



IDA Canada

Pre-Budget Submission 2023

Recommendations

- 1) Strengthen Canada's Main Street and Downtown Businesses by Enacting 100 per cent loan forgiveness on CEBA loans and Ensure Regional Economic Development Agencies are Best Utilizing Funding.
- 2) Address Main Street and Downtown Challenges Including Homelessness, Addiction and Mental Health Concerns.
- 3) Invest in Skills and Infrastructure Development to Support the Needs of the Changing Labour Market.

Recommendation One: Strengthen Canada's Main Street and Downtown Businesses

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated downtown and main street businesses across the country as offices closed and foot traffic decreased dramatically. Federal support has helped many small and medium-sized businesses to survive the pandemic. However, more help is needed to help rejuvenate these businesses.

We recommend the federal government enacts 100% loan forgiveness on CEBA Loans. Businesses appreciated loan repayment extensions, but in the wake of the pandemic, many businesses are struggling with cost increases, labour and material shortages, and lingering operational issues. As a result, outstanding CEBA loans significantly burden many business owners struggling to rebuild their businesses.

Additionally, we ask that the government ensure that regional economic development agencies best utilize federal funding by ensuring it flows to local main street and downtown businesses through their improvement associations. In doing so, local businesses and economies in need will be supported, benefiting whole communities.

Recommendation Two: Address Main Street and Downtown Challenges

Street issues, including homelessness, addiction and mental health, have become a barrier to the recovery of major downtowns and some main streets. To ensure these places remain vibrant destinations where all community members can thrive, we ask the federal government to play a meaningful leadership role in addressing this crisis. We call upon the federal government to lead a nationwide initiative to find and share best practices for addressing street issues and subsequently coordinate government action at all levels to address them.

IDA Canada seeks the establishment of a National Task Force on addictions and mental health, which would include a representative from the national body of downtown and main street business associations. In the meantime, additional funding should be provided to municipalities and their social service partners for in-patient addiction support through the Canada Health Transfer.

IDA Canada also recommends the development of a pilot program that allows individuals with precarious housing, addictions or mental health issues to benefit from skills training and other supports so they can find employment roles within their main street and downtown communities, such as businesses, service providers and support organizations, and Business Improvement Associations.

Recommendation Three: Invest in Skills and Infrastructure Development

Every dollar invested in main streets, downtowns and their businesses have a strong downstream impact on the economic health of a community. Providing support to address skills and labour shortages and infrastructure gaps will further support the health of main streets and downtowns across Canada.

IDA Canada recommends a continued focus on job creation strategies in downtowns and main streets to reinforce a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Develop training and re-training programs, micro-loans and location grants developed in partnership with local colleges, universities, and the private sector.

We also recommend a dedicated \$500 million annually from the Investing in Canada Plan for main streets and downtowns. These funds should focus on ensuring streetscapes are fully accessible; public spaces are vibrant; cultural hubs are dynamic and welcoming; public transit is accessible, safe, and affordable; public washrooms increase in number and inaccessibility; existing buildings and their ground-level storefronts are re-utilized and made more efficient; and all infrastructure investment is sustainable.

About IDA Canada

IDA Canada is a national coalition dedicated to advancing and promoting vital, livable urban centers. IDA represents a vast network of over 500 business improvement associations and societies of commerce, representing over 250,000 business and property owners in districts with billions of dollars in assessment and economic activity. IDA is committed to creating vibrant, livable, and sustainable downtowns that support economic development, community building, and environmental sustainability.