



## **VANCOUVER ATTACKS HIGHLIGHT URGENT NEED FOR COORDINATED MENTAL HEALTH CARE**

Save Our Streets coalition calling for greater collaboration and action from all levels of government

**Vancouver, B.C. (September 5, 2024):** Following yet another violent unprovoked attack by a person with a history of mental illness and violent offences, Save Our Streets (SOS) is once again calling on all levels of government to stop pointing fingers at each other, put the rhetoric aside, and work together to fix a broken system that is failing people with mental health and addictions issues and placing individuals and businesses in every B.C. community at risk.

Yesterday morning in downtown Vancouver, two men were violently attacked in separate but connected incidents in which one man lost his hand and another lost his life. According to Vancouver Chief of Police Adam Palmer, the suspect now in custody is a 34-year-old White Rock man with a history of mental illness, violent offences and dozens of interactions with police. His history includes convictions for assault, and he was on probation for an assault in 2023 at the time of his arrest.

While the severity of yesterday's incidents is unusual, street disorder, attacks on strangers and retail crime have become commonplace across the province. The Save Our Streets coalition has grown to well over 100 community and business organizations representing every region of the province for that very reason.

"The fact is too many people do not feel safe in their communities, and along with business owners across Greater Vancouver, they are begging for change, for public safety, for safer streets," says Bridgitte Anderson, an SOS member and the President of the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. "We cannot stand by and let things like this happen. We need urgent action now from all levels of government."

SOS has advocated for judicial reform to halt the revolving door for repeat offenders, for law enforcement reforms to provide police with the tools they need to maintain the law, and for a full continuum of care to treat those suffering from addiction and mental illnesses.

"We need all three levels of government to act together now and address these issues with an obvious sense of urgency," says SOS co-founder Jess Ketchum. "It is outrageously unacceptable that the victims in this most recent tragedy were attacked. It is also outrageously unacceptable that residents are fearful of walking in their own neighbourhoods. It is also outrageously unacceptable that an individual as sick as this person knowingly is, is permitted to wander around the streets endangering himself and others."

With a provincial election on the horizon, voters will be looking for less finger pointing and more action focused on results rather than intentions. If our system isn't working, and it is obviously not, then it's foolish, reckless and irresponsible not to make changes. Other jurisdictions are making progress, so there's no reason we can't make progress as well. We look forward to addressing the many issues related to mental health, addictions and crime at our Communities Driving Change Forum in Vancouver on January 23.



**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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