BIABC Welcomes Federal Bail Reform as Important Step Toward Safer Communities and Stronger Support for Small Businesses

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Vancouver, BC - The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) says the federal government's announcement of forthcoming bail reform legislation and new policing investments represents a step in the right direction to address rising crime and public safety concerns affecting communities and small businesses across the province.

Next week, the Government of Canada will table a new bail reform bill aimed at cracking down on violent and repeat offenders. The proposed legislation will focus on serious crimes such as violent auto thefts, breaking and entering, human trafficking, and sexual and violent assaults—seeking to keep those accused of such acts out of Canadian communities.

The Prime Minister announced the forthcoming bail reform bill will include amendments to the Criminal Code to:

- Introduce "reverse-onus" bail for major crimes;
- Allow consecutive sentencing for those who commit multiple crimes;
- Restrict conditional sentences for a range of sexual offences; and
- Impose harsher penalties for organized retail theft.

"This legislation will be a meaningful step forward," said Jeremy Heighton, BIABC President. "Communities across British Columbia have been calling for action to ensure repeat and violent offenders are not cycling through the system and back onto our streets within hours."

BIABC suggests the present challenges are complex and demand a multi-pronged approach. Key priorities include:

1. **Advance Federal Bail and Sentencing Reform**
   Close loopholes that allow repeat offenders to return to communities quickly. Support tighter bail restrictions and require transparency on community safety considerations in bail decisions.
2. **Address Prolific Non-Violent Offenders**
   Create a province-wide Non-Violent Repeat Offender Program to ensure

consistent treatment, monitoring, and rehabilitation services for chronic offenders.

3. **Expand Community Safety and Targeted Enforcement Program (C-STEP)**
   Increase funding to strengthen local prevention, intelligence gathering, and enforcement efforts through BIA–police partnerships and security infrastructure investments.
4. **Strengthen Crime Reporting**
   Establish mechanisms to capture unreported business crime and integrate non-police reporting into official statistics. Better data supports targeted policing, resource allocation, and policy decisions.

"These federal measures are one part of the solution," added Heighton. "Addressing public safety and business crime requires coordinated action at all levels — federal bail reform, provincial programs for chronic offenders, stronger reporting mechanisms, and investments in targeted local enforcement."

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.

– 30 –

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