



An open letter to our elected (and soon to be elected municipal) leaders

In other parts of the world, people are fighting to retain their democratic rights, but in BC we have the power to effect positive change at the ballot box.

In this province, not a day goes by when public safety, violence, property crime and vandalism in our downtowns and main streets aren't at the forefront of the news headlines – and with only days until municipal elections take place, the onus is on voters to research where candidates stand on these matters and demand commitments that will lead to positive action.

Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) represents more than 70 business districts, which collectively encompasses tens of thousands of small and medium-sized businesses that employ hundreds of thousands of people across this province. Together, we are gravely concerned that these public safety issues have reached the tipping point, not just in Vancouver but across the province - in communities like Langley, Abbotsford, and Surrey – on Vancouver Island – and in Northern and Interior centres like Prince George, Quesnel, Kamloops, Kelowna, and Penticton, among others.

We understand this is a complex problem and there is no single solution. And it's for that very reason that all three levels of government need to work in collaboration to develop a comprehensive plan and tackle these issues as a matter of urgency.

At the municipal level, BIABC is challenging all candidates in the October civic elections to make a commitment to support core funding that will mitigate main street issues through increased policing resources, street lighting, sanitation, and anti-graffiti programs, as well as stronger bylaw enforcement.

At the provincial level, BIABC recommends the creation of a Special Committee on Public Safety to create and advance a plan that will support individuals dealing with mental health, addictions and/or homelessness, as well as examine alternative justice options, identify short, medium and longer-term measures to address the issue of prolific offenders, and an increase to police resources. Additionally, there is an immediate need for implementation of assistance programs for victims of commercial crime, and improvement to the crime reporting process and response through E-COMM.

At the federal level, BIABC is advocating for the establishment of an all-party committee on Downtowns and Main Streets.

This is time for our elected representatives within all three levels of government to put people and our communities first. This is a collective crisis, and we need a collective response from our elected (and soon to be elected municipal) leaders.

Teri Smith – President
Business Improvement Associations of BC