

Report For Information

Memo to: Impact of Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions Conditions on Business Task Force

From: Kelly Brooks, Director of Communications and Government Relations

Subject: Summary of Business Impact Survey: Safety, Cleanliness and Crime

Summary

This report provides a summary of the results of the Business Impact Survey: Safety, Cleanliness and Crime, which was conducted to gather a better understanding of how the challenges of homelessness, mental health and addictions conditions are affecting the local business community. 156 businesses participated in the survey. The full survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Methodology

The survey collected quantitative responses through a structured questionnaire which consisted of multiple-choice questions. Respondents were asked about the frequency and nature of the issues encountered and the impact on their operations. The survey also included questions which explored the actions businesses have taken, and the associated costs incurred.

Key Findings

Business Location and Representation:

The majority of respondents (54.49 per cent) were located in Downtown Sudbury, followed by the South End (12.82 per cent), Donovan/Flour Mill (11.54 per cent), and New Sudbury (8.33 per cent). Smaller proportions represented the West End, Minnow Lake and surrounding communities such as Valley East and Chelmsford.

Frequency and Increase of Incidents:

More than half of the respondents (55.13 per cent) reported that issues related to crime, drug use and cleanliness affect their business daily, and another 24.36 per cent indicated weekly impacts. In the past six months, 85.26 per cent of businesses noticed an increase in these issues.

Types of Situations Encountered:

Businesses most frequently reported:

- Hazardous or unsanitary conditions (84.62 per cent), including human waste, needles and garbage.
- Drug-related activity (81.41 per cent) in and around business areas.
- Property damage (64.74 per cent), harassment or verbal abuse (54.49 per cent), and theft or shoplifting (37.82 per cent).
- Physical assault (16.67 per cent), though less common, was also noted as a concern.

Impact on Business Operations:

The survey identified broad range of impacts on workplace safety, costs and community perception:

- Safety concerns for staff or customers (88.46 per cent).
- Negative perception of areas in which the businesses are located (72.44 per cent).
- Increased business costs related to security, repairs and sanitation (57.69 per cent).
- Staff stress or turnover (50.64 per cent) reduced customer traffic (44.23 per cent) and financial losses (36.54 per cent) were also reported.
- 21.15 per cent experienced an increase in insurance premiums, while 5.13 per cent reported no significant impacts.

Observations and Patterns

Response Actions:

Businesses have implemented various strategies to respond to safety and cleanliness issues:

- 65.38 per cent introduced security measures, such as cameras, alarms or guards.
- 50 per cent contacted the police non-emergency line, whereas 42.95 per cent called 911.
- 25.64 per cent contacted the City of Greater Sudbury (311), while 17.95 per cent used online crime reporting tools.
- Around 14 per cent adjusted operating hours, and 13.4 per cent offered direct assistance to individuals.
- 9.62 per cent reached out to social service programs, and 4.49 per cent had moved their business to a different location entirely.

Financial Burden:

A significant number of businesses have incurred additional costs in response to these challenges:

- 23.72 per cent spent between \$5,000 and \$10,000, and 22.44 per cent spent \$1,000 to \$5,000.
- 12.82 per cent reported costs ranging from \$10,000 to \$50,000, while 3.21 per cent exceeded \$50,000 in expenses.
- About 19 per cent were unsure of the total amount, and 10.26 per cent reported no direct costs.

Conclusion

The findings reflect a community-wide, growing and persistent concern within Greater Sudbury's business community about the effects of crime, cleanliness and related social issues. Businesses, particularly in the downtown core, are facing ongoing disruptions tied to homelessness, substance use, and mental health conditions. Most businesses have taken steps independently to protect their staff and property, often incurring financial costs to maintain operations. The data from the survey indicates a pattern of escalating concern among local business owners.