BIABC LABOUR DAY MESSAGE:
BUSINESS OWNERS AND FRONT-LINE STAFF NEED A SAFE WORK ENVIRONMENT

For immediate Release
August 27, 2024

Vancouver, BC – In addition to significant financial impacts, a survey of business owners across the province reveals 82% have increased fear and anxiety because of rampant crime, vandalism and street disorder issues. This Labour Day, Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC) say the provincial government needs to do MUCH more to ensure a safe work environment for business owners and their front-line staff.

BIABC represents 70 business districts and more than 55,000 businesses, and conducted a survey of 500+ business owners across BC during the month of June. A majority of respondents suggest BC's decriminalization of illicit drugs in January of 2023 exacerbated what was already a challenging environment.

Of those surveyed, 82% of respondents report increased fear and anxiety and 77% suggest there is a greater level of street disorder. 86% also say there has been increased drug/mental health related activity, while 58% say violence and aggression has increased, followed by 56% of respondents suggesting theft/shoplifting has spiked, as well as 53% reporting an increase in broken windows or doors. Consequently, 64% of respondents saw a reduction in customer/street traffic.

"Small and medium size business owners and their staff simply want to be able to come to work each day without worrying about the threat of violence or related street disorder. Survey results clearly show the ongoing situation is taking an emotional toll on them," said Jeff Bray, President of BIABC. *"Many survey respondents provided comments underlining that their intent is not to victimize those with mental health and addiction issues – but rather to see them provided access to on-demand, wrap around services in which they are provided appropriate treatment."*

For the past two years BIABC has advocated for significant investments and policy actions to address mental health, addictions and housing which are broadly viewed as root causes of many crime and public safety issues. The Association suggests a comprehensive plan is required for youth and adults, with a range of targeted and meaningful investments and policy decisions to address/mitigate the impacts of prolific, non- violent offenders and to create a specific pathway to access for on-demand, wrap around services, and sustained/intensive treatment- regardless of where one lives in the province.

Between June 6 and 28, BIABC surveyed business owners in communities across BC with the intent of formulating questionnaires for parties and candidates vying in the upcoming provincial election. The survey results are from more than 500 business owners and operators, representing 26 distinct business

districts across British Columbia- representing a broad spectrum of small and medium size businesses including retail, food, tourism, arts/culture/entertainment, and office.

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.

-30-

Contact:

Jeff Bray
President – BIABC
250.217.9461 or 250.386.2238
jeff@downtownvictoria.ca