October 3, 2024

Jeff Bray, President
Business Improvement Areas of BC (BIABC)
jeff@downtownvictoria.ca

Dear Mr. Bray,

Thank you for reaching out to the Conservative Party of British Columbia with your important questions. We value the contribution of BIABC in supporting vibrant business communities, and we are pleased to respond to the pressing issues you have outlined. Below, we have provided our party's positions on each of the six questions you posed.

1. Community Safety

BC used to be a place where people felt safe leaving their doors unlocked. Today, the NDP's soft-on-crime policies allow criminals to roam free in search of law-abiding citizens to attack. Service workers fear for their safety on the job, horrifying stranger assaults have been normalized, and public trust in the justice system is shattered.

The Conservative Party of BC will restore law and order by reversing the reckless David Eby policies that have put criminals first and British Columbians last.

Here's how we will do it:

Safe Streets for Every British Columbian

Every British Columbian should feel safe in their community. If elected, we will do everything at our disposal to make sure police departments have the front-line officers and resources they need to keep British Columbians safe.

The NDP's disastrous social experiments have failed the vulnerable people they claim to help, while also causing chaos in our communities. And too often, properties owned or funded by the government have been part of the problem, not the solution. To bring safety back to our streets, the Conservative Party of BC will:

- Defend our police who risk their lives to keep us safe. We will have their backs.
- Hire more front-line officers in provincially-funded forces.
- Expand our capacity to train new police officers.
- End drug decriminalization and reject the dangerous Eby-Trudeau legalization experiment.
- Enforce mandatory mental health treatment for those who pose a danger to themselves and others.
- Have zero tolerance for criminal and nuisance behavior related to government-funded housing facilities.

Crushing Organized Crime and Drug Networks

BC is being flooded with deadly drugs like fentanyl, destroying lives and families. British Columbians expect their government to launch an all-out assault on drug smuggling and organized crime, targeting those who profit from poisoning our streets. The Conservative Party of BC will:

- Do everything in its power to crack-down on criminals who import and distribute deadly drugs like fentanyl.
- Work with the federal government to improve border integrity in both land and maritime environments.
- Secure our ports and fight for BC's fair share of federal resources to combat the organized crime networks causing so much devastation in our communities.
- Get deadly fentanyl off our streets by using every possible regulatory tool to crack-down on fentanyl precursor materials.

2. Mental Health, Addictions, and Housing

The Conservative Party of British Columbia is committed to breaking the cycle of crime and addiction. Rehabilitation and enforcement go hand-in-hand. A life diverted from crime and addiction is often a life saved. BC's Conservatives believe in giving individuals every opportunity to get their lives back on track, whether from crime, addiction, mental illness or trauma.
It's the right thing to do, and all of society benefits when the path to a healthy life is taken. Our hope is to create a province so prosperous that far fewer British Columbians find themselves in these difficult circumstances to begin with. But for those who want or need the help, we'll always make sure it's available. The Conservative Party of BC will:

- Integrate addiction and mental health treatment into the justice system and correctional system.

- We will offer real help to those who need it, while ensuring criminals face serious consequences.
- Enact world-leading rehabilitation practices to encourage exit from gang life.
- Support community policing which is foundational to trust-building local law enforcement.

3. Addressing Chronic Offenders

Concrete action is needed to stop the cycle of repeat offenses. Violent criminals are walking the streets instead of serving real jail time. The NDP's "catch-and-release" approach to justice has turned neighborhoods into danger zones. We've seen it over and over again, with tragic results: failure to punish bail violations puts the public at risk and undermines confidence in the administration of justice.

At the same time, our courts need to be equipped with the Judges and Sheriffs needed for the swift administration of justice. Just delayed is justice denied – for everyone.

The Conservative Party of BC will:

- Crack-down on bail offenders.
- Hire more Sheriffs and Judges to clear the massive court backlog.

Addressing the justice system's "revolving door" problem is key to restoring trust and security for small businesses, who should not bear the brunt of repeated vandalism and theft.

4. Review of the Mandatory Sick Leave Policy

A Conservative government will work with business leaders to explore fair options, while ensuring policies remain administratively simple and reduce financial liabilities for business owners.

5. Securing Small Business Rebate Program

We strongly support improving the delivery and access to the Securing Small Business Rebate Program and will extend it beyond January 2025. This program is vital to helping businesses recover from vandalism and property damage. A Conservative government will simplify the application process, increase awareness, and ensure that more businesses can benefit from this essential support. Our goal

is to make the program more accessible and beneficial to small businesses across the province.

6. Fighting for Small and Medium Sized Businesses

We will designate a Minister to be responsible for Red Tape reduction, and focus in particular on red tape reductions that would benefit small and medium sized businesses. Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of our provincial economy, and they deserve a government that fights for them. We will focus on the unique needs and challenges faced by small businesses, ensuring they have the support required to thrive. By elevating small businesses as a government priority, we will promote job creation, innovation, and long-term economic growth.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with BIABC and share our vision for restoring safety, supporting businesses, and ensuring the prosperity of British Columbia's business districts. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you require further details or clarification.

Sincerely,

John Rustad,
Leader, Conservative Party of British Columbia