



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **COST OF RETAIL THEFT LIKE A HIDDEN TAX ON BC FAMILIES THAT YOU WON'T SEE IN THURSDAY'S PROVINCIAL BUDGET**

*Retail shrinkage, including theft and organized retail crime,  
cost every British Columbia family \$824 in 2023: Jess Ketchum, SOS (Save Our Streets)*

**Vancouver, B.C. (February 21, 2024):** In 2023, retail theft in British Columbia cost every family \$824, a hidden tax that you won't see in Thursday's provincial budget, says Jess Ketchum, a founder of the [Save Our Streets](#) coalition (SOS).

"We estimate the annual loss due to retail shrinkage, theft and organized retail crime at over \$9 billion across Canada, including more than \$1.4 billion right here in British Columbia, and it's getting more organized and more violent," said Ketchum. "We've got a provincial budget coming out on Thursday, and you may hear about the cost of groceries and gas but you won't see the cost of organized theft and shoplifting to British Columbia families in the budget, but it's real. In fact, it amounts to about \$824 annually per family. It's like a crime tax, and it's definitely taking a toll on families as well as the growing number of local businesses hit hard by crime and street disorder."

Ketchum said shoplifting has increased across all categories, including food, apparel, and other merchandise, with those costs ultimately borne by consumers. At the same time, governments across the country are losing out on \$1 billion annually in tax revenues because of stolen goods.

"As companies have to replace stolen merchandise and increase security, those costs become part of the business, and all of us end up paying the price," noted Ketchum. "Even more concerning is the increase in repeat offenders, and the fact that retail theft involving violence has increased 300 per cent over the past four years, according to the Retail Council of Canada. Workers and customers shouldn't have to worry about their safety, but these days it is definitely on all our minds."

Ketchum said he is hoping this week's provincial budget will include funding that targets street disorder and crime, in an effort to reclaim streets and neighbourhoods across the province.

"When we started SOS last October, we had 30 community, neighbourhood and business organizations join us and since then, we've grown to nearly 80 members from across the province," noted Ketchum. "No community, no neighbourhood, and no business is immune from the sort of street disorder and theft we're seeing today. While some of it can be attributed to individuals with addiction and mental health illnesses, there is also a growing organized criminal element that preys upon them and facilitates the crimes being committed. More and more stores are seeing people target specific items in an organized fashion. It's a disturbing trend and it ends up costing all of us."

Ketchum said SOS is calling on governments at every level to step up and use their resources and authority to end the downward spiral that is hurting families, communities, neighbourhoods, and local businesses. SOS is calling on governments to more clearly identify and articulate objectives for decreasing these crimes, how success or failure will be measured and how they intend on meeting those objectives. Holding governments accountable for their responsibilities is at the core of the SOS strategy.

“We need less talk and more action from every level of government. British Columbians can lead the way. Let’s celebrate results rather than announcements,” said Ketchum.

Communities, citizen groups, and BC businesses interested in joining SOS are invited to contact:  
[info@saveourstreets.ca](mailto:info@saveourstreets.ca).

Online: [SaveOurStreets.ca](http://SaveOurStreets.ca)

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## **“SAVE OUR STREETS” COALITION MEMBERS TO DATE**

Alder Bay Equity Partners  
Anthem Properties  
Aritzia  
Bay Centre Victoria  
BC Restaurants and Food Services Association  
Beach Fire Brewing Co., Campbell River  
BIABC  
Blackbird Security  
Business Council of BC  
Canadians Against Crime & Public Drug Abuse  
Chilliwack Beware Crime and Safety  
Chu Cho Environmental, Prince George  
Circle K  
Citizens Take Action (Dawson Creek/Ft. St. John)  
Clean Streets Penticton  
Clean Up V9L (Duncan)  
Convenience Industry Council of Canada  
Cranbrook Neighbourhood Network  
Destinations Vancouver  
Downtown Campbell River BIA  
Downtown Kamloops BIA  
Downtown Kelowna Association  
Downtown Nanaimo Business Association  
Downtown Prince George  
Downtown Surrey BIA  
Downtown Van  
Downtown Victoria Business Association  
Gastown Business Improvement Society  
Gastown Residents Association  
Georgia Main Food Group  
Ginger Group  
Gold Silver Guy  
Gourmet Warehouse  
Greater Vancouver Board of Trade  
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce  
Hastings North BIA  
Highwaymen Barbers  
Invictus Properties  
J. Gordon Enterprises  
Kamloops Citizens for Change  
Kerrisdale Business Association  
KLA Inc.  
London Drugs  
Lordco  
Lululemon  
Magnolia Hotel and Spa  
Marquis Wine  
MEC Mountain Equipment Company  
Metro Vancouver Crime Stoppers  
Nanaimo Area Public Safety Association  
Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce  
Nelson Neighbourhood Network  
Newcastle Community Association  
North Shore BIA (Kamloops)  
Pacific Reach Properties  
Quesnel Downtown Association  
Quesnel In Action  
Restaurants Canada  
Retail Council of Canada  
Rexall  
Rocky Mountaineer  
Safewatch Live Monitoring Inc., Burnaby  
Sechelt Downtown Business Association  
Save-On-Foods/Pattison Food Group  
Save Our City Vancouver  
Safer Vancouver  
Securiguard  
South Cariboo Chamber of Commerce  
Surrey Board of Trade  
Tango Meats and Deli  
The Lotus Strata BCS2884  
7-Eleven Canada  
Trail Neighbourhood Network (N2)  
Urban Development Institute (UDI)  
Vancity Health Clinic  
Victoria Crescent Association, Nanaimo  
Whispering Waves Boutique, Campbell R.  
Wroughtenart, Cowichan Valley