604-430-8600
www.bcndp.ca
320 - 34 W 7th Avenue
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1L6

BIA BC
c/o Jeff Bray
Sent via email

October 6, 2024

Re: BC NDP Response to BIA BC

Dear Jeff Bray and BIA BC,

Thanks for the opportunity to engage with our province's business community. You've raised important questions and the BC NDP is pleased to provide answers below.

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1. **Do you support targeted investments to improve community safety, including the implementation of a comprehensive policy framework and investment that shifts the focus from just harm reduction to include prevention, treatment, and enforcement.**

Our urban centres are the beating heart of BC towns and cities, and we're determined to keep them vibrant, prosperous, and safe. That's why we are taking action on *all fronts* to save lives, fight crime, keep communities safe, and get people treatment so they can recover.

We have four former police officers running for us and guiding policy – three of them retired, decorated, senior officers – because we're tackling the root causes of crime by taking strong action to put people on a better path before they can become repeat offenders. We're expanding support for young people, opening new complex care housing, helping homeless youth via Covenant House, enhancing mental health and addictions treatment, and delivering evidence-based programs in corrections facilities to reduce recidivism. John Rustad's cuts would put all this progress at risk.

Prevention, treatment, and enforcement are all key components of the BC NDP's comprehensive approach required to improve the situation in our downtowns. We've hired over 250 police officers, and opened 600 new treatment beds with more on the way.

We are also opening new secure treatment facilities for people struggling the most and who aren't in a place to ask for treatment themselves – starting with Maple Ridge and Surrey before rolling out across BC.

We saw John Rustad's approach to this issue when he was last in government. Oversight of mental health and addictions treatment was eliminated, leaving communities to struggle with how to manage unregulated "treatment" homes that were too often run as drug dens by organized crime. Rustad was there when his government closed down Riverview without proper community support and cut youth treatment just as the toxic drug crisis was growing.

We need more quality prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction – not less. We can't afford to let John Rustad's BC Conservatives take us backward in the fight to protect our communities and support those struggling with addiction. That's why we will keep doing everything we can to fight this crisis and support local communities.

2. What are your specific plans to address mental health, addictions, and housing?

Our approach starts with prevention by providing supportive, safe and confidential mental health and addiction services to youth and their families. We've fast-tracked the development of Foundry Centres for Youth in communities across BC. And they're working well, with more than 17,500 people aged 12-24 and their families accessing critical mental health, addiction, and physical and sexual health services. We are moving forward with Foundry Centres in ten more communities – quadrupling the number since 2017.

The BC NDP Platform contains specific plans to address mental health, addictions, and housing including:

- Expanding mental health counseling care across BC by fueling the vital work of community-based mental health organizations through a new $50 million Community Mental Health Resilience Fund.
- Helping prevent the cycle of addiction by strengthening drug prevention education in BC schools. Built around providing supportive training and resources to all school staff, this approach is aimed at creating opportunities for children and youth to be engaged about how dangerous and toxic drugs are. And done in ways that are appropriate for their age and grade, and maximizes their odds of making good choices to protect themselves and their friends.
- Creating more access to high quality addiction treatment by strengthening local recovery homes, supporting First Nations treatment centres and Indigenous-led programming, and funding more at-home addiction treatment services. This will include more access to addiction treatment for youth, as well as culturally appropriate treatment programs.
- Removing barriers to treatment and keep families together through the recovery process by establishing residential treatment options that provide direct supports to parents undergoing addiction treatment.

- Breaking the chain of addictions leading to crime by setting up designated mental health units in correctional centres to provide rapid treatment for people with mental health and addiction challenges being held on remand or sentenced to custody by the courts.
- Providing secure, supportive and dignified care for people in BC whose struggles with brain injuries, severe mental health illness and addiction require intensive care.
- Expanding specialized treatment beds for people from across the province with both mental health and substance use disorders by building a second Red FishHealing Centre and additional "satellite" facilities.
- We will bring the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) program to more communities, in line with our provincial decampment strategy to get people inside. We'll work closely with communities on new housing options — and make sure new facilities have the staff, enforced good neighbour agreements, and locations to deliver successful outcomes for residents and the whole community.
- Fuelling the construction of more non-market housing. People in BC are paying too much for rent. In fact, 25% of renters are spending more than half their monthly income on it. We'll provide more land for nonmarket and co-op housing, build more homes on it, and help nonprofits take care of those homes

3. How will you achieve concrete results with the federal government to address the issue of chronic violent and non-violent offenders.

We know that repeat offenders are a significant problem, impacting communities all across BC.

We're doing our part in BC. We've launched 12 new dedicated teams of police, prosecutors, and probation officers, currently monitoring almost 400 offenders and driving down offence rates in real and measurable ways. BC's bail policy is now the strictest in the country, and due to our pressure, the feds have finally required violent repeat offenders to prove they should be released, not the other way around.

But there's still more to do. We'll keep up the pressure on Ottawa until we get the changes BC communities need.

The BC NDP Platform commits to continue our work on repeat offenders by:

- Stopping repeat offenders in their tracks by strengthening targeted policing, increasing funding for immediate police investigations, adding more comprehensive case management capacity for prosecutors, and expanding support for rehabilitative referrals.
- Keeping repeat violent and gang offenders off the streets by pushing Ottawa for stronger bail and sentencing conditions, along with easier access to

dangerous offender designations for violent people who need to stay behind bars.

John Rustad would cut the services that help prevent crime and keep people safe – just like his government did before when he repeatedly voted for budgets that slashed funding for crime prevention and victim support. His cuts would make crime and street disorder much worse. We can't afford that.

4. Will you support a review of the mandatory 5-day sick leave policy?

We're looking forward to working with businesses to find solutions to areas where outdated laws or regulations have made doing business unnecessarily difficult – that's why we're committed to undertaking an ease of business review to remove obstacles for business. But, there are also important policies we need to keep in place to support workers and keep them safe. Paid sick leave is one of them. With COVID, we saw how important it is to make sure workers are not at work when they are sick. We engaged with businesses and organizations on paid sick leave – some wanted more than five days of paid leave, and some wanted less.

5. Will you support improving the delivery of the Securing Small Business rebate?

Our ease of doing business review will look at both the rules and regulations that are creating issues for businesses, as well as provincial government programs designed to support businesses that are unnecessarily difficult to apply for or may not be working as well as they could. Our commitment is to work with key business organizations, individual business owners and entrepreneurs to identify and remove barriers to establishing or growing businesses here in British Columbia

6. Will you create a stand alone Ministry of Small Business?

Small businesses are diverse across this province in needs and priorities, and they will be supported through multiple ministry programs from tourism to forestry to agriculture and more. But we'll also make sure that there is a single minister with bottom line accountability for small businesses so you know who to turn to in order to navigate government.

From a BC NDP government you'll see tangible action that will support vibrant urban centres and help small businesses succeed.

One early example of this work is our commitment to cut red tape for BC restaurants, wineries, breweries and distilleries by modernizing liquor laws and licensing, including a move to risk-based licensing that encourages good business practices throughout the industry

You'll also see new support for the activities that bring people downtown, and into the businesses there. We'll build up the heart of our communities by investing in

the tourism, arts and culture activities people here – and those visiting here – love most. The BC NDP platform includes:

- An expanded Arts, Culture & Sports Infrastructure Fund that helps local community and cultural organizations bring people together, and inform, entertain and engage ever-widening audiences.
- Bringing people together to celebrate their communities, cultures and love of local arts by providing stable, year-over-year funding for fairs, festivals and events.