

Mandatory drug treatment centre to be built adjacent to Royal Oak area

Facility will be built near the Southern Alberta Forensic Psychiatry Centre, Calgary Remand Centre and the Calgary Correctional Centre

By [Bill Kaufmann](#), Published Aug 12, 2025



Premier Danielle Smith and Minister of Mental Health and Addiction Dan Williams announced the government's plan to build new addiction facilities in Calgary on Monday, Feb. 24, 2025. Darren Makowichuk/Postmedia

One of Alberta's two involuntary drug treatment facilities will be built adjacent to northwest Calgary's Royal Oak neighbourhood in an area that already hosts five lockups.

According to an Alberta Infrastructure document detailing qualifications for prospective construction and operation contractors, the Calgary centre — a pillar of the UCP government's controversial compassionate intervention concept — will be located immediately next to the Southern Alberta Forensic Psychiatry Centre and the Rocky Ridge Athletic Complex, the latter currently under construction.

Along with the forensic lockup, the area is also home to four other jails or detention facilities, including the Calgary Remand Centre and the Calgary Correctional Centre.

The impending addition of another secure facility in the area along with efforts to mitigate homelessness there have raised the hackles of some neighbouring residents, who fear their corner of the city has become a dumping ground for social ills.

The other mandatory treatment centre within the \$180-million plan will be built in northeast Edmonton at the Alberta Hospital Edmonton Campus.

Both will have a 16,000-square-metre footprint and contain 150 beds, with completion scheduled for 2029.

It'll be a secure facility but will nonetheless be “welcoming,” Alberta Infrastructure said in an email.

Each facility will include spaces for intake assessments, medically supported detox, and both individual and group therapy, ensuring a comprehensive approach to addiction treatment, said the ministry.

“Extensive planning and consultation will guide the development of these purpose-built facilities, ensuring they meet the unique needs of individuals entering compassionate intervention and pursuing recovery.”

The sites were chosen partly due to their proximity to other provincial facilities that could be supportive, the ministry said.

“Building on existing government-owned land near other government facilities allows us to maximize land usage and take advantage of existing utilities,” said Alberta Infrastructure.

The chosen contractor will be responsible for the design and construction, and partially finance the project and maintain it for 30 years.

The private-public partnership will see the province fund about 50 per cent of the projects' building cost, said Alberta Infrastructure, though the government will retain ownership.

Deadline for request for qualification submissions is late October, with the selected contractor to be notified in June of next year, says the province.

As of last week, more than 80 business entities had expressed interest in the projects.

Province not holding consultations say area residents



The sun rises above suburban houses in homes in Royal Oak in 2022. Some residents of that community are concerned that an involuntary drug treatment facility will be build near the community. Azin Ghaffari/Postmedia

Some residents in the area have voiced concerns over the facilities' potential effects on crime, particularly from individuals released from them.

They've also expressed heated opposition to a year-round daytime refuge for the homeless in a Rocky Ridge-area church, citing worries over public safety.

Nearby residents stunned by news of the involuntary treatment centre said a dearth of consultation on the initiatives continues to leave them frustrated.

"Time and time again governments are implementing programs without any consultation or engagement with the people that will be most directly affected," said Royal Oak resident Dawn Stewart, who lives across Country Hills Boulevard from the treatment centre site.

In contrast, she said before Calgary police opened their arrest processing unit in the area in 2020, "they openly discussed with us in advance and people were able to talk through the concerns."

At the same time, she said the problem of drug addiction in the wider community is one that needs to be addressed.

But she said the new facility should be constructed farther away from neighbourhoods along 85th Street N.W., where most of the lockups are located.

Data from city police show the communities of Rocky Ridge and Royal Oak have among the lowest crime rates in Calgary.

The approach was preceded by the [tabling this year of the Compassionate Intervention Act](#), which will allow family members, guardians, medical professionals and law enforcement to force severely addicted individuals into mandatory treatment.

It's raised concerns from medical and substance treatment experts who say the strategy lacks backing in research.

"This bill presents challenges for physicians and patients. The current evidence does not support that the benefits of involuntary treatment outweigh the risks and costs," Alberta Medical Association president Shelley Duggan said in a statement last May.

"In addition, there are questions around medical ethics, human rights, social justice, the role of lawyers as gatekeepers to care, and potential harms. Many individuals who use substances have experienced significant trauma, and involuntary treatment carries a real risk of re-traumatization."

Critics say Alberta should ensure more voluntary treatment before pursuing the mandatory model, and that the province hasn't released data on the effectiveness of already-implemented drug treatment efforts.

But the provincial government insists harm-reduction strategies that have included the supply of safer substances have failed, and that severely addicted individuals lack the ability to act in the best interests of themselves and others. Some families of the centres' prospective clients agree, calling it a desperately-needed last resort.

The province is also planning on opening [11 voluntary recovery centres](#), with five expected to be operational this year.

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