

WHO WE ARE

The National Network of IDA Canada represents the 500+ organizations across our country which manage Canada's business districts, making them vital places in the nation's identity and key centres of economic, cultural and social growth.

Our members are urban place management organizations, such as business improvement associations/districts/zones (BIA/BID/BIZs) and societies des commerce (SDCs in Québec), with representation from every province. The skilled individuals who manage these organizations are committed to positive change within their communities and look for opportunities to collaborate locally, provincially, and nationally. The organizations we represent are comprised of over 100,000 businesses from coast to coast, with a combined property assessment in the billions of dollars. We are members of the International Downtown Association (IDA).*

THE CONTEXT

Downtowns, main streets and traditional commercial areas are the economic, cultural and social hubs of Canadian cities and towns; and their strength is critical for a successful city and region.

Downtowns generally occupy less than 1% of the land area within a city but can generate 10-25% of the city's total tax base. They also attract an average of 20% of citywide construction value. Downtowns and traditional commercial areas are employment hubs, job generators and creativity and innovation centres. According to the Conference Board of Canada, the country's hub cities are a driving force of the national economy. City and town centres matter and IDA Canada wants federal politicians to better understand the critical role they play now and in our future.

CHANGING TIMES

Historically, change came about in gradual stages, but today, change is cascading all around us.

Our means of communicating and relating with each other, conducting business, and carrying out politics is rapidly changing. Our social, physical, economic, emotional and spiritual environments are quickly and radically shifting. Overlying all of these changes, as well as the five strategic priority areas we identify in this document, is the overwhelming challenge of our global climate emergency. All actions and solutions must be seen through the lens of mitigating further climate change.

OUR FUTURE

In anticipation of the fall federal election, IDA Canada is looking to federal parties to ensure their platforms demonstrate the means by which commercial areas in cities and towns can become more socially balanced, economically energized, culturally dynamic and innovatively robust and environmentally sustainable and resilient.

We are looking to our future federal government to work collaboratively to conduct more research of city and town centres and commercial areas to support the development of effective policies and programs focused on these areas. We are seeking a stronger collaboration with all three levels of government and the private sector to strengthen reinvestment in our urban cores. We are calling for enhanced engagement with our urban champions – those BIA/SDC leaders who deal with change every day on the streets and in their businesses – to identify where more effective partnerships can be established.



Celebrating Canada with 3000 strong at the corner of Portage and Main in Winnipeg on July 1, 2017

CONCLUSION

Our downtowns and main streets are not only the economic engines of our communities, but they are the cultural, social, and iconic hubs of our country.

Most importantly, they are the critical barometers of health, prosperity and vitality in every community. We cannot allow them to languish as the result of changing times, practices or circumstances. These barometers need skilled “weather forecasters” capable of analyzing and acting on what must be done. Our federal government is key to knitting this new network together with partners at all levels of government and with the private sector. IDA Canada and its members stand prepared to act now and utilize its intellectual and financial resources to affect positive change in our country. We have the means to facilitate, collaborate and build partnerships in communities across the country. Please call on us to work with you!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT

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*The International Downtown Association is the premier organization for urban place professionals who are shaping and activating dynamic city center districts. Our members are downtown champions who bring urban centers to life, bridging the gap between the public and private sectors. We represent an industry of more than 2,500 place management organizations, employing 100,000 people throughout North America and growing rapidly around the world. Founded in 1954, IDA is a resource center for ideas and innovative best practices in urban place management.



The community comes together to celebrate Car Free Day in Downtown Victoria, B.C.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

PREMISE

For any community to thrive, it must ensure a healthy, stable and inclusive environment for residents and for businesses, co-existing in social and economic balance. This comes in the form of affordable housing, employment opportunities, food security, personal safety, and appropriate, sustainable and balanced taxes.

GOAL

To ensure Canada is comprised of healthy, thriving and inclusive communities in which there is respect, equal opportunities, affordable and accessible housing, and appropriate services to support community wellness and employment. The federal government has an opportunity to work with Canadians to re-establish and strengthen social housing and community wellness programs, social harmony and workforce education. This provides the basis for a stable environment in which our urban core business communities can thrive.

PROGRAM PROPOSALS

1 Provide funding to research and track the health, well-being and prosperity of Canada's downtowns and commercial centres, and create an annual report to share this information (*The Value of Investing in Canada's Downtowns*, www.downtown.org/ida-canada).

2 Provide increased funding for the National Housing Strategy to effectively and sustainably provide financial support for a spectrum of social housing options, including non-profit, co-housing, secondary suites, laneway homes, and 'tiny homes', etc.

3 Commission a National Strategy on Mental Health. This commission should draw on the experiences of service providers, municipal councils & staff, business improvement associations, police, and the judiciary to formulate conclusions and co-ordinated five-year strategies which will result in increased, targeted funding to significantly reduce mental health issues.

4 Establish a National Task Force on the national and growing opioid crisis. The task force should focus on creating co-ordinated funding and solutions to mitigate the causes and effects of addiction.

5 Empower Canada Lands Corporation to sell land at less than market value, for affordable housing and neighbourhood development, including complementary commercial opportunities.



Yoga in Downtown Regina

COMMUNITY VITALITY

PREMISE

Communities at their core are shaped by people and defined by a sense of place based on a vibrant public realm, historic character, arts and culture, and unique, street-level and neighbourhood-serving businesses.

GOAL

To revitalize – without displacement – city and town centres and the public realm and socio-economic fabric which comprise them. This investment will help create employment and business opportunities, and kindle a new-found pride of community. BIAs and SDCs are ready to work with the federal government as visionaries and catalysts to renew investment in community cores. These areas are key to the health and prosperity of our communities. Forward-thinking and innovative initiatives must be developed to strengthen them through the creation of multi-stakeholder partnerships.

PROGRAM PROPOSALS

- 1 Create innovative, multi-faceted Urban Development Agreements with the three levels of government and the private sector, focused on a holistic revitalization of city and town centres.
- 2 Increase funding for arts and culture, with heightened emphasis in developing 'creative cores' and providing broader eligibility for groups which focus on collaborations.
- 3 Partner with BIAs and SDCs to renew 'Main Street' programs for commercial streets and downtowns of smaller communities, focusing on strengthening local commercial store-fronts and street level enhancements and intensified upper floor uses.
- 4 Prioritize placing federal offices in the urban core, town centres, and traditional commercial areas.



Public transit lined up in Downtown Fredericton

URBAN MOBILITY

PREMISE

With the renewed strength of our urban centres – in which organizations and individuals are increasingly conscious of environmental impacts – innovative and well-designed transportation networks and affordable transit are key to the on-going viability of communities.

GOAL

To create transportation frameworks designed to decrease dependence on individual vehicles while intensifying multi-modal transportation networks. We urge the federal government to devote more resources to re-thinking and re-working our intra-urban and inter-urban transportation systems, and to strengthen rail connections between urban and rural communities, while removing dependence on fossil fuels.

PROGRAM PROPOSALS

- 1 Provide funding to municipalities for the creation of complete streets, designed to safely include pedestrians, public transit, bikes and cars, all in the context of improving civic sustainability standards and enhancing street amenities.
- 2 Accelerate the implementation and articulate the specifics of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change to support an increasingly efficient and low-carbon transportation system.
- 3 Commission specific research into curb management (involving alternate forms of transportation, such as scooters) for urban centres in partnership with BIAs and SDCs.
- 4 Support, but carefully regulate, the proposed use of connected and automated vehicles as well as other new transportation alternatives.
- 5 Partner with BIAs and SDCs to provide funding for plug-ins for electric vehicles.



Installing granite curbs in Downtown Halifax

INFRASTRUCTURE

PREMISE

An efficient community is comprised of infrastructure which is kept in top condition; public spaces and parks which are well-designed and maintained; buildings which exude the character of the community and where environmental innovations are encouraged and supported.

GOAL

To strengthen the physical, social, economic and cultural role of city and town centres and traditional commercial areas through innovative federal investment programs designed to replace or create new infrastructure. Significant tri-level government investment opportunities can be created by redefining relationships and transforming programs.

PROGRAM PROPOSALS

- 1 Partner with provinces, municipalities and BIAs and SDCs to identify strategic priorities and create funding for downtown and traditional commercial area infrastructure projects which focus on innovation, place-making and the changing environment in which equal consideration is given to pedestrian and alternate means of transportation.
- 2 Partner with BIAs and SDCs to facilitate a new vision for our core communities as catalysts in redefining identities and establishing stronger physical presence, re-awakened cultural richness and social stability.
- 3 Prioritize the redevelopment of federally-owned urban lands for mixed-use development which complement adjacent areas and surrounding neighbourhoods.



Putting the finishing touch on a delightful meal in your local downtown/main street restaurant

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

PREMISE

To support and sustain entrepreneurship, our communities need to provide start-up business support, create incubation incentives and develop urban cluster strategies, all in the context of heightened sustainability objectives.

GOAL

To continue kindling the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of Canadians by developing and expanding creativity hubs in urban cores by ensuring close working relationships with the private sector and the business improvement area associations which represent them.

PROGRAM PROPOSALS

- 1 Develop a culture of entrepreneurship through micro-loans and location grants to commercial enterprise located in downtowns, main streets, and traditional commercial areas.
- 2 Provide grant funding to BIAs and SDCs to create local specific sector training programs – as part of a work-force development initiative – in partnership with local colleges, universities, and the private sector.
- 3 Develop a microloan or loan guarantee program for the crafts & maker community.
- 4 Partner with BIAs and SDCs to create capacity-building incubation centres for retail innovation in downtowns and main streets.