

The BC Greens believe that small businesses should be able to put down roots and build a future in their communities without the fear that a sudden rent increase could force them to close their doors.

Small businesses are at the heart of our downtowns and main streets. They provide local jobs, essential services and the shops, cafés and gathering places that give communities their character. We want our main streets to be places where local businesses can build a future and continue to be part of what makes our communities special.

But right now, B.C. small businesses are closing faster than new ones can open. More businesses have closed than opened in the province for five quarters in a row, and in just three months last year, B.C. lost a net 1,300 businesses.¹ More than one in four small businesses now describe their condition as weak or critical.²

In downtown Victoria, asking rents for retail spaces rose 13% in just one year.³ Unlike residential tenants, BC businesses have no protections for how much their rent can increase when a commercial lease is renewed. A business can spend years building a loyal customer base, only to find it can no longer afford to stay in the space where it built its success. When that happens, the whole community loses.

We want to change that. Our economic vision puts strong local economies at the centre of BC's future, and that means giving independent businesses greater security in the places where they operate.

Sidney is a great example of a community with a vibrant downtown business community. Its independent shops, restaurants and services make downtown a destination for both residents and visitors. But even in Sidney, the warning signs are showing. Available retail space in Sidney rose 30% in a single quarter this year,⁴ and the town's own Economic Development Plan has warned that affordability for small retailers "will be an issue" as older commercial buildings are redeveloped and lease rates rise.⁵ We want Sidney and other communities across the province to remain places where local businesses can put down roots and be part of their community for generations.

When B.C. municipalities asked for the power to protect local businesses from runaway commercial rents, the **Eby Government said it does "not intend to enable local governments to intervene in commercial leases."**⁶ The BC Greens believe in better.

¹ Statistics Canada, Table 33-10-0270-01, as cited by CFIB, *Q2 2026 business entries and exits* (2026).

² CFIB, *B.C. Election 2026: Small Business Priorities* (October 2026).

³ CBRE Victoria, [Victoria Retail Figures Q2 2025](#), (2025)

⁴ CBRE, *Greater Victoria Retail Figures Q2 2026* (2026).

⁵ Town of Sidney, *Economic Development Plan* (2022), p. 15. This also fixes the "Sydney" typo in your original footnote.

⁶ UBCM, 2024 resolution, provincial response.

The BC Greens will:

- Introduce province-wide commercial rent and vacancy control, limiting rent increases during tenancies, at renewal and between tenants. Rent protections will remain with the commercial space when a business leaves, preventing landlords from imposing large increases simply because a new tenant moves in. This will start with establishing a provincial commercial rent registry and phasing in protections across BC, with safeguards against evictions used to circumvent the rules and a fair process for exceptional cost increases, major improvements and redevelopment. This process will allow for learning and adjustment to meet small business needs.
- Give municipalities the power to tax vacant commercial storefronts and other commercial properties, discouraging landlords from leaving usable spaces empty.
- Help local businesses and communities own the spaces where they operate by giving commercial tenants, municipalities, First Nations, cooperatives and community organizations the first opportunity to purchase qualifying commercial properties when they come up for sale, supported by provincial financing and loan guarantees.