

Commumunity Safety

Business Engagement Summary Report

February 2026



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Introduction

Community safety is of growing concern to residents (see: [Citizen Survey](#)) and a top City Council priority, representing a significant share of annual investment.

In response to concerns heard from the business community about a recent rise in social disorder, vandalism, and related issues in the Downtown area, the City conducted engagement to gather input on community safety and to better understand what safety-related actions the community would like the City to prioritize.

In-Person

- ▶ On January 27, the City of Kelowna hosted an in-person forum for the Kelowna business community to share their thoughts and priorities on safety. Attendees also heard from City leaders, RCMP, and Provincial partners about efforts underway and were able to ask questions.

Online

- ▶ An online survey was open from January 27 – February 10, complementing the in-person business owner engagement and offering an opportunity for all Kelowna residents to provide feedback.

All participants were asked to identify:

1. Priority actions the City should focus on within its scope
2. Which uniformed resources should be prioritized
3. Additional actions or considerations related to community safety and street disorder

This report summarizes key themes and trends from the online and in-person engagement and is intended to reflect community input as it was provided.



Overview of Participation

There were approximately 230 attendees at the in-person Community Safety Business Forum. In addition, a total of 134 survey responses were received during the online engagement period. Respondents included business owners, residents, and other community members, offering insight into both business-specific impacts and broader perceptions of safety across the city. The majority of online survey respondents (85%) indicated they were not business owners.

What we heard

1. Priority Actions the City Should Focus on Within Its Scope

All participants were asked to select up to three actions they believe the City should prioritize within its scope. Results reflect the total number of times each option was selected.

Figure 1. Actions prioritized by in-person participants

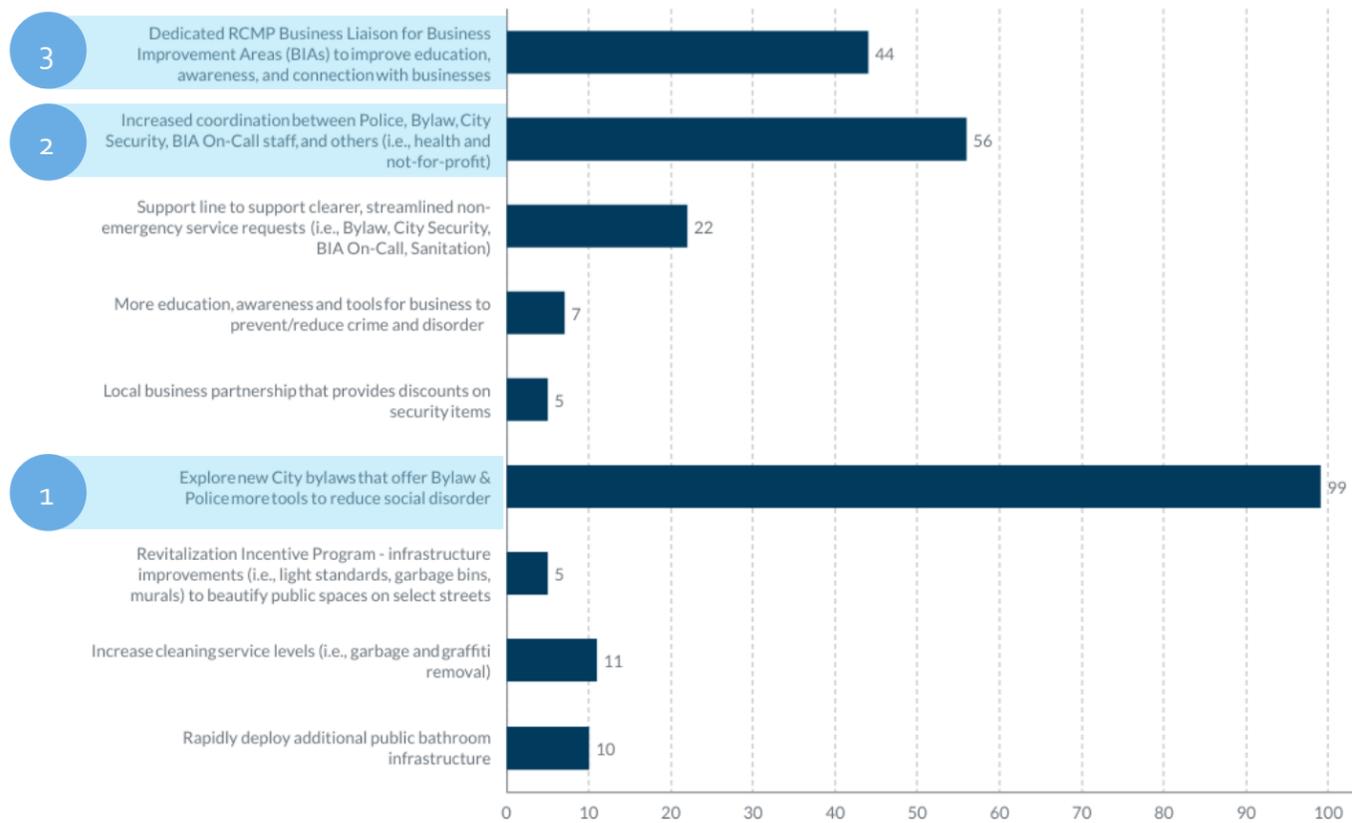
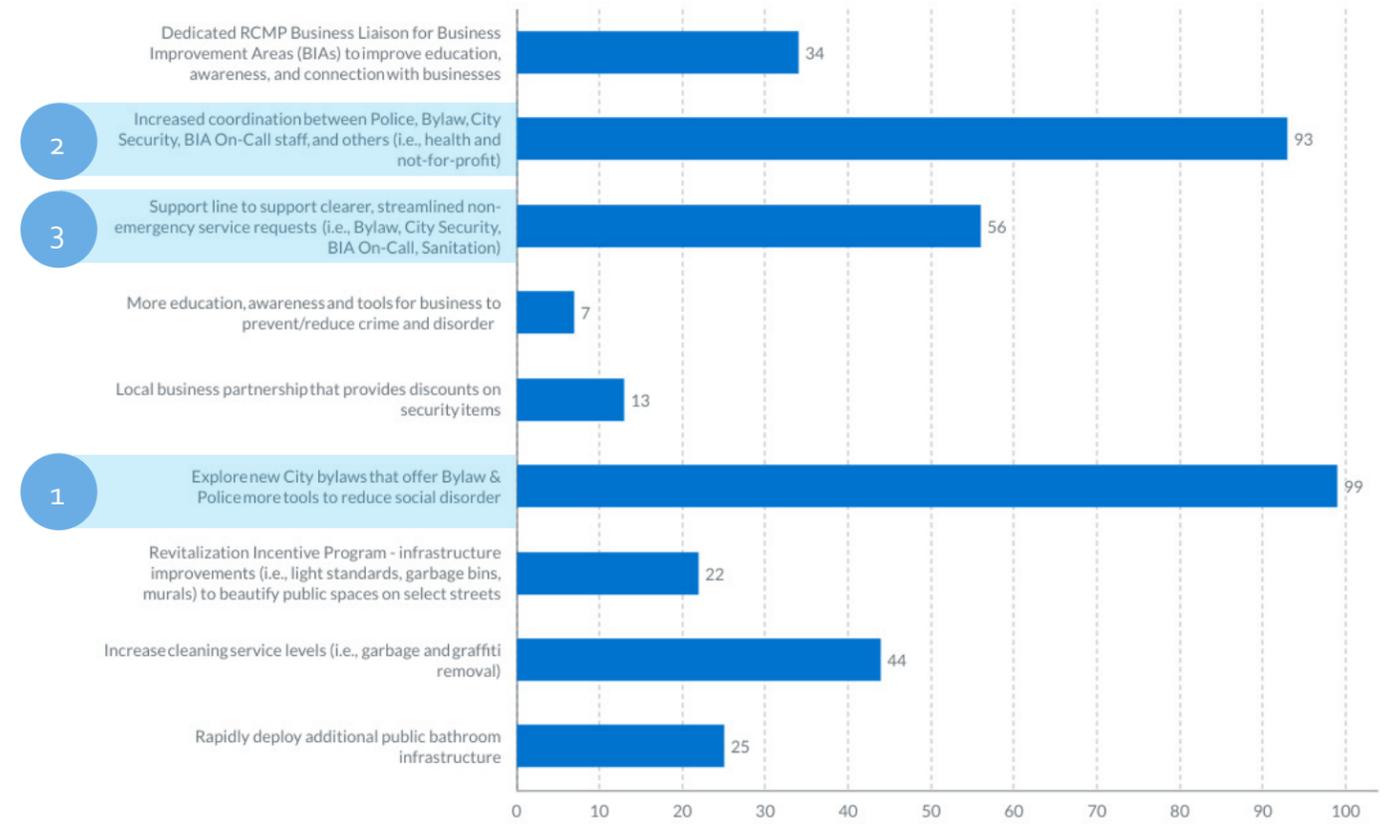
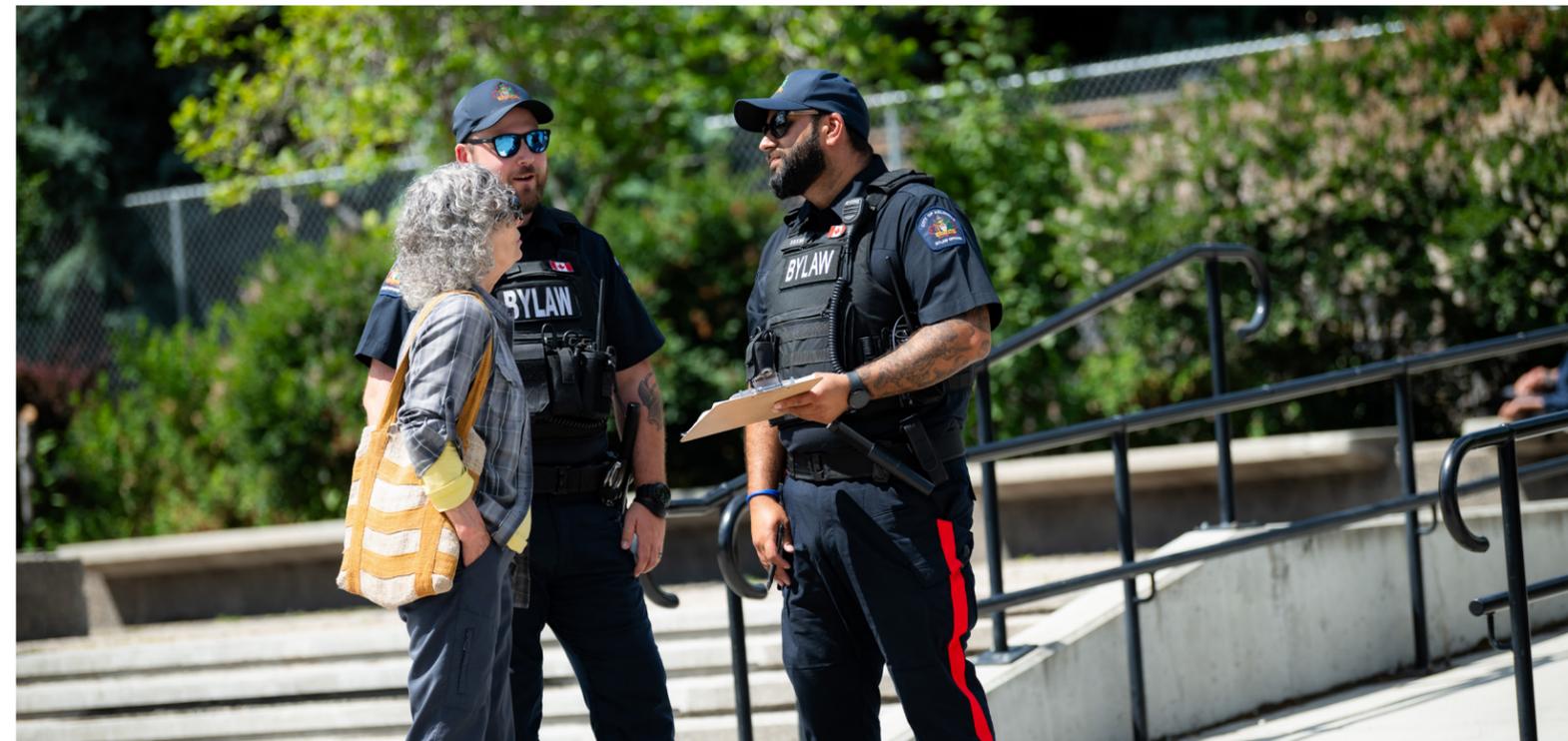


Figure 2. Actions prioritized by online participants



Both groups said their two top priorities were new City bylaws and increased coordination between various groups. Survey respondents' third priority was a support line, whereas forum attendees' third priority was a dedicated RCMP Business Liaison, consistent with the primary audience for the in-person session.



2. Which Uniformed Resources Should Be Prioritized

Participants were asked to identify their topmost priority for uniformed resources to help improve safety and address street disorder. Dollar signs accompanied the options listed in order to represent the varying levels of investment required for each resource.

Figure 3. Uniformed resources prioritized by in-person participants

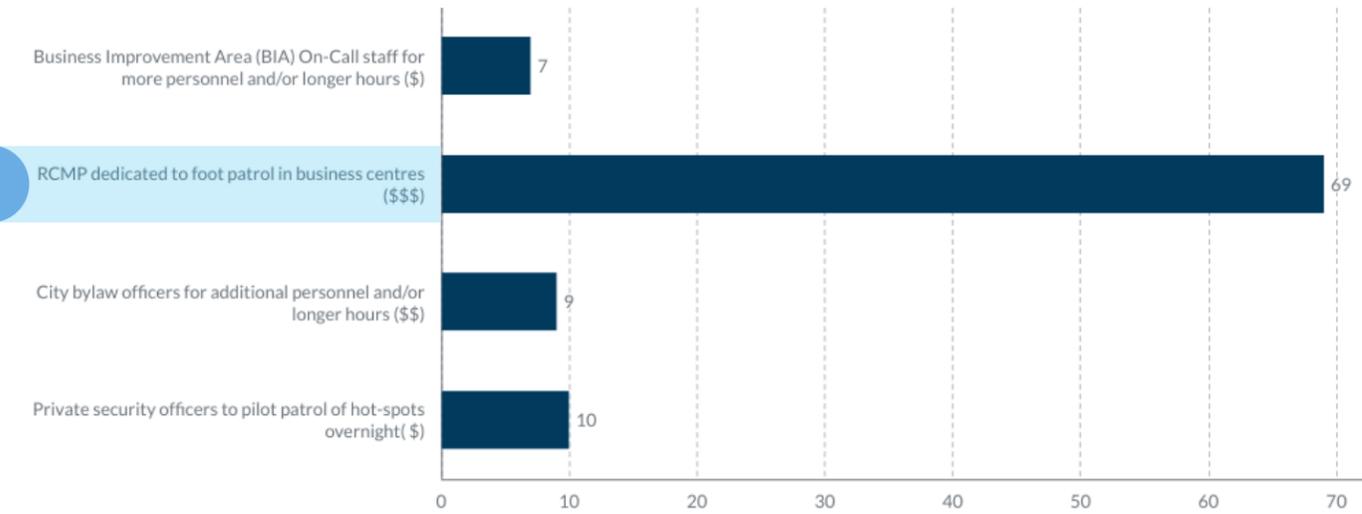
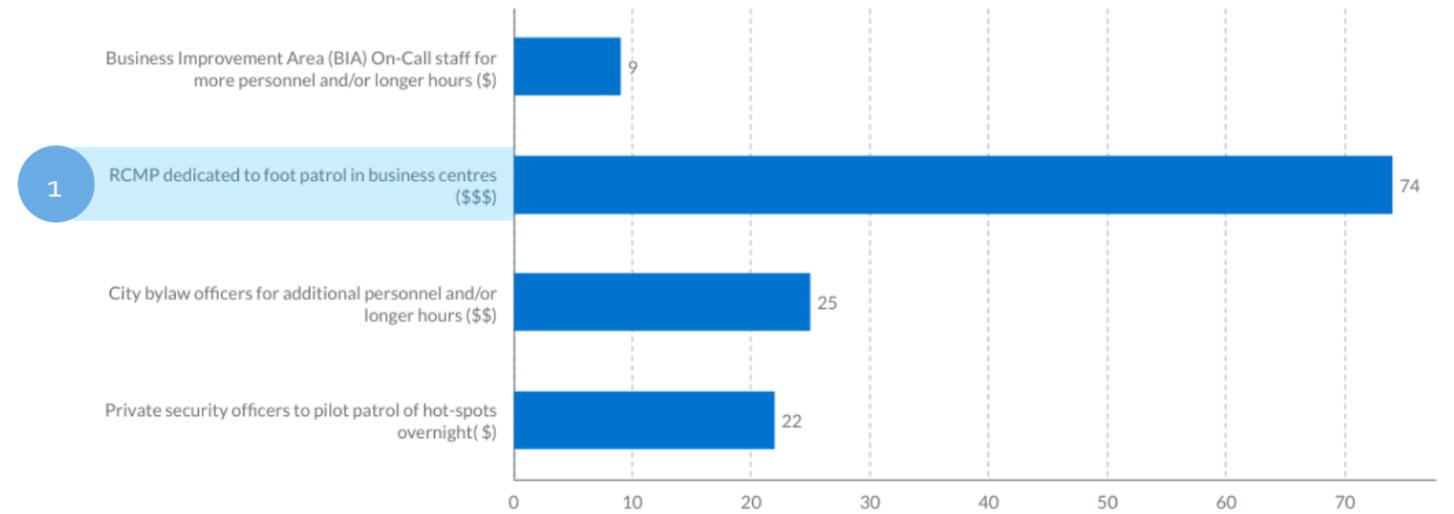


Figure 4. Uniformed resources prioritized by online participants



There was a clear preference among both groups for RCMP dedicated to foot patrol in business centres, which was selected significantly more often than other options. Other resources—such as City Bylaw Officers, private security patrols, and BIA On-Call staff respectively—were selected less frequently.



3. Additional Actions or Considerations Related to Community Safety and Street Disorder

In addition to structured questions, participants were invited to share any other actions or considerations related to community safety and street disorder. A total of 42 comments were provided in-person and 104 comments were provided via the online survey.

While individual responses varied, several consistent themes emerged across the qualitative feedback, both in person and online:

Justice system and accountability

- ▶ Many respondents expressed concern about repeat offenders and what they perceive as a lack of consequences for criminal behaviour. Comments frequently referenced bail practices, prosecution capacity, and frustration with individuals repeatedly cycling through the justice system.

Mental health, addiction, and treatment supports

- ▶ A significant number of respondents emphasized the need for increased access to mental health services, “detox”, rehabilitation, and longer-term treatment options. These supports were often described as critical to addressing the root causes of street disorder rather than relying solely on enforcement.

Shelter, housing, and service configuration

- ▶ Respondents raised issues related to shelter availability, housing options, and how the location or concentration of services can impact surrounding areas. Several comments focused on the need for better alignment between housing, treatment, and enforcement approaches.

Visibility, response, and safety in public spaces

- ▶ Consistent with the quantitative results, many comments reinforced the importance of visible patrols, quicker response times, and consistent presence in downtown and other high-impact areas, including evenings and weekends.

Cleanliness, lighting, and public realm conditions

- ▶ Concerns about garbage, graffiti, drug paraphernalia, lighting, and general upkeep were common. Forum attendees shared additional concerns about camping on boulevards, shopping carts along key corridors, the need to maintain sidewalks/doorways. Respondents linked these conditions directly to perceptions of safety, comfort, and the viability of business areas.

In addition to the above, the forum participants wanted to see:

Expanded bylaw authority & enforcement tools

- ▶ Calls for stronger municipal enforcement powers and bylaw support for frontline safety outcomes.

Downtown/business-area on-call coverage & hours

- ▶ Strong support for expanding Downtown Kelowna Business Association / Uptown Rutland Business Association on-call programs and restoring/strengthening coverage, including longer hours or 24/7 support within business areas.

Inter-agency coordination & communications

- ▶ A recurring “systems” theme—people want clearer coordination and communication among City, RCMP, health, housing, and social services.

Conclusion

Both online and in-person engagement results show strong alignment across participants around the need for coordinated cross-system action, visible uniformed presence, and practical measures to address both immediate safety concerns and longer-term drivers of social disorder.

Quantitative results highlight clear priorities within the City’s scope – particularly coordination, bylaw tools, and cleaning, along with a strong preference for RCMP foot patrols in business centres. Qualitative feedback reinforces these findings and emphasizes broader system challenges related to justice, treatment, housing, and public space conditions.

Together, this input provides a foundation to inform ongoing work to improve community safety and support a safer, more welcoming environment for businesses, residents, and visitors.

Based on feedback received through this engagement process, the City quickly implemented a temporary overnight security program and a “Who to call, when to call” social media campaign to help people identify what resource is best suited for different situations – and keep 911 free for emergencies. In addition, feedback provided by businesses in the lead-up to the Forum led to the creation of a Business Security Enhancement Rebate Program from the City. This Program aims to support businesses through a no-cost Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design audit of their premises and the opportunity to offset the cost of implementing recommended security measures for eligible businesses. In February, Mayor Dyas was in Ottawa and Victoria advocating for urgent criminal justice reform, as well as expanded healthcare supports and services – which fall within the mandate of the Province and Federal governments.

Next steps include:

- ▶ continuation of police / Bylaw foot patrols and enhanced focus on illegal sheltering;
- ▶ a review of current service levels for timely cleaning and removal of abandoned materials Downtown;
- ▶ implementation of the Business Security Enhancement Rebate Program;
- ▶ a review of bylaws to explore new tools for Bylaw and police to affect social disorder; and
- ▶ launch of the announced Business CCTV Program to expedite business video evidence for police investigations;
- ▶ continued advocacy for necessary justice and health improvements, including bail legislation reform, increased prosecutors locally, and a regional compassionate mandatory care facility.
- ▶ further reinforcement of BIA “On-Call” Ambassador Programs;



Public outreach

Date	Tactic	Impressions/Reach	Engagement
January 16	News release	5,045 sent	2,964 opens; 59 clicks
January 27	Handout	~230 distributed	54 QR code scans
January 28	News release	6,211 sent	3,605 opens; 49 clicks
January 28	Organic social post (LinkedIn)	2,244 views; 1,427 reach	138 clicks
January 28	Organic social post (Facebook)	3,674 views; 2,313 reach	183 clicks
January 28	Organic social post (Instagram)	2,366 views; 1,372 reach	20 interactions
January 30	Organic social story (Instagram)	371 views; 353 reach	N/A
January 30	E-newsletter	3,639 sent	2,072 opens; 56 clicks
February 2	Organic social post (LinkedIn)	1,469 views; 978 reach	48 clicks
February 2	Organic social post (Facebook)	13,288 views; 8,141 reach	751 clicks
February 2	Organic social post (Instagram)	8,206 views; 4,165 reach	95 interactions
February 3-10	Kelowna.ca homepage highlight	N/A	N/A
February 9	Organic social story (Instagram)	515 views; 499 reach	N/A



Appendix A: Participant Questions

Ninety-five questions were received in total, as shown below. Responses were posted on Get Involved. Due to volume, commonly recurring questions from the Forum were selected for response.

Submitted via	Question
Forum	I'm interested in how the City is identifying which safety issues are symptoms of capacity gaps (lighting, public space design, services, coordination, response time) versus those requiring enforcement. Specifically, how community input is translated into prioritization decisions, how success is measured over time, and how the City ensures short-term responses don't crowd out longer-term, preventative system improvements.
Forum	Why are we spreading services for the unhoused throughout the downtown core instead of centralizing it in logical locations where shelters are? Food services moved in front of Kelowna Community Theatre and the only entrance of the Black Box Theatre -why?
Forum	Why can't the outdoor shelter be moved AWAY from the downtown core and where families recreate? Tax and donor dollars were raised to fund a public rail trail, NOT an outdoor shelter.
Forum	We need more safe places for vulnerable folks to be, and ways for them to get there, so that when they are moved along from downtown businesses they have somewhere to go. Without this, moving people along will continue to be a revolving door of shuffling the problem along.
Forum	We need 24 hour bathrooms available in the downtown core. Why are they so limited? People need to defecate and without options...how can they be blamed?
Forum	You said the unhoused can go to the rail trail designated area..but what about daytime when the overnight folks have to vacate the site? Those human Canadian citizens deserve the dignity of somewhere they can be.
Forum	We are struggling in our current state with our existing processes and police force. How do we plan on coping with the influx of the unhoused community we see every summer?
Forum	In 2019 a crew of City maintenance workers operating small street sweepers, Red Shirts, bylaw patrol officers and RCMP led by Cst. Greg "Woody" Woodcox who cleared people out of business fronts every day. Furthermore, Woody got to know every homeless person on our streets in the downtown. What changed?
Forum	Why can't the law be changed to allow the RCMP charge people? It works in other Provinces.
Forum	Shopping carts are key core of their survival in the streets. This keeps them away from publicity funded shelters. Does our police or city have a plan to enforce on removal of these stolen carts?
Forum	What about business owners outside DKA hours? I've never had police support after hours despite having security measures. With lights attracting people and being near TD Bank, who can I rely on for support? People using right beside and on my business where I park etc.
Forum	CoK why not investigate Penticton and PG model of AI CCTV This is interpretative and notifies RCMP prior thereby reducing crime. I sent an email to CoK and Mayor and Council. Registering business CCTV with limited footage shows crime after the fact AI CCTV is a no brainer - works well -Penticton
Forum	More RCMP will obviously help. How will the additional cost be offset? And, what changes in laws are going to happen to keep the guilty parties incarcerated and not released immediately after being detained?
Forum	Will the RCMP, the city, or the province consider implementing a tiered policing or peace officer program like Alberta's approach to public safety?
Forum	What is being done to stop the flow of drugs from the top down such as gangs and traffickers. Clearly the flow of drugs to these camps is coming from an outside source.

Forum	Fentanyl, fentanyl, fentanyl. Without it, most problems we are discussing would be no longer. Should we focus on making fentanyl trafficking a major crime?
Forum	We supply unlimited amount of narcan kits to everyone with our tax paid dollars. These are costing our government a lot of money. With the new law taking place in Jan 31, will this change as well?
Forum	How will we reduce the attraction of drug addicts to Kelowna when we are building a new Wet Facility in town?
Forum	What is the recovery rate of fentanyl addiction?
Forum	Why are we not taking these people to rehab? Why is the interior health supplying drugs to these vulnerable people. Don't you think you are making it worse and perpetuating the problem?
Forum	What is the status of community courts in our community?
Forum	Is there new hope that the courts will stop the revolving door for the repeat offenders?
Forum	Who hires new prosecutors?
Forum	Why is there money to add more police officers and bylaw but no money for prosecution?
Forum	How do we get more federal prosecutors?
Forum	Is the Oliver correctional facility being suggested for compassionate mandatory care? How would that work under the present infrastructure and staffing that the facility uses?
Forum	Those suffering social disorder is often referred to having mental health issues. But what about the mental health issues that local businesses and employees and employers are suffering from the increase in violence and social disorder in the community.
Forum	How do complex care units work?
Forum	What can be done to help the folks that will never be able to go into supportive housing given their addictions to fentanyl. Will they be left on the streets indefinitely if no help can be accepted?
Forum	At what point is an individual addicted to drugs no longer capable of making decisions about their lifestyle - when can we mandate them into treatment?
Forum	How can the City reasonably expect downtown business owners to comply with all regulations, pay taxes, and absorb the impact yet continue to issue fines and penalties for minor infractions such as false alarm permits, garbage bin bylaws, or parking without addressing the root safety issues!
Forum	Welfare payments and fully subsidized rental suites, funded by taxpayers, while allowing active drug use on-site with no requirement for treatment or progress toward recovery? Why are taxpayers funding long-term housing, meals, and services are still under offered under the name of supportive housing.
Forum	Why doesn't the City beef up its loitering bylaws and impose penalties including potential imprisonment under the Offence Act thereby giving its Bylaw Officers the power to move people along - instead of complaining that it's powerless?
Forum	How can we standardize responses to common incidents across businesses to educate troublemakers about consequences?
Forum	The one outdoor location you are encouraging people to move towards is behind other north end businesses. How are they to deal with the ripple effects of that outdoor location now and moving forward?

Forum	Does the City look at what kind of business is opening and where? It was obvious that a low cost coffee/food place downtown was going to be an issue...I don't think there is a single person who didn't know opening a low cost food establishment on Bernard would not lead to problems.
Forum	Why did it take widespread frustration across the entire downtown community for our concerns to be acknowledged and addressed? Why has this process taken so long, and how does the City plan to restore trust moving forward?
Forum	Who holds the non-profits in the City of Kelowna accountable?
Forum	Who holds interior health accountable in the City of Kelowna?
Forum	Can we get a commitment from the panelists to work together to cut through red tape to affect actual change through collaboration and accountability to each other and the public? We are looking for action and accountability - instead of saying we want to can we hear we will?
Forum	Could each member of the panel state one action item for this group of engaged citizens to take forward.
Forum	How many more RCMP officers do we need to be able to respond faster? If it's 60,000 calls surely you can do the math? More than the 33 added since 2023?
Forum	How are more arrests going to stop the cycles and symptoms of systematic poverty?
Forum	What is the current establishment of members assigned to Kelowna City Detachment? What are the current hard and soft member vacancies at Kelowna City Detachment?
Forum	Do the local pawn shops cooperate with the police as far as stolen goods are received and sold?
Forum	What is the status of the gang impact in our city?
Forum	If we are receiving police call volumes bigger than Richmond and Coquitlam, do we have a police force that's proportional to our 60k+ calls?
Forum	If the Kelowna RCMP have like 50 cells that aren't filled. Why can't we hold people there?
Forum	Is staffing for police adjusted for when support checks are dispersed? Generally, there is a spike the day and the week after.
Forum	How many RCMP staff are there in Kelowna, and how is that breakdown: admin staff versus staff investigating files? Additionally, how many police officers are in cars on the beat and out in public on average each day?
Forum	Can RCMP resources be reallocated to the communities with the highest incident rates? Ie. to Kelowna away from lower mainland communities with lower case rates?
Forum	We can't talk about crime & not mention gangs whose violent coercion & debt collection tactics are to blame for street crimes of desperation. But few businesses participate in the inadmissible patron program.
Forum	How can we get more businesses to make Kelowna unwelcome & resist laundering dirty cash?
Forum	These problems are massive and the "solutions" haven't been solving, with catch and immediate release being our provincial standard, are you concerned at all about vigilantism.
Forum	What is being done to stop the flow of drugs from the top down such as gangs and traffickers. Clearly the flow of drugs to these camps is coming from an outside source.
Forum	Fentanyl, fentanyl, fentanyl. Without it, most problems we are discussing would be no longer. Should we focus on making fentanyl trafficking a major crime?

Forum	Effective prosecution of offenders seems to be a challenge and this significantly impacts our local businesses. If 15 repeat offenders were responsible for approx 1,500 (or so) reports, how many of those would be in the 1,800 supported charges? And what is the crown doing to increase effectiveness?
Forum	The repeat offenders do not fear arrest because the penalties are not stiff enough. What is the solution to change the judicial system so that there could be significant penalties and enforce them? Say a minimum 10 year sentence if caught selling illegal drugs.
Forum	Bail reform is important! What about sentencing? Consequences do not match the repeat crimes.
Forum	What's the annual burdened cost of 10 new prosecutors?
Forum	Minister Yung, after 10 years in power, what tangible actions is your government taking to make Kelowna safer and when will residents see results?
Forum	Minister Yung, when is the province going to hire more crown prosecutors?
Forum	What actions is the province taking to address the gap identified by the RCMP Superintendent that occurs after an arrest and processing of an offender?
Forum	Will Minister Yung advocate for mandatory involuntary compassionate care?
Forum	Of the 180 rapid shelter units at three different sites - are all inhabited? If not what percentage are utilized?
Forum	Can the city of Kelowna put more public washrooms in place?
Forum	Do folks all know that there is no water available for folks who overnight at the rail trail. None? How is that providing services?
Forum	When someone has an uncomfortable situation happening outside their business what is the FIRST step we should take?
Forum	If the stats show that the majority of the crime is by the same 15-30 people, why can't we arrest these people?
Forum	Why does downtown Kelowna still not have dedicated 24/7 foot patrols when most break ins, vandalism, and fires occur overnight?
Forum	Is there any idea of how many crimes go unreported? It should be a consideration to encourage everyone experiencing a crime to report it for 1 month so that you really do get an accurate picture of what the issues are....
Forum	As of Jan 31st, public drug use is illegal. Are signs or suspicion of public drug use illegal as well?
Forum	When are going to get the additional prosecutors? When are we getting more addition rehab services?
Forum	Is mandatory care legal in Canada and BC, and if so when can it begin?
Forum	What's the difference between mandatory compassionate care and incarceration?
Forum	Why are we permitting tents and shelters to go up all over the city? Sidewalks, boulevards, business entryways. Does the city not have a bylaw that designates where temporary shelter can be erected? And if so, why is that bylaw not being enforced?
Forum	Our property taxes almost doubled in the last few years and has made it more expensive to run our business. A portion of the increased taxes should go to police walking around downtown constantly to make our customers feel safe when they visit us.
Forum	What are us Business Owners to do NOW in the absence of timely response..?

Forum	Who on this stage is accountable for community safety? If everyone owns it, no one does.
Get Involved	Now that decriminalization has been deemed a failure, can we expect enforcement on public drug use? In recent years it's become more common to see people smoking crack pipes downtown than cigarettes. People are often overdosing in public and being left to sober up or being narcanned and left downtown. Will there be a time people can be taken off the street when publicly intoxicated?
Get Involved	Is it reasonable to expand the services of the DKA red and blue shirt teams up to Gordon, and between Harvey and Clement? There are businesses on the "fringe" that don't have access to these services but are plagued with the same issues as the main streets of downtown.
Get Involved	What is being done to deal with the bus loads of homeless from the GVA in advance of the FIFA this summer? Can we send them back? Can we investigate and prove this is happening?
Get Involved	What is preventing the province from hiring more prosecutors and judges?
Get Involved	The drug crisis is not new and the dealers continue to prey on the vulnerable population. It is apparent that consequences are not enough to deter dealers as the risk vs reward is heavily in their favour. What is needed to hold these accountable and is this a Crown Issue or Criminal Code issue?
Get Involved	Why can't offenders and users serve their sentences while also receiving help? Why can't we rebuild our services and create jobs in detox, nursing, and healthcare by utilizing the beds in our jails that currently sit empty? This seems better than putting up more buildings and wasting more taxpayer money.
Get Involved	From what I hearing the business owners want to know who is moving the unhoused from their store front TOMORROW morning? Who do they call? Right now they feel obligated to do. Thank you!
Get Involved	Is there an ongoing commitment for panelists to work together formally to collectively tackle the problem Can we hear a commitment for collaboration today?
Get Involved	Is the City monitoring the number of unhoused that have come from other Provinces or cities. Are there any safeguards to ensure we are supporting the unhoused from our community first
Get Involved	1 in 2 primary care visits in this province is for mental/behavioral health. 75% of people who died by overdose saw their primary care provider in the year prior to their death seeking treatment. Recent data show that 1 in 3 visits to ER visits are now for mental health in the interior. Despite a 50 million dollar commitment to increase access to psychological services last year - 12 months in not 1 dollar has been spent. What can the minister say about this funding as a part of the solution.
Get Involved	When are the red coats coming to my area..the corner of bernard and gordon..my co workers and myself are afraid to go to work we are tied. Everyday we face the unhoused sleeping or doing drugs on our doorstep..I have over 75 calls into the police asking for help.. myself and my coworkers have dealt with this for 5 years and are tired of this our mental health is being affected..is there any help red coats please help us..we ask the unfocused people where they are from if we can and many are from out of town being bussed here .Who is authorizing this and allowing them into kelowna..
Get Involved	BYLAW OFFICERS in the City of Kelowna are scheduled to cover the hours of 6am to 12 Midnight daily. Currently there are 44? Officers employed by the City. The majority of issues that Businesses are experiencing (Property Crime) are occurring between the hours of midnight and 6am. Why? Is there not a Team of Bylaw Officers active during the times of midnight & 6am? City payroll is very high and a redistribution / audit of payroll dollars to address this issue is a very real solution.
Get Involved	Why are we not qualifying individuals who get services and free meals? I personally know the food bank and gospel mission are being abused. Many people come from other areas and provinces and we feel obliged to help everyone. We have to be able to tell someone who comes here from another city or province " sorry all our services are full" and " you have to go back where you came from" or we we'll never be able to look after this situation. We need to look after our own citizens first.

Get Involved	Residents need justice and support too, not just businesses. What are only downtown business areas part of the discussion/survey for increased services. This impacts the residents in the area as well. On St Paul near Metro, residents have to zig zag across streets to avoid bodies on the ground and since the cleanup at the rail trail, people are sleeping or using in groups all over from Recreation ave down to Doyle. Soon The rail trail reroute on Cawston will need a reroute.
Get Involved	Why is Kelowna not protecting those who support the city who pay to live here? I moved here mid July. Have seen syringes on the ground, people injecting themselves in public, smoking crack in public, homeless sleeping where ever they please. This city is far from what is advertised. I find it disgusting in places. I have travelled all over the world and have never seen such behaviour. A city one is afraid to go out after dark. Second most dangerous city list in Canada. Not something to be proud of.
Get Involved	Why can't the city remove the people living in store fronts? The down town core is filled with unruly drug addicts who have taken over certain parts of the city. New high rises are going up with homeless people using store fronts as bathrooms. Homeless are starting fires smashing windows and causing small businesses to leave. Small businesses owners have put the heart, sole and life savings into their business only to have it ruined. Why hasn't anyone done anything to protect the tax payers?