

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on April 2, 2025

1. **Supporting Local Businesses: A Proactive Approach to Retail Security**

Submitted by: Councillor Montague

WHEREAS

1. Retail merchants in the City of Vancouver, particularly in the downtown core, are experiencing an unprecedented increase in retail theft, leading to significant financial losses and jeopardizing their ability to continue operating;
2. Many businesses have reported that the severity and frequency of retail theft are unsustainable, with some facing potential closure as a result;
3. Business owners and their employees – many of whom are women and young people – are experiencing an escalation in violent interactions with increasingly unpredictable and brazen shoplifters;
4. Recent data presented by the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) shows an 11.7 per cent jump in reported shoplifting incidents city-wide in 2024: An increase to 7,686 reported incidents. This number is considered to be a small fraction of the total number due to significant under-reporting of shoplifting incidents¹;
5. Retail theft has far-reaching consequences, including economic losses, reduced consumer confidence, and negative impacts on public safety and community well-being;
6. Addressing retail theft effectively requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach involving key stakeholders, including business owners, law enforcement, social service agencies, municipal and provincial authorities; and
7. A dedicated Type D task force would provide a structured approach to engaging stakeholders, analyzing data, addressing complex issues, and developing actionable, evidence-based recommendations tailored to Vancouver's retail security needs.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council direct staff to establish a Type D task force titled the Retail Security Task Force, comprising representatives from the Vancouver Police Department (VPD), local business improvement associations (BIAs), retail merchants, legal experts, social service organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, including provincial government representatives.

¹ According to a BIV article, one retailer with two stores in the downtown area had 7,800 shoplifting incidents between those two stores over a one-year period, of which only 1,060 were reported. <https://www.biv.com/news/retail-manufacturing/vpd-hold-forum-for-200-retailers-aim-to-enhance-crime-reporting-10336535>

- B. THAT the Retail Security Task Force be tasked with conducting a thorough assessment of the root causes and impacts of retail theft, including but not limited to organized retail crime, social factors, enforcement challenges, and existing legislative and policy frameworks.
- C. THAT the task force engage with affected businesses, law enforcement, community organizations, and key stakeholders from other jurisdictions that have successfully mitigated retail theft to gather their input on best practices.
- D. THAT the task force prepare and submit a comprehensive report to Vancouver City Council within six (6) months of its formation, outlining its findings and providing evidence-based recommendations for immediate, short-term, and long-term solutions and strategies to reduce retail theft and enhance business security;

FURTHER THAT following presentation of the task force report, Vancouver City Council direct staff to explore potential funding and partnership opportunities with provincial and federal governments, as well as private sector stakeholders, to support the implementation of the task force's recommendations.

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