



## BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATIONS CALL ON LOCAL & PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO ADDRESS PROPERTY CRIME EPIDEMIC

**For Immediate Release  
November 8, 2022**

The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) reports that property crime and vandalism in downtowns and main streets have reached epidemic proportions and are calling on municipal and provincial governments to help offset the substantial costs.

In recent weeks, media have profiled the introduction of business security grant programs by Vancouver-area BIAs to directly assist their member businesses with the impacts of smashed windows and other forms of property crime, as well as enhancing their overall business security protocols - but this funding allocation, which is estimated at around \$200,000, is just the tip of the iceberg.

There are 22 BIAs within the City of Vancouver and collectively, they invest \$16.5 million to brand, promote, and revitalize their respective business districts on behalf of their member businesses and property owners. Approximately \$4 million, representing 25% of the total funding, supports a variety of clean and safe initiatives, such as daily security patrols and micro-cleaning, community policing partnerships, anti-graffiti measures, and grants. This figure has continued to increase significantly, year over year. The more that is spent on efforts to keep commercial streets clean and safe, the less that can be contributed to other economic development programs.

“While BIAs have stepped in, what we really need is our municipal and provincial governments to step up and help support our business communities,” says Teri Smith, President of BIABC. “By not coming to the table, governments are in effect downloading these costs directly onto the backs of individual business owners whose viability is threatened as a result of current conditions.”

“In many cases, businesses can no longer access insurance, or they are paying out of pocket to keep their premiums from sky-rocketing any further. And that doesn’t even touch upon the emotional toll that the rampant crime and safety issues are having on business owners and their employees. They need a lifeline”, emphasized Smith.

Similar to pandemic grant relief programs, local and provincial governments should be developing and implementing funding assistance programs to mitigate street level issues and to support commercial victims of crime. A recent Vancouver example was the approval of graffiti abatement grant funding in the amount of \$500,000 provided to the Vancouver BIAs to assist with the citywide impacts of increasing graffiti. The City of Victoria also provided funding to the Downtown Victoria Business Association to create a Security and Vandalism Grant, which enabled businesses or property owners to enhance their security through various means, such as installation of security systems or anti-shatter window film.

This September, members of Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) launched an urgent appeal to all three levels of government to deal with untenable street issues and crime plaguing communities across the province. More information about the appeal can be found here:

[https://bia.bc.ca/index.php?area\\_id=1003&page\\_id=1104](https://bia.bc.ca/index.php?area_id=1003&page_id=1104)

**About the Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia:**

Formed in 1991 to assist and promote the BIA movement in British Columbia, Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) is the provincial champion of strong, vibrant and successful downtowns, main streets and commercial districts throughout our province.

Our members together represent more than 70 business districts that employ hundreds of thousands of retail, service and office employees within their defined business districts. Mostly small- and medium-sized businesses, they are part of maintaining your community's excellence and highest quality of livability.

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