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Mayor Ken Sim unveils Retail Security Task Force to address rise in theft

VANCOUVER, BC – Following the passage of a motion by Councillor Brian Montague, Mayor Ken Sim is launching the City’s new Retail Security Task Force, a coordinated initiative aimed at tackling the rise in retail theft and improving safety for workers, small businesses, and communities across Vancouver.

Cities across Canada are facing increasingly complex public safety challenges, including rising retail theft linked to organized crime and repeat offenders. In Vancouver, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) recorded 7,686 shoplifting incidents in 2024, an 11.7 per cent increase over the same period last year. However, police believe the true number may be significantly higher due to widespread underreporting.

“This isn’t just about stolen goods. It’s about protecting workers, standing up for local businesses, and making sure the people who keep our neighbourhoods thriving feel safe and supported,” said Mayor Ken Sim. “Retail theft is hurting communities across Vancouver, and we’re stepping up to tackle it head-on.”

The Retail Security Task Force will be a Mayor’s advisory group, bringing together a cross-sector group of stakeholders, including representatives from the VPD, business improvement associations, retailers, legal experts, social service providers, and the provincial government. Over the next six months, the task force will examine the root causes of retail theft, consult with impacted businesses and frontline staff, and study effective models in other jurisdictions. It will then deliver a report to Council with practical, evidence-based recommendations.

Since taking office, Mayor Sim and City Council have made public safety a top priority. For the first time in over a decade, the City has fully funded both the VPD and Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS). The City has also hired more than 200 new police officers and 35 mental health professionals, launched Task Force Barrage to disrupt organized crime in the Downtown Eastside, and expanded integrated crisis response teams citywide. Mayor Sim has also called for provincial mandatory care and bail reform for repeat offenders.

“We know these challenges didn’t start overnight, and we know they won’t be solved by one level of government alone,” added Mayor Sim. “But we’re not waiting around. We’re bringing together the right people, rolling up our sleeves, and getting to work to find real solutions.”

With this initiative, Mayor and Council are taking meaningful steps to stand up for businesses, workers, and neighbourhoods across the city, making Vancouver a safer place for everyone.

- 30 -

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