOPS – Interior Health and RCMP are enhancing the successful partnership programs in Kelowna and Kamloops by hiring additional staff in each community and expanding operating hours to provide this specialized crisis response service 12 hours per day, seven days per week.

"When people are in crisis because of mental illness or addictions challenges, we want them to be met with care," said Sheila Malcolmson, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. "Expanding the successful Integrated Crisis Response Teams in Kamloops and Kelowna will support more people in distress and connect them to help and healthcare."

The programs in Kamloops and Kelowna, respectively known as Car 40 and the Police And Crisis Team (PACT), have a new name: the Integrated Crisis Response Teams. The programs will benefit from increased consistency in training, roles, reporting, and evaluation.

"Working together, RCMP and Interior Health are committed to addressing the needs of vulnerable people in our region. We recognize that cooperation and collaboration are critical to ensure quality care for people experiencing mental health and substance use related crises," says Interior Health president and CEO Susan Brown. "This is a first step as we work together to enhance crisis response across the region."

The additional staffing and expansion of hours is based on an analysis of call data. Community need will continue to be monitored to ensure objectives are being met.

"I want to commend the ongoing work of the committee, especially co-chairs Mr. Jason Giesbrecht from Interior Health, and Supt. Shawna Baher from the RCMP. Interior Health and the RCMP are committed to working together in finding solutions that support 'persons in crisis'. Standardizing and expanding the existing Integrated Crisis Response Teams in Kamloops and Kelowna is the first step towards my vision of a model that has health clinicians available to support a police officer at every 'person(s) in crisis' call," says RCMP Chief Superintendent Brad Haugli. "The RCMP want to ensure 'person(s) in crisis' get the help they desperately need."

The Interior Health/RCMP Joint Committee continues to meet and work together looking at crisis response services across the region, including those in smaller jurisdictions, to identify additional opportunities for crisis response enhancement.

The Integrated Crisis Response Teams are one option within overarching crisis response services. These teams provide a specialized response to individuals experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis, when intervention by a mental health clinician is needed and there is no risk of violence.

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dākelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka'pamux, Secwépemc, St'át'imc, Syilx, and Tsilhqot'in Nations where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.

Together a specially trained officer and clinician provide short-term crisis management with assessment and intervention, help with admission to hospital, connection to other medical and social services, and other supports.

"I know residents of Kamloops will be happy to hear about the expansion of this crisis response service as we continue to see many people struggling with mental health and substance use issues on our streets. This is a great step forward," says City of Kamloops Mayor Reid Hamer-Jackson.

Kelowna Mayor Tom Dyas says today's announcement is good news and complements other work underway in the city.

"We know that RCMP continue to face mounting mental health-related calls. Having professionals with the necessary training to deal with mental illness will help people in our community who are experiencing a mental health crisis," he says.

Interior Health also provides Crisis Response Teams who receive phone calls from community members and existing clients who are experiencing a crisis. These teams are the main contact for RCMP for requests to provide mental health assessments, including suicide risk assessments; substance withdrawal assessments; links to Opioid Agonist Treatment if required; and referrals to community services.

Interior Health has several outreach teams who liaise with police partners on an as-needed basis. These outreach teams include Access, Treatment Support and Recovery (TSR), Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), and Substance Use Outreach.

For more information about mental health and substance use services in Interior Health visit interiorhealth.ca.

For information about the RCMP Southeast District visit the [Royal Canadian Mounted Police webpage](https://www.rcmp.gc.ca/en/southeast-district).

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