



SAVE OUR STREETS CALLS FOR 25 PRIORITY GOALS AND ACTIONS IN LETTER TO PREMIER EBY

Recommended action items aimed at shaping the mandates of incoming cabinet ministers

VANCOUVER, B.C. (Nov. 7, 2024) – Following a provincial election which demonstrated widespread public dissatisfaction with how government is addressing public safety, justice, repeat offenders, retail crime, and addictions and mental health treatment across the province, Save Our Streets (SOS) has delivered to Premier David Eby a list of 25 priority actions items aimed at making communities safer, restoring confidence in the justice system, better addressing addictions and mental health issues, and improving the quality of life of all British Columbians.

Last month, a province-wide SOS survey conducted by Research Co. provided an unsettling snapshot of how the daily lives of British Columbians across the province have been significantly impacted by crime, addiction, mental health issues, homelessness, and a justice system that too often puts the rights of criminals first.

Among the most startling results were that:

- 50 per cent of British Columbians fear for their own safety and that of their families;
- 74 per cent said crime and violence are impacting their quality of life;
- 88 per cent said crimes are going unreported due to lost confidence in the justice system;
- 87 per cent support increased police presence and bail system reforms; and
- 86 per cent support harsher penalties for those charged with multiple offenses.

Research by SOS member and partner, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), found:

- 86 per cent of small businesses have concerns over the safety of their employees and customers.
- 62 per cent of small businesses are spending more on security;
- 54 per cent of small businesses have been impacted by community safety issues;
- 61 per cent of small businesses are facing challenges with vandalism, breaking and entry; and
- 57 per cent of small businesses are facing challenges with theft/shoplifting.

SOS's hope is that the 25 requested action items delivered to Premier Eby last Thursday (Oct. 31) will be reflected in the mandate letters he will deliver to Cabinet Ministers, outlining the priorities of the new government and its ministries for the next four years.

“We understand there are no magic bullets for these complex and intertwined issues, but we believe we have the knowledge, experience and expertise in British Columbia to design and implement the new global model for responding to these issues,” says SOS Co-founder Jess Ketchum. “What we need now is the political will of the provincial government, and the willingness of all levels of government to collaborate in the public interest. Government should be encouraged by our survey and the election results, which showed British Columbians not only demand urgent action now on these issues, but that they are also overwhelmingly open to new ideas and willing to support government in implementing them.



SOS's 25 requested action items include:

1. Initiate actions to see that our police forces (RCMP and municipal), Crown prosecution services and judicial system are better able to eliminate full-time vacancies and maintain a full complement of police officers and judicial administration positions and support staff.
2. Expand the use of medical staff working with police in response to suspected mental illness incidents.
3. Fully implement the re-criminalization of drug possession and use in public places.
4. Establish and clearly articulate a policy that provides involuntary care for those unable to make life-saving decisions on their own and who may be endangering their lives and those of others.
5. Direct prosecutorial services to more consistently approve charges following recommendations from police forces.
6. Initiate a policy of transparency in dealing with occasions when a charge is recommended by police but not pursued by having the mitigating circumstances outlined in the court proceedings, allowing for greater public scrutiny and accountability.
7. Encourage prosecutorial services and judges to better balance the “public interest” interpretation of current law that considers the impact on victims of violence, verbal and physical assaults, and the impacts of theft and vandalism.
8. Identify and implement reforms to streamline the court system, allowing for speedier access to justice and the elimination of time-related court stays.
9. Identify and publicize specific federal actions required to reform the bail system to eliminate the so-called revolving door for repeat offenders.
10. Require the judicial system to demonstrate a renewed dedication to building and maintaining public confidence in the justice system.
11. Increase the criminal penalties for those who commit any form of violence against retail and service workers or their employers.
12. Increase the consequences for vandalism.
13. Determine means of using harm reduction programs to incent users to accept voluntary assessment, treatment and recovery.
14. Enable police forces to offer voluntary assessment, treatment and recovery as an alternative to charges for drug possession for personal use.
15. Determine means of using supportive housing to incent users to accept voluntary assessment, treatment and recovery.
16. Expand immediate access to assessment and detox services in every B.C. community that has a hospital or urgent and primary care center.
17. Increase the seizure of the proceeds of crime.
18. Reinstate the authority of police services at B.C. ports.
19. Initiate automatic deportation applications for non-citizens found guilty of crime, with a focus on illicit drug importation, manufacturing and sale.
20. Publicly outline a plan and implement the expansion of government-operated and/or government-regulated treatment and recovery facilities in each region of B.C., prioritized on current need.
21. Initiate a public-facing web-based program that shows the real-time availability of addiction and mental illness treatment facilities in B.C.
22. Establish a stand-alone housing plan that differentiates between housing for the general public from housing for those suffering from addiction and mental illnesses, who require varying degrees of medical observation and treatment.



23. Initiate a public enquiry into the ownership and management of Single Room Occupancy hotels to identify how the standard of living and health and safety of occupants can be improved.
24. Develop and implement policy for building smaller stand-alone health-serviced housing units and locating them within communities with the support of host communities.
25. Establish a publicly accessible and regularly updated crime database that can measure B.C.'s progress, or lack thereof, in addressing prioritized categories of criminal activity.

“As British Columbians, communities, businesses and organizations across the province have clearly indicated, addressing these 25 points with mere announcements will not be enough,” add Ketchum. “It is absolutely critical that all plans and initiatives going forward include measurable data points so we can track their effectiveness and make any necessary adjustments if we’re not making progress. You cannot manage what you cannot measure.

“Our SOS members have been encouraged by Premier Eby’s post-election comments in which he recognized the importance of these issues to British Columbians, and our hope is that their desire for urgent, actionable and measurable action on these issues will be reflected in the mandate letters the Premier will provide to his new Cabinet Ministers. We wish the new government every success going forward and look forward to having Premier Eby join us when we host our Communities Driving Change Forum in the new year.”

The day-long SOS “Communities Driving Change” Forum on January 23 will feature panels of experts, keynote speakers and community leaders exploring how British Columbia 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.

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 submit online at SaveOurStreets.ca or contact info@saveourstreets.ca.

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