CRITICAL ISSUES OF PUBLIC SAFETY & COST OF DOING BUSINESS DEMAND URGENT RESPONSE FROM NEW NDP GOVERNMENT

For Immediate Release
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Vancouver, BC – Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) are calling on the newly elected NDP Government to move with urgency to address a number of critical issues impacting public safety and the viability of small and medium-sized businesses across the province.

"BIABC would like to congratulate David Eby on his election victory and acknowledge all candidates for their contribution to the democratic process ," said BIABC Past-President Teri Smith. "Following the conclusion of a hard-fought campaign, there is unfortunately no time for a victory celebration. Businesses and residents need the government to step up immediately and start doing the hard work to address the pressing issues impacting the health and vitality of communities across the province."

BIABC represents hundreds of thousands of retail, service and office employees in more than 70 business districts across the province. A recent survey of businesses informed several areas of our advocacy that includes a humane response to the complex issues of mental health, addictions and homelessness. A comprehensive plan is also required for youth and adults with a range of targeted and meaningful investments, as well as policy decisions to create a specific pathway to access on-demand, wrap around services, and sustained, intensive treatment.

Specific to the cost of doing business, members support a review of the current five-day mandatory sick leave policy, improved delivery and increased access and awareness of the Securing Small Business Rebate Program – and the creation of a stand-alone Small Business Ministry to give voice to the largest private sector employer in the province, BC's small businesses.

Of great concern is the feedback from respondents indicating that if conditions don't change, 39% don't believe they can continue operating successfully past 2 years - while 52% suggest they will only be able to continue for four years.

In response to the BIABC questionnaire sent to all parties during the election campaign, the NDP made commitments to:

- Open new secure treatment facilities, fast-tracking the development of Foundry Centres for Youth and their families to access critical mental health, addiction, and physical and sexual health services;
- Expanding specialized treatment beds across the province with both mental health and substance use disorders;

- Keep repeat violent and gang offenders off the streets by pushing Ottawa for stronger bail and sentencing conditions, and
- Appoint a single Minister with bottom line accountability for small businesses.

"Over the course of the provincial election campaign, party leaders and candidates staked out many positions and promises. Small and medium-sized businesses raised their collective voice about significant issues that are placing an emotional and financial toll on them, and circumstances which in many cases, have become unbearable. As a result, our hope is that the incoming government will choose to treat its election commitments as a bare minimum and go well beyond those pledges, because British Columbians deserve better," concluded Smith.

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 our province. Members represent more than 70 business districts that employ hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office employees within defined business districts.

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Contact:
Kelly Gleeson
kgleeson@lbmg.ca
604-240-6231