

October 14, 2026

Honourable Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
P.O. Box 9058 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2
Email: SDPR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

RE: Provincial Action Needed to Protect Uptown Rutland Businesses

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Uptown Rutland Business Association (URBA), we are writing to request provincial action on the growing impacts of social disorder affecting businesses and property owners in the Uptown Rutland Business Area.

URBA's mandate is to promote and advocate for matters of common concern and interest to businesses and property owners in our area. It is in this capacity that we raise concerns about the impacts being experienced by our members.

Since the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction relocated its Kelowna Employment and Assistance office from Dilworth Drive to **405 Highway 33 West in spring 2023**, businesses and property owners in the surrounding area have repeatedly reported increased theft, vandalism, public drug use, discarded needles and other forms of social disorder.

These incidents have real consequences. Businesses face increased costs for security, clean-up and property damage, while some report reduced customer activity. Small businesses are not equipped or resourced to manage complex social issues, nor should they be expected to absorb their financial and operational consequences indefinitely.

We recognise that the Ministry office is not the cause of homelessness, addiction, mental-health challenges or crime. These are symptoms of broader societal issues with no easy answers. We thank the professionals across healthcare, law enforcement, the judicial system and government who are working to address the root causes.

While that long term work continues, our members need help managing the immediate impacts they are experiencing today.

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1. Review the Highway 33 Office

We ask the Province to conduct a formal review of the **location and community impacts of the Income and Disability Assistance office at 405 Highway 33 West**. The review should assess whether the location remains appropriate and whether adequate measures are in place to mitigate impacts on surrounding businesses and property owners.

If the office remains at its current location, we ask the Province to work with URBA, the City of Kelowna and affected businesses to develop a specific mitigation plan.

The Province selected this location. It should therefore take an active role in understanding and addressing its impacts.

2. Support Community Safety Initiatives

URBA and local businesses have already taken action. URBA has relaunched its **On-Call program**, providing a visible presence and responding to incidents of social disorder, and established a **Street Clean Team** to address garbage, graffiti and debris. Individual businesses have also invested in cameras, physical security, property improvements and additional security services.

These efforts help protect the business community, but they come at a cost and cannot replace government responsibility.

We ask the Province to provide meaningful support for community safety measures, including security, clean-up, graffiti and vandalism remediation, needle and hazardous-material removal, and other initiatives developed in partnership with URBA and the City.

3. Establish Accountability to the Communities Carrying These Impacts

Businesses and property owners experiencing these impacts need a meaningful voice in how they are addressed.

We ask the Province to establish an ongoing mechanism for engagement with URBA, affected businesses, property owners and the City of Kelowna. This should provide a clear process for raising concerns, receiving responses and reviewing whether mitigation measures are working.

The Province should also report transparently on the impacts and effectiveness of measures associated with the Highway 33 office. Success should ultimately be measured by whether conditions for surrounding businesses and the community improve.

We recognize that broader solutions require action beyond URBA's mandate. In this regard, we support the **City of Kelowna's advocacy for additional healthcare resources and Crown prosecutors** to address the underlying challenges contributing to social disorder and repeat offending.

Conclusion

Our role is not to prescribe solutions to homelessness, addiction, mental health, crime or the justice system. Our role is to advocate for the businesses and property owners we represent.

Our members are experiencing the consequences now. While governments and professionals continue addressing the root causes, we need the Province to help address the impacts being carried by our business community.

We respectfully request a meeting with the appropriate Minister and senior officials to discuss the Highway 33 office, support for community safety initiatives, and a meaningful accountability framework.

Uptown Rutland businesses are doing their part. We are asking the Province to do its part.

Sincerely,



Justin Bullock

President,

Uptown Rutland Business Association

On behalf of the Board of Directors

c.c. All MLAs and Provincial election candidates