BIA WEEK SHINES LIGHT ON THE HIDDEN INVESTMENT KEEPING BC'S MAIN STREETS SAFE AND VIBRANT

Businesses are stepping up, investing tens of millions annually into their communities

For immediate release
April 20, 2026

VANCOUVER, BC – As British Columbia marks BIA Week, a simple but important question is coming into focus: what is really keeping our main streets clean, safe, and vibrant? Across the province, the answer is increasingly a network of more than 80 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), representing approximately 55,000 small businesses, collectively investing in the communities they call home.

Retail crime, vandalism, and street disorder continue to impact storefronts across the province. At the same time, the cost of doing business is rising on all fronts - from wages and insurance to taxes and regulatory pressures. Yet rather than stepping back, businesses are stepping up - funding security, cleanup, beautification, and local events that help bring people back to their neighbourhoods.

Through their local BIAs, businesses are helping to fund the very things many assume government provides - including daily street cleaning, graffiti removal, security patrols, and public space maintenance. They are also investing in placemaking, from murals and decorative lighting to festivals and events that bring life back to commercial districts.

New survey data released as part of BIA Week underscores the scale of that contribution, with BIAs collectively investing tens of millions of dollars directly back into their communities each year.

A few examples include:

- Vancouver – $ 20,359,547
- Kamloops – $1,112,000
- Kelowna - $1,264,000
- Prince George - $348,000
- Williams Lake - $126,000

“Across British Columbia, small businesses are not just operating in their communities - they are actively investing in them,” said Jeremy Heighton, President of BIABC. “They are stepping up to support safety, cleanliness, and vibrancy in their neighbourhoods, often filling gaps that are growing wider.”

That role has evolved significantly. What began as a model focused on local enhancement has, in many communities, become something far more essential - a system of necessity helping to sustain main streets in the face of growing pressures.

“BIAs are increasingly frontline partners in public safety, economic resilience, and community building,” added Heighton. “But there is a limit to what small businesses can continue to absorb on their own.”

BIA Week provides an opportunity to pull back the curtain on that reality - not only to recognize the contributions BIAs make, but to hear directly from the businesses funding this work and what they are experiencing on the ground.

“The message from our members is clear,” added Heighton. “Small businesses cannot continue to carry these responsibilities alone. Strong, vibrant commercial districts require true partnership - with all levels of government stepping up alongside the business community.”

Beyond their local impact, BIABC continues to play a growing role as a coordinated provincial voice for small business - bringing frontline insights into policy discussions on public safety, affordability, tariffs, and broader economic pressures.

As BIA Week is recognized across the province, the message is clear: behind every clean street, safe storefront, and vibrant neighbourhood is a network of businesses investing not only in their own success - but in the future of their communities.

About BIABC
The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC) is the provincial champion of strong, vibrant, and successful downtowns, main streets, and commercial districts throughout the province. Its members represent more than 80 business districts, employing hundreds of thousands of retail, service, and office workers.

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