FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BIABC Labour Day Message: Businesses and Staff Need Safe, Secure Workplaces

Vancouver, BC – As Labour Day approaches, a new survey from the Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) reveals that business owners and front-line staff across the province continue to face rising fear and anxiety due to persistent crime, vandalism, and street disorder. BIABC is urging the provincial government to take stronger, immediate action to ensure safe work environments.

BIABC, representing 80 business districts and more than 55,000 businesses, surveyed over 350 owners in late June and early July.

2025 survey highlights:

- 67% report street disorder has increased in the past year, citing drug- and mental health-related activity, more homeless encampments, broken windows and doors, theft, violence, and aggression.
- 74% say these conditions have increased fear and anxiety for staff.
- 57% report a reduction in customer/street traffic.
- 61% report increased operating expenses due to crime and vandalism.
- Nearly 1 in 5 (19%) say their business may not be financially viable beyond the next year if conditions do not improve.

Context from the 2024 survey:

- 86% said there had been increased drug/mental health-related activity, while more than one-half of respondents saw more violence and aggression, an increase in theft/shoplifting, and broken windows or doors.
- 82% reported increased fear and anxiety for staff.
- 64% experienced a reduction in customer/street traffic.
- 17% said that if conditions did not improve, their business would not survive beyond another year.

The year-over-year comparison shows that concerns about safety, crime, and disorder remain deeply entrenched. While some percentage shifts occurred between 2024 and 2025, the scale of the problem has not eased. Businesses continue to face high levels of staff anxiety, reduced customer traffic, and growing operational costs linked to crime. Most troubling, the proportion of owners warning they cannot survive another year

without change has stayed nearly the same — highlighting that the situation is not improving and urgent government action is needed.

"Small and medium-sized business owners and their staff simply want to come to work without worrying about violence or disorder," said Jeremy Heighton, President of BIABC. "This is not about blaming those struggling with mental health or addictions – it's about ensuring people can come to work each day without worry, and those experiencing mental health, addiction and homelessness have access to on-demand, wraparound services that provide proper treatment."

For the past three years, BIABC has advocated for significant investments and policy measures to address the root causes of crime and public safety issues, including mental health, addictions, and housing. The Association is calling for a comprehensive, province-wide plan – with targeted investments, policies to address prolific non-violent offenders, and a clear pathway to sustained, intensive treatment services available regardless of where someone lives in BC.

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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