

How to respond to panhandlers and squeegee people

If you are approached by a panhandler or squeegee person you should be aware that while some are frauds, with props such as blankets and torn clothing, pets and long stories, others suffer from addictions, poverty or mental health problems. Most are harmless.

If you feel you want to help, please do so in a useful and intelligent way by generously supporting the service organizations and charities that are established in your community to help these people.

Panhandlers

If you encounter a panhandler:

- Briefly acknowledge them with a nod or a glance.
- If asked for money, simply say "Sorry".
- Move purposefully on.
- Do not engage them or allow yourself to be engaged.
- Do not fumble for change and pretend you have none or make excuses.
- In the event you see or experience aggressive behavior, do not ignore it, report it to police by dialing 911.

Squeegee or Road Solicitation Situations

If you encounter one of these situations:

- Remain in your vehicle, lock your doors and roll up your windows.
- Shake your head indicating "no" to the service or solicitation.
- Do not be drawn into the situation even if they wash your windshield anyway. Simply shake your head indicating "no" and do not engage them further.
- Do not give money.
- Do not engage them verbally.
- Drive away calmly.
- Stop at the side of the roadway or elsewhere out of traffic, away from the person, and report the location and incident to police by calling 911, especially if the behavior was aggressive.

Safe Streets Act & Trespass Act

Now in effect
in British Columbia

Understanding the New Laws

Safe Streets

• Coalition •

www.safestreetscoalition.com
Lower Mainland 604-910-SAFE (7233)
Toll-Free 1-866-735-SAFE (7233)

Brochure information is abridged from the
Province of British Columbia and the
Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement
Association crime prevention materials.

Safe Streets

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The Safe Streets Act divides offences into two categories: Aggressive Solicitation and Captive Audience Solicitation.

Examples of Aggressive Solicitation would lead a person to fear for their safety and include:

- Aggressively following people while asking them for money.
- Blocking a person's passage while demanding money when the person is trying to walk down the street.
- Making rude comments or lewd gestures if someone refuses to give you money, if those actions would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety.
- Any other action that would make a reasonable person fear for their safety.

Examples of Captive Audience Solicitation include:

- Approaching a person while they are in a captive audience situation. A captive audience situation includes being at a bus stop, an ATM (bank machine), or while a person is sitting in a car at a stop light.

Is Panhandling now illegal?

No, this is not an anti-panhandling or antibeggar law. This is an anti-aggressive solicitation law and an anti-captive audience solicitation law. Panhandling that is not aggressive and is away from a captive audience location is not illegal under the Safe Streets Act or under the amended Trespass Act.

Charities&Fundraisers

Question: Can charities still hold fundraisers on bank property, in front of a grocery store or near automated teller machines?

Answer: Yes, as long as the person soliciting has received express permission from the owner or occupier of the premises. With that permission, the law allows solicitation within five metres of the ATM.

Examples of violations of the amended Trespass Act include:

- Remaining on, or returning to, private property after being asked to leave by the property owner or occupier or a representative of the property owner or occupier. The person in this situation must provide their correct name and address if asked.
- Defacing signs that give notice of trespass or prohibited activities.



Can a person be arrested under the Safe Streets Act or Trespass Act?

Police will have the option to educate, issue a violation ticket or issue a provincial appearance notice requiring a person to appear in court. For situations where a person continues the offence or repeats it, Police have the authority to arrest.

Fine Amounts

How much are the violation tickets under the Safe Streets Act and amended Trespass Act? Depending on the contravention, tickets are \$86, including an \$11 victim surcharge levy and \$115, including a \$15 victim surcharge levy.

Question: Where do people go to pay the tickets?

Answer: ICBC collects violation tickets on behalf of the government. All payment options including mail-in options are listed on the back of the violation tickets.

Question: What if a person issued a ticket doesn't pay it?

Answer: A person who is issued a violation ticket has 30 days to pay it, or take steps to dispute the ticket. If the person does not pay or dispute the ticket, they are deemed guilty and the fine amount becomes payable to the Crown. The person would then be subject to collection activity.

Question: You said ICBC is collecting the tickets. Does collection activity mean if someone doesn't pay a ticket for aggressive panhandling they'd lose their license?

Answer: No, ICBC would not refuse to issue a driver's licence in this case. If this type of fine went unpaid for an extended period of time it would be passed on to a collections agency to recover. ICBC would not take any action.

Question: Can a person go to jail for not paying their ticket?

Answer: This ticket is not unlike a parking or speeding ticket. A person cannot go to jail in Canada for refusing to pay a ticket.

Inability to Pay

Question: Do you expect someone with no money to pay a fine?

Answer: We expect people to not break the law. If they do there are consequences. An inability to pay a fine has never been an excuse for breaking the law.

Question: Where do you send violation tickets if the person is homeless?

Answer: Violation tickets are handed out on the spot.

Question: Can a person go to jail for violating the Safe Streets Act or amended Trespass Act?

Answer: Yes, in certain circumstances. It is up to a judge to determine whether a person will face a jail sentence based on repeat offences or the nature of the specific offence. The judge would have other options, including prohibiting a person from returning to the area of the offence.

