BIABC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS GROWING IMPACT OF NON-VIOLENT CRIME ON BUSINESSES - AND WHY MUCH OF IT GOES UNREPORTED

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Vancouver, BC - Violent crime and the harm it causes individuals and communities remains a major public concern in British Columbia. However, a new province-wide survey by the Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) shows that non-violent repeat crime is also imposing a significant and growing financial burden on local businesses - and that much of this crime is never formally reported.

The survey found that nearly nine in ten businesses report non-violent repeat offenders - responsible for theft, break-ins, vandalism, and chronic disorder - have had a moderate to very significant impact on their operations, with most respondents reporting crime affecting their business has increased compared to previous years. For many businesses, these impacts translate into substantial and recurring financial losses.

"There is no question that violent offending and its consequences are serious and deserve focused attention," said Jeremy Heighton, President of BIABC. "But the reality for many BC businesses is that non-violent repeat crime is a constant, daily pressure - one that directly drives up costs, erodes margins, and undermines confidence in our commercial areas."

According to the survey:

- Almost 90% of respondents say non-violent repeat crime has had a moderate to very significant impact on their business or commercial area.
- Nearly 40% of businesses report annual losses exceeding $5,000, with a significant share reporting losses in the tens of thousands of dollars directly attributable to repeat non-violent offenders.
- A significant portion of business crime goes unreported, weakening the evidence base needed to inform effective prevention, enforcement, and resource allocation.

A number of BIAs also provided further context about the level of persistent non-violent crime. In Kamloops, annual losses linked to this form of criminality exceeded $1 million in 2025, Downtown Victoria estimates graffiti removal alone cost $1 million last year, while Prince George estimates more than $4.2 million in downtown losses in 2025, including a single $2-million building. In the lower mainland, the Collingwood BIA spent $59,600

addressing non-violent crime in 2025 - rising to a projected $93,500 in 2026 – while the City of North Vancouver reports the level of theft and fraud have increased 18% and 12% respectively, since 2023.

Among businesses that experienced crime in the past year, many reported to authorities only a fraction - or none - of the incidents. The most commonly cited reasons for not formally reporting include long response times, lack of follow-up, low confidence that incidents will be resolved or prosecuted, and the perception that reporting does not lead to meaningful outcomes.

"When property crime and disorder become normalized, the impacts ripple outward - affecting employees, customers, investment decisions, and the vitality of entire neighbourhoods," Heighton added. "Businesses are asking for a system that recognizes repeat behaviour, improves accountability, and better integrates prevention, enforcement, rehabilitation, and data collection."

The survey results show strong support for coordinated provincial action, including:

- Improved crime reporting and data collection systems
- Better coordination across the justice system
- Targeted programs focused on repeat non-violent offenders
- Practical tools that make reporting easier and provide feedback to those who take the time to report incidents

While recent bail reforms have focused on violent offenders, BIABC says repeat non-violent offending remains a major gap. The organization is calling for the Repeat Violent Offender Intervention Initiative to be expanded to include chronic non-violent offenders, warning that without stronger accountability, businesses will continue to face ongoing losses that threaten their long-term viability.

The survey of 260 businesses was conducted in late November 2025, confirming that public safety and repeat offending remain a top advocacy priority for BIABC heading into 2026, alongside cost pressures, red-tape reduction, and the impact of US tariffs.

About BIABC

The Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) is the provincial champion of strong, vibrant, and successful downtowns, main streets, and commercial districts throughout the province. Its members represent more than 80 business districts, employing hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office workers.

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