



Community Wellness Key Messages

Community Public Safety

- Overall, we are witnessing a deterioration in real and perceived perceptions of public safety from business owners, employees, customers and residents resulting from increased street disorder, encampments, property crime, theft, violence, as well as heightened mental health and addiction-related issues that are rampant throughout our urban centres across BC.
- The notion that much of the above are victimless crimes is a dangerous and highly inaccurate narrative. The impacts are very real and harmful, as business owners are facing increased costs to repair damaged property (broken windows, doors, graffiti), higher insurance premiums or loss of insurance coverage, loss of product and revenue due to theft, as well as loss of staff and customers, but most importantly increased fear, stress and anxiety amongst employers and employees in the workplace due to first-hand experience in dealing with crime, safety, mental health and addiction-related issues.
- Small business owners and employees are members of our communities; they are our neighbours, our friends, our siblings, our parents, our children and their sense of (and actual) safety is paramount. Safety is also very much linked to the protection of jobs. Small business people are already struggling with labour shortages as a result of the pandemic and providing a safe workspace is critical to attracting and keeping staff. Many small business owners are also providers of lower wage employment and consequently, there is a real potential for lower wage earners, many of which are women and people of colour, to fall below the poverty line, if a business has to close its doors. The loss of small businesses does not support the overall health and well-being of our communities.
- Enforcement, treatment, and prevention (in addition to harm reduction) are key pillars to a successful, holistic public safety strategy. Acts of crime need to be assessed and dealt with accordingly at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels in a cooperative fashion. The current system is broken and not working for anyone. Criminal behaviours require an immediate response, but also a deeper assessment of the root causes to help direct the necessary course of action, whether it be on-demand mental health and/or addictions support services or incarceration, restorative justice, and rehabilitation.

Community Wellness Components

- Achieving community wellness requires a collaborative and integrative approach involving all levels of government and representatives from all impacted groups of people to identify the full spectrum of needs and challenges and to develop long-term solutions that will work for all.
- A continuum of housing and care is needed to support healthy and vital communities, but in conjunction with the appropriate on-site, wrap-around supports and services in place when and where needed.

- Development of and investment in a comprehensive provincial complex care program with qualified, trained staff is critical to meeting the needs of our most vulnerable individuals that require specialized care across all communities in BC, along with an examination and adoption of additional measures, including involuntary care, where needed. The programs must also be designed to have the capacity and protocols necessary to connect effectively to alternate justice mechanisms.
- Implementation of an effective safe drug supply program as one measure to address the toxic drugs circulating in our communities and to help reduce property crime and the impact it has on small business owners and the wider community.
- Identify and support innovative, research-based approaches to addressing mental health and addictions issues, such as SFU's CARMHA Program that can also provide measurable outcomes and success indicators.
- Development of a provincial program to support businesses dealing with the financial impacts due to property crime.