IMPACT OF CRIME & VANDALISM and THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS FOCAL POINTS OF BIABC CONFERENCE

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Kamloops, BC - Next week, representatives from Business Improvement Areas of BC, representing 70 business districts and more than 55,000 businesses on main streets and downtowns across our province, will converge on Kamloops for their annual conference and AGM.

Not surprisingly, the impact of crime and vandalism on small and medium size businesses is expected to take centre-stage at the conference, but they are just one example of the many layers of costs and taxation that have made doing business extremely difficult in recent years, and the President of BIABC says more needs to be done.

"The Safer Communities Action Plan is not having a meaningful impact and expecting that business can continue to absorb the increasing cost of crime and vandalism has to stop," said BIABC President Jeff Bray. *"This is a critical time for businesses, and we need to turn the tide."*

In that same vein, BIABC suggests other key areas of advocacy in the coming months, will include the following:

Repeal of Decriminalization of drugs. BIABC recognizes the complexity of the issues plaguing communities across BC and continue advocating for new policy decisions and investments to address root causes such as mental health, addictions, and housing. Without adequate access to treatment and support services, it's clear that decriminalization is not working in its present form - and communities are bearing the social and societal impacts.

A review of the mandatory five-day sick leave policy for all employees. This policy was established in response to the pandemic and applies to all employees covered by the Employment Standards Act, including part-time, temporary, and casual. While there is a positive economic and social benefit, it is one of several employer-related costs that have increased in recent years - and puts the onus on a business owner to pay the employee taking sick leave along with the employee backfilling that position. We are advocating for a review, in consultation with the business community - on options such as a rebate or subsidy that reduces the financial liability for businesses without placing an administrative burden on them.

Ongoing monitoring of the Small Business Rebate Program. BIABC strongly advocated for the creation of the Program and supported recent adjustments to streamline the process. The Association will continue monitoring progress to ensure the program is meeting its desired result.

The theme of the April 28-May 1 gathering is 'Confluence: Forward Together' which represents the collaboration of BIAs in advocating and addressing issues impacting small and medium sized businesses – and their common desire to forge a stronger partnership with governments in advancing opportunities and advocating solutions.

"Business Improvement Areas have their own unique challenges, opportunities and areas of focus," continued Bray. *"However, they also share many of the same objectives and our annual conference provides the opportunity to come together, collaborate, strategize, problem-solve and collectively create stronger communities."*

The conference will be co-hosted by the Kamloops Central Business Improvement Association (KCBIA) and North Shore Business Improvement Area (NSBIA).

The Kamloops North Shore BIA is excited to welcome the province to Kamloops, and to showcase the opportunities that revitalization of our neighbourhood is creating," said Jeremy Heighton – Executive Director, NSBIA. *"When we focus on our partnerships, and our common challenges, our confluence leads to innovative and creative solutions that drive community prosperity."*

"As we gather in Kamloops for this year's BIABC conference, the focus will be on finding effective, collaborative solutions to move our business districts forward," said Howie Reimer - Executive Director KCBIA. *"Together, we are committed to advocating for meaningful changes that ensure the vitality and sustainability of businesses across our two rivers and across the province."*

The BIABC conference will include a series of keynotes, panel discussions and break-out sessions dedicated to a host of issues, including restorative justice, crime prevention through environmental design, and the cost of doing business and economic development. Detailed information about the program is available here.

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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