



Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce
Safety, Maintenance & Parking Committee - Engagement with Membership
March 12, 2024
Re: Crime and Theft

What we heard:

- Downtown businesses have seen a drastic increase in theft. Offenders are much more emboldened than in the past (where they would be sneaky or at least try to hide their actions). In some ways it seems more targeted and organized. It seems shoplifters do not care about being caught, and know there is very little legal recourse to their actions.
- Business owners have very little power to stop shoplifting and they do not want their employees to engage in physical altercations.
- Physical and Psychological safety issues: staff feel threatened and unempowered to approach and confront shoplifters.
- Concerns over employing vulnerable staff members, including young people, and women, due to the potential risks of violence, and threatening behaviour, that they will be subjected to.
- Shoplifting events vary in severity, and physical safety concerns vary (from recent instances of shoplifters using weapons performing armed robbery, to underage children performing snatch and grabs).
- The underlying psychological trauma that business owners and their employees experience is underreported, and there is an overall perceived lack of recognition or care from authorities.
- RCMP response varies significantly by member and situation. While some go over and above to collect details and evidence, some are indifferent and perform little due diligence.
- There is no trespass act or enforcement, business establishments cannot ban or prevent repeat offenders from entering their premises, other than physically blocking entry.
- The Justice system is not working. There are very few convictions or consequences for repeat offenders. Shoplifters know this, and this is a reason why there has been a change in attitude and brazenness.
- Shoplifters and those causing these problems are not receiving the support they need, whether it is access to recovery services, financial support, housing etc. It is spilling over into crime.
- If the goods are returned to the store there is no further action taken by RCMP
- Most instances of theft are occurring in the downtown core: front street to 4th Ave, Main street to Alexander Street



Ideas discussed:

Systemic changes are needed (system is broken):

- Politicians need to act and create changes to justice, healthcare & social services.
 - Additional text in bail conditions banning store access
 - Make it easier to prove possession of stolen goods
 - Pawn shop ID law development, enforced record keeping
 - Harsher consequences for repeat offenders
- We need a Trespass Act.
- RCMP taskforce for theft.
- Bylaw Officers with enforcement/arrest authority
- More RCMP foot or bike patrols/increase presence.
- More enforcement of existing laws re: drinking in public or disturbing the peace so gatherings do not escalate to violence and theft

Business Community

- Provide resources for best security practices/theft prevention systems.
- Provide training for new employees about how to engage if theft is noticed or suspected, what rights does the business have?
- Create a way to record all instances including the ones that businesses are not currently reporting to RCMP
- Loss prevention courses/conflict resolution courses.
- Private security initiatives.
- Group chat/email/social media to document repeat offenders and warn other businesses.
- Education for the public to increase awareness of stolen items in the marketplace
- Ensure engagement with the local First Nations Governments when developing resources and advocating for change

Next Steps:

Chamber to put together a what we heard document.

Attend the YG Community Safety Meeting March 26th – 11:30am to 2:30pm at the Elks Lodge and voice concerns gathered from our membership.

Chamber and businesses to work together to voice concerns and promote system change.

Chamber to put out a simple survey to members to gather initial statistics on the economic impact and prevalence of theft.