



**NEW BIABC POLL SHOWS STREET DISORDER THREATENING VIABILITY OF BUSINESSES ACROSS BC**  
Increased costs and safety concerns affecting businesses and mental health of owners and employees

VANCOUVER, B.C. (September 10, 2024) – A new poll released by the Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC), a Save Our Streets coalition member, is providing shocking statistics about the extent to which street disorder and public safety issues are affecting businesses across the province, as well as the mental health and safety of business owners and their employees.

BIABC represents more than 70 business districts across the province, which employ hundreds of thousands of retail, service and office employees. This summer, BIABC surveyed more than 500 small and medium size business owners in communities across BC to gain their perspective on a wide range of issues, including public safety-related issues, and their impact on the viability of small businesses.

Among the most notable results are:

- 97% of businesses indicated the cost of doing business has increased over the past five years, (by more than 20% for 53% of respondents) due to numerous factors, including insurance and security;
- Since 2023, 58% reported increased violence and aggression, 56% reported a spike in theft/shoplifting, 63% reported a rise in graffiti, and 53% reported an increase in broken windows;
- 82% of respondents said they've experienced increased fear, anxiety and/or stress because of increasing street disorder, theft, violence/aggression, mental health and drug-related activity, vandalism, and homelessness.
- As a result of property crime, 61% of respondents have had to invest in safety measures, such as cameras, alarm systems, gates, improved lighting and locks within the past two years; and
- If conditions don't change, 39% don't believe they can remain viable or continue operating successfully past two years (52% suggest they will only be able to continue for four years).

As BIABC President, Downtown Victoria Business Association CEO and Save Our Streets (SOS) member Jeff Bray notes, "Business owners have made it very clear that they and their staff are enduring circumstances that are placing a significant financial and emotional toll on them. It's a situation that for many has become unbearable – and they will want and expect decisive action by our next government. As British Columbians prepare to head to the polls, BIABC will be appealing to candidates and their political parties to take a stand in support of a sector that is integral to the provincial and local economies but is equally important to the vitality and vibrancy of our neighbourhoods and communities."

"We thank BIABC for their work to capture the reality of how street disorder, retail crime and mental health issues are affecting businesses in every corner of the province," adds Jess Ketchum, Co-Founder, SOS. "Of course, when businesses have to close their doors, employees lose their jobs, which further impacts families around the province. What's going on in B.C. and around the country today clearly shows that short-term band-aid solutions by different levels of government don't work. We need a coordinated new commitment and approach to tackling our street disorder and mental crisis now with new ideas and best practices that are proven effective."



On January 23, Save Our Streets will host the Communities Driving Change Forum in Vancouver, where panels of experts and community leaders will explore how we can better address the many issues related to mental health, addictions and crime, including judicial reform, policing reform, addictions and the mental illnesses continuum of care, and housing. B.C.'s provincial party leaders are being invited to speak and the Forum will be livestreamed.

**About Save Our Streets**

Save Our Streets is a coalition of 100-plus community and business organizations representing every corner of British Columbia. SOS members are committed to seeing governments bring order and public safety back to communities across British Columbia. Concerned citizen groups, and B.C. businesses interested in joining or supporting SOS are invited to apply online at [SaveOurStreets.ca](http://SaveOurStreets.ca) or contact [info@saveourstreets.ca](mailto:info@saveourstreets.ca).

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**Media contact:**

Greg Descantes

[gdescantes@pacegroup.com](mailto:gdescantes@pacegroup.com)

604-417-1379