



# International Downtown Association Canada



## ABOUT IDA CANADA

IDA Canada, a national coalition of the International Downtown Association, works on behalf 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 represents the commercial neighborhoods in every community across the country that continue to be our economic, social and cultural backbone.

## STRENGTHENING CANADA'S MAIN STREET AND DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the downtown and main street businesses. Offices have remained closed, and foot traffic has dramatically decreased. We are thankful that the federal government has provided critical support to our small businesses. However, more help is needed not just to survive but to rejuvenate these businesses.

- Enact 100% loan forgiveness on CEBA loans. We appreciate the loan extension repayment of one year, but many businesses are still struggling with cost increases, labour and materials shortages, and lingering pandemic operational issues. The outstanding loan is an additional major weight on the backs of small businesses across Canada.
- Ensure federal business funding is best utilized by regional economic development agencies making certain some funds are flowing to local main street and downtown businesses through their improvement associations.



## ADDRESSING 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 members of the community can thrive, we ask the federal government to play a meaningful leadership role in addressing this crisis.

- The federal government should lead a nation-wide initiative to find and share best practices for addressing street issues, and subsequently co-ordinate government action at all levels to address them. We also seek the establishment of a National Task Force on addictions and mental health, which would include a representative from the national body of downtown & main street business associations. In the meantime, commit additional funding to our municipalities and their social service partners for in-patient addiction supports through the Canada Health Transfer.
- Develop 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.

## INVESTING IN SKILLS AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

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

- Continue to focus job creation strategies in downtowns and main streets as a means of reinforcing a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship as we emerge from COVID. Develop training and re-training programs, micro-loans and location grants developed in partnership with local colleges, universities, and the private sector.
- Dedicate \$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 in accessibility; existing buildings and their ground level store fronts are re-utilized and made more efficient; and all infrastructure investment is sustainable in nature.