



March 25, 2020

Dear Prime Minister & Members of Cabinet,

We appreciate the skill and energy you and your team have devoted to creating calm and developing initiatives designed to provide stability in Canada during this challenging time.

As a voice for over 500 Business Improvement Associations (BIA/BID/BIZ/SDCs) which act in the interests of over 100,000 businesses, IDA Canada knows intimately the challenges faced by landlords, businesses, and employees. We would like to join you in finding solutions for these extraordinary times.

We believe the first step is acknowledging that progress will not be made unless all levels of government, banks, utilities, landlords, tenants, and employees work together with respect and the acknowledgement that each and all will have to sacrifice something in the period before we return to some degree of normalcy.

We have reviewed the details available on Canada's *COVID-19 Economic Response Plan* and while recognizing that many details remain to be worked out, have some suggestions which may result in greater fairness and balance in some of the programs presented to date.

'The *Business Credit Availability Program* will allow the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC) and Export Development Canada (EDC) to provide more than \$10 billion of additional support, largely targetted to small and medium-sized businesses.' News reports suggest that individuals are already 'frustrated with delays and denials'. We believe **the Minister of Finance should immediately convene a meeting with the presidents of our major lending institutions and credit card companies to ensure there is 'give as well as take'** and that these institutions allow a suspension – even temporary forgiveness – of payments in dire circumstances (which will of course have to be defined). This financial summit should be the venue for unprecedented creativity in finding imaginative solutions in which all make a contribution.

Helping Businesses Keep Their Workers: Temporary Wage Subsidy. Many, if not most, of our businesses have had to close because of implementation of local or provincial emergency measures, so this initiative will not likely benefit as many companies/ employees as originally thought. We suggest retooling this program to ensure it includes making funds available to employees who have had to remain at home as a result of their businesses closing. **The level of funding should be substantially increased as other European countries have done and the funds should not be made as a subsidy, but a direct payment which does not have to be repaid.** We appreciate the proposed Emergency Support Benefit for self-employed people who are not normally eligible for EI sickness benefits.

The *Insured Mortgage Purchase Program* will see the government purchase up to \$50 billion of insured mortgage pools through CMHC, allowing 'long-term stable funding to banks and mortgage lenders...'. While this will assist many, there must be some provision for this benefit to fairly trickle down to tenants. There is great concern about businesses being evicted and there must be provision to allow as many businesses as possible to re-open and re-establish themselves without fear of staggering rental debt or

eviction. In a letter to the Minister of Finance, the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) and others suggested a *Main Street Bailout* which amongst other things proposed **forgiving the first \$10,000 of all commercial leases for April to June**. We support this and other measures proposed including local initiatives taken by municipalities and utilities. I attach a copy of their letter for your easy reference.

To facilitate Canada's business community having a timely understanding of progress in program development, we encourage your government to create and actively promote regular bulletins (twice a week) directed to small and medium business owners. This platform could also be used to share strategies on how these businesses can remain solvent. Given the close working relationship our business associations have with those impacted, we would be most willing to assist in sharing these updates through our network and ultimately, in deploying or promoting your programs.

Our Business Improvement Associations and IDA Canada stand ready to work with all to navigate this crisis and give businesses a fighting chance.

Thank you,

Judith Veresuk
Chair, IDA Canada

[IDA Canada](#), a national coalition of the [International Downtown Association](#), represents organizations across the country that manage Canada's business districts, making them vital places in the nation's identity and key centres of economic wealth and social and cultural growth. The National Network of IDA Canada has been created to provide a single voice for business district professionals while sharing best practices, experiences, and the tools to create more vibrant cores in our cities and towns.

cc: Honourable Bill Morneau
Honourable Navdeep Banes
Honourable Mary Ng
Honourable Melanie Joly
Honourable Maryam Monsef
Honourable Catherine McKenna