



For Immediate Release
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BIABC URGES PROVINCE TO ESTABLISH FUND THAT SUPPORTS INITIATIVES ADDRESSING VANDALISM AND PROPERTY CRIME

Vancouver, BC – BIABC, the organization that represents downtowns and main streets in 70 business districts across BC, is urging the province to create a fund that will support initiatives aimed at curtailing the impacts of vandalism and property crime.

In a letter to Premier David Eby and Finance Minister Katrine Conroy, BIABC commends government for its recent announcement that will provide \$1 billion to local municipalities to build and invest in infrastructure and amenities, through the Growing Communities Fund.

However, BIABC states there is still an urgent need to address local priorities that don't fall within the scope of the Fund and is calling on government to create a separate funding envelope that addresses the rampant vandalism and property crime issues impacting communities across BC.

With several compounding pressures facing businesses, additional costs associated with repeat vandalism and property crime incidents are threatening the short and long-term viability of small businesses - as evidenced by a recent survey by the association, of 500 businesses in Metro Vancouver, the Fraser Valley, Kelowna, Kamloops, Prince George, and Victoria. When asked about the impact of crime and vandalism and how long they can continue to operate under these conditions, 9% of businesses advised less than one year, 17% advised one year and a further 22% suggested two years.

"Businesses require immediate relief and funding for anti-vandalism programs aimed at enhancing business security and/or mitigating the impacts of crime is a needed next step," says Teri Smith, President of BIABC. "Eligible initiatives could include, business security audits, costs associated with glass replacement or graffiti removal, installation of shatter-proof film treatments, as well as stronger locks and better lighting, or upgrading of alarm and monitoring systems."

Specific BIAs and municipalities have been administering programs in response to current street level conditions, but with appropriately funded programs and resources, a stronger and broader impact is possible.

"We recognize the complexity of the issues plaguing communities across BC and commend the government for actions that may address community health and safety needs through development of the Safer Communities Action Plan," adds Smith. "While we support the various facets of the plan, several of them are longer-term in nature and with many businesses on the brink of closure, we need to also identify solutions that will provide immediate relief in the interim."

BIABC says it is committed to working with government to support economic development and resiliency for the small business sector, the economic engine of our province. Restoring the health and vitality of our communities is essential and inextricably linked to a robust, thriving economy.

In September of 2022, BIABC launched a campaign focused on generating support from the three levels of government about the plight of business owners, their employees, and communities at large, that are being drastically impacted by issues of crime and public safety. The goal is to work collaboratively with elected officials and achieve results that benefit businesses, communities – and as a result, our province.

The Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) is the provincial champion of strong, vibrant, and successful downtowns, main streets, and commercial districts throughout our province. Members represent more than 70 business districts that employ hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office employees within defined business districts.

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Contact:

Teri Smith
President – BIABC
604-518-8814 or 604-696-0144
t.smith@westendbia.com

Patricia Barnes
Advocacy Chair – BIABC
604-862-9637
patricia@eastvillagevanancouver.ca