BIABC WELCOMES ROYAL ASSENT OF BAIL, SENTENCING REFORMS AND URGES FURTHER ACTION ON REPEAT NON-VIOLENT CRIME

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VANCOUVER, BC – The Business Improvement Areas of British Columbia (BIABC), representing the majority of 80 business improvement districts and more than 55,000 small businesses operating in communities across the province - is welcoming news that Bill C-14, the Bail and Sentencing Reform Act, has received royal assent in Parliament, calling it an important step toward safer communities.

At the same time, the Association is urging senior levels of government to build upon these reforms by addressing the ongoing challenge posed by prolific non-violent repeat offenders who continue to impact businesses, employees, customers, and commercial districts throughout British Columbia.

"While the legislation addresses several categories of repeat offending, it does not fully address the broader challenge of prolific non-violent repeat offenders whose actions – including those related to retail crime - continue to have significant impacts on businesses, employees, customers, and communities," said BIABC President Jeremy Heighton.

BIABC surveys of members underline that repeat non-violent offending - including shoplifting, retail theft, break-ins, vandalism, property crime, and chronic street disorder - remains one of the most significant challenges facing small businesses throughout British Columbia.

"Every day, business owners are dealing with the consequences of repeat non-violent crime," said Heighton. "While these offences may not always make headlines, their cumulative impact is enormous. Business owners are paying for repairs, replacing stolen merchandise, investing in additional security, and spending countless hours dealing with incidents involving the same individuals over and over again."

BIABC has acknowledged the province's ongoing efforts to develop and pilot a Non-Violent Repeat Offender (NVRO) program in select BC communities, viewing it as an important step toward a more consistent and effective response to individuals who repeatedly cycle through the justice system. As the program is evaluated and expanded, BIABC encourages government to ensure it is implemented province-wide,

with strong collaboration between police, Crown counsel, probation services, health providers, and community agencies to both improve public safety and address the underlying factors contributing to repeat offending.

BIABC will continue to advocate for practical measures to address repeat offending in all its forms and strengthen safety for businesses, employees, residents, and visitors throughout British Columbia.

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 the majority of BC's 80 business districts and more than 55,000 small businesses across British Columbia.

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