



IDA Canada 2023 Government Relations Recap

2023 was a big year for IDA Canada's advocacy work!

For the first time, IDA Canada representatives met in person for an advocacy day on Parliament Hill. We met with key decision-makers to discuss issues, including the ongoing and increasing mental health crises and financial pressures facing small businesses. This advocacy opportunity allowed members to converse with decision-makers about the issues that matter most to communities across the country.

During our Parliament Hill Day, IDA Canada engaged with 30 MPs and Ministers, garnered excellent media coverage on the day, and, following that, boosted public and political awareness of these pressing issues.

The press conference held on our Parliament Hill Day resulted in over 300 mentions across TV, radio, and online news outlets from regions across the country. It also sparked additional interviews with IDA representatives who spoke on the specific issues their businesses and communities face, establishing IDA Canada members as thought leaders in the issues facing small businesses and communities nationwide.

IDA Canada also participated in government consultation processes for Budget 2023, making submissions supporting CEBA loan forgiveness to the Standing Committee on Finance, Department of Finance and Ministry of Finance. This opportunity allowed IDA Canada to share its members' concerns and the need for continued assistance post-pandemic.

This year, we also launched IDA Canada on social media! IDA Canada now has a dedicated X (formerly known as Twitter) page that allows us to proudly showcase the vital work of our members to a political audience. We are excited to have a virtual space where members, the public, and politicians can gather to recognize each other's successes and challenges and work together to support Canadian downtowns and main streets.

Since its start at the beginning of the year, posts on IDA Canada's Twitter account earned over 27,000 impressions, with nearly half resulting from Hill Day-related posts from IDA Canada representatives and politicians.

Through social media, we've also launched a spotlight series highlighting our members' successes and promoting their advocacy interests. We also launched a Downtown and Main Street Month campaign, which will continue taking place annually in the month of August. Members, community leaders, and businesses, among others, from across the country celebrated their downtowns and main streets and their importance to their communities, cities, and national prosperity. Members also met one on one with their local Members of Parliament to showcase their work and success.

As we head into January, IDA Canada is actively participating in the 2024 Budget cycle and looks forward to continuing to showcase its member's work on X.

We encourage our members to continue to use social media to engage with their community, politicians, and the wider public to share their challenges, successes, and what makes them unique. Going forward, if you want to be featured on the [@IDACAN Downtown](#) X feed, please fill out this [google form](#) or tag us in your posts!

For more information, please contact Impact Public Affairs: Jayme Wilson, jayme@impactcanada.com

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. For more information: www.downtown.org/ida-canada.

Overview

IDA Canada representatives travelled to Ottawa to bring their members' – and all of Canada's – interests to the forefront of decision makers' attention. Issues impacting downtown and main streets were addressed including the ongoing and increasing financial pressures on small businesses and the mental health crises. Representatives met with over 30 political decision makers garnering excellent media coverage on the day and following that boosted public and political awareness of these pressing issues. Affordability and the accessibility of housing continue to be priorities of the federal government, identified in legislation being tabled currently as well as the Fall Economic Statement.

On the Hill

On November 6, 2023 IDA Canada representatives from across the country gathered in Ottawa to meet with over 30 Ministers, Members of Parliament, and political staff to advocate for Canadian downtowns and main streets. Top-of-mind was the approaching CEBA loan repayment deadline, and action to address homelessness, mental illness, and addiction. These issues were discussed during a morning press conference, and at the evening reception where IDA representatives had the chance to mingle with political decision makers.

The Fall Economic Statement (FES) was announced on November 21, and outlined the federal government's current finances and priorities. Consistent with the spring budget and the summer cabinet shuffle, it named affordability and housing as primary concerns, balancing them with fiscal responsibility and restraint. The FES outlined several commitments to housing measures and tax credits, including \$15 billion in 10-year low-interest loans pledged to construct 30,000 more rental housing units across Canada, as well as a new Canadian mortgage charter.

CEBA loans and the approaching payment deadline have been pertinent issues in the House and Committee meetings. Members from multiple parties have called on the federal government to extend the repayment deadline.

Additionally, the Government of Canada [recently announced](#) it has finalized agreements with Visa and Mastercard to lower credit card transaction fees for small businesses, aiming to benefit over 90% of credit card-accepting businesses in Canada. The reductions, including a 27% decrease in interchange fees, are expected to save eligible small businesses around \$1 billion over five years. Further, the agreement includes measures to reduce domestic consumer credit interchange fees, provide free access to online fraud and cybersecurity resources, and ensure the protection of Canadians' reward points, with the new rates scheduled to take effect in the fall of 2024.

Media Updates

Our Parliamentary press conference had excellent media coverage, resulting in over 300 mentions across TV, radio, and online news outlets from all regions of the country. This also sparked additional interviews with IDA representatives who spoke on specific issues their businesses and communities are facing. We are continuing to work to amplify the issues of our members and carry this momentum to take action in addressing these issues.

Our Twitter/X highlights the work and initiatives of our members and is a virtual meeting place for people passionate about Canada's downtowns and main streets. We encourage you to share your challenges, successes and advocacy priorities; responses will be shared via IDA Canada social media to raise awareness about the importance of downtowns and main streets and celebrate our members' hard work. To be featured, please fill out this [google form](#).

Holiday Social Media Campaign

IDA Canada is launching a social media campaign this holiday season to spotlight the seasonal initiatives and festivities happening in your downtown areas and main streets.

This December, we will be using the hashtag **#holIDAyhighlights** to amplify your work to bring holiday cheer to your downtown and main street - and we are encouraging you to do the same.

If you want to be featured on the [@IDACAN_Downtown](#) Twitter/X feed, please fill out this [google form](#) or tag us in your posts. Happy Holidays!

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Overview

IDA Canada is continuing to work with the federal government to advance the interests of our members as the House sits this fall. We are hosting an advocacy day at Parliament Hill on November 6, 2023, where representatives from IDA Canada will discuss the issues that matter most to our members.

Many IDA Canada members attended IDA's Annual Conference & Marketplace in Chicago, where they were able to connect and share insights with urban leaders from all over and learn from interactive sessions on a wide range of prominent issues. IDA Canada representatives from Montreal hosted *How Neighborhood Nodes are Changing the Urban Game*, sharing their success in supporting downtown activation and a larger urban ecosystem, while representatives from Lethbridge presented their efforts as downtown management professionals working to address street issues with compassion and concern for stakeholders.

Outside of formal meetings and engagement, we continue to use social media to raise awareness of our members' concerns, successes, and events from coast to coast.

On the Hill

Premiers from every province and territory signed onto a letter initiated by BC Premier David Eby calling on Prime Minister Trudeau to extend the one-year extension on the repayment of Canadian Emergency Business Account loans by an additional year past the current January 18, 2024, deadline, and for more time for loan forgiveness.

Bill C-56, the Affordable Housing and Groceries Act, resumed its second reading in the House. The Bill seeks to amend the Excise Tax Act in order to implement a temporary enhancement to the GST New Residential Rental Property Rebate to incentivize the construction of more apartment buildings, student housing, and senior residences.

IDA Canada has been working to prepare for our upcoming advocacy day on Parliament Hill, happening on November 6. We will continue to advocate for municipal infrastructure revitalization, support for small business, and federal action on mental health and other street issues. We are looking to discuss how we can work with the federal government to support downtowns, main streets and their wider communities across the country.

Media Updates

We are thrilled to see so many of our members use social media to engage with their communities, visitors, and politicians alike. We urge you to continue to do so, and encourage you to reshare, tag, and engage with IDA Canada on Twitter [@IDACAN_Downtown](#) to reach other members and communities across the country!

Our ongoing Spotlight Series highlights the work and initiatives of our members - we encourage you to complete a voluntary survey, sharing your challenges, successes, and advocacy priorities. Responses will be shared via IDA Canada social media to raise awareness about the importance of downtowns and main streets, and celebrate our members' hard work. To participate in the ongoing campaign, please fill out this [Google form](#).

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IDA Canada is continuing to work with the federal government to advance the interests of our members as the House sits this fall.

Outside of formal meetings and engagement, we continue to use social media to raise awareness of our members' concerns, successes, and events nationwide, and establish [@IDACAN_Downtown](#) on Twitter as a forum for engagement. If you aren't already following IDA Canada on Twitter, we encourage you to check out our page, which highlights the great work of our members and showcases it for a political audience.

If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to share your favourite moments from the 2023 IDA Conference in Chicago with the #IDACanada tag. We look forward to continuing to see your posts!

On the Hill

The House of Commons resumed on September 18 after the summer recess, and continues to sit through the month of October.

The federal government continues to prioritize key issues important to downtowns and main streets across the country, including housing and revitalization. IDA Canada will continue to collaborate with decision-makers to advance these priorities and more.

The first piece of legislation introduced this fall was the [Affordable Housing and Groceries Act](#), which will help to enhance competition in the grocery sector and remove the GST on the construction of new apartment buildings. These actions will help to stabilize the price of groceries and expedite the building of needed rental homes, helping make life more affordable for Canadians.

Media Updates

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Future Forecast

IDA Canada is in the process of planning and preparing for a Hill Day on November 6. This will involve numerous meetings with members of various relevant ministries, as well as IDA Canada members. The Hill Day is an important time for delegates from IDA Canada to voice their concerns and interests with decision makers, and discuss ways of action on these priorities.

During the Hill Day and through our other advocacy efforts, we will continue to advocate for municipal infrastructure revitalization, support for small business, and federal action on mental health and other street issues.

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Overview

This August, IDA Canada celebrated Downtown and Main Street Month, a chance for IDA members to share what makes their communities special, and to connect with their elected officials. We have begun to plan our advocacy work for the fall when the House's resumes, advancing the interests of IDA Canada members in alignment with the priorities of the federal government, especially given the recent cabinet shuffle.

On the Hill

We will continue to work to bring the interests of our members to the forefront of the federal government's attention, including the asks outlined in our pre-budget submission that was submitted to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA). We are determined to work with the federal government to address homelessness, mental health, and addiction in the context of downtowns and main streets, invest in infrastructure development, and address labour shortages faced by many of our members.

The House of Commons is set to resume as of September 18, with MPs returning to Ottawa. We will carry the momentum generated over the summer into the fall in order to advocate for the interests of Canada's downtowns. The cabinet shuffle highlighted affordability and the health of the economy as key priorities of the federal government, committing to working on housing and infrastructure as a way of achieving that. IDA Canada is eager to collaborate with critical decision makers in Ottawa and in communities across the country on these shared priorities.

Media Updates

Twitter was the home of our Downtown and Main Street Month campaign throughout the month of August. Members, community leaders, and businesses, among others, from across the country were engaged in celebrating their downtowns and main streets, their importance to their communities, cities, and national prosperity. IDA Members shared videos and other media showcasing their vibrant businesses, and encouraged community members, politicians, and the public to visit and celebrate downtowns and main streets close to home and across the country. We encourage our members to continue to use social media to engage with their community, politicians, and the wider public to share their challenges, successes, and what makes them unique.

Going into the fall, we will continue to use our Twitter page, [@IDACAN_Downtown](https://twitter.com/IDACAN_Downtown), to connect with politicians and promote the goals of downtowns and main streets across the country. Our ongoing Spotlight Series highlights the work and initiatives of our members - we encourage you to complete a [voluntary survey](#), sharing your challenges, successes, and advocacy priorities. Responses will be shared via IDA Canada social media to raise awareness about the importance of downtowns and main streets, and celebrate our members' hard work.

Future Forecast

We are looking forward to carrying the momentum generated during Downtown and Main Street Month into the fall as the House resumes. We are planning a Hill Day in November 2023 where we will connect with politicians in Ottawa to discuss and take action on the priorities impacting IDA members across Canada. Municipal infrastructure revitalization, support for small business, and federal action on street issues are at the top of the agenda.

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Overview

On July 26, 2023, Prime Minister Trudeau unveiled a new cabinet team, shuffling the responsibility of portfolios relevant to IDA Canada members. This is the most significant cabinet shuffle since the last election in October 2021, seeing 30 of 38 ministers move offices.

August is Downtown & Main Street Month, a chance for IDA members to share what makes their communities special and to connect with their elected officials. We will continue using social media to promote the interests of our members and connect with decision-makers before the House is back in session in September.

Cabinet Shuffle

The shuffle affected nearly all of Trudeau's cabinet, adding seven rookies to various roles and shifting several people responsible for portfolios relevant to IDA:

Hon. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, NS) was moved from his position as the Minister for Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship to the new role of Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities. This shift, particularly the creation of a distinct federal ministry of housing and infrastructure, highlights the emphasis the government would like to place on development in this area and the innovative view of housing as infrastructure, which several provinces have advocated for. MP Fraser brings with him connections and experience in immigration and settlement relevant to issues falling under housing.

Hon. Gudie Hutchings (Long Range Mountains, NL), the Minister of Rural Economic Development, was given the responsibility of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. This additional responsibility signals that the Prime Minister believes in her ability to stimulate economic growth and prosperity in rural areas, which they look to extend into Atlantic Canada.

Hon. Randy Boissonault (Edmonton Centre, AB) was moved from his role as Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance to the new Minister of Employment, Workforce Development, and Official Languages. We expect MP Boissonault to emphasize tourism as a critical employment sector.

Hon. Rechie Valdez (Mississauga-Streetsville, ON) will serve as the Minister of Small Business, a new stand-alone portfolio. Valdez was first elected in 2021. This is her first appointment in the cabinet.

Hon. Ya'ara Saks (York Centre, ON) will serve as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and Associate Minister of Health. Saks was first elected in a 2020 by-election. This is her first appointment in the cabinet.

MP Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Hochelaga, QC) is now the Minister of Tourism and the Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for Quebec Regions. Martinez Ferrada was first elected in 2019. This is her first appointment in the cabinet.

Final Pre-Budget Submission

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) is seeking public consultation for the upcoming budget. IDA Canada has submitted a pre-budget submission that will bring the critical priorities of Canadian downtowns to the forefront of decision makers' attention, highlighting their importance to national prosperity which warrants strengthened and ongoing federal support.

Our budget submission included the following advocacy asks:

1. Strengthen Canada's main street and downtown businesses by ensuring federal business funding is best utilized by Regional Economic Development Agencies, making certain funds flow to local main street and downtown businesses through their improvement associations.
2. Address main street and downtown challenges by providing funding through the Canada Health Transfer to treat addictions and mental health in collaboration with municipalities and their social service partners for in-patient addiction support.
3. Invest in skills and infrastructure development by dedicating \$500 million annually from the Investing in Canada Plan for main streets and downtowns with a 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 accessibility; existing buildings and their ground level storefronts are re-utilized and made more efficient; and all infrastructure investment is sustainable.

IDA Canada will continue working through the 2024 pre-budget cycle to push issues forward and work with MPs, Ministers, and staff to accomplish these goals. To view the full pre-budget submission, click [here](#).

On the Hill

IDA Canada met with **James Maloney**, Chair of the Ontario Liberal Caucus and MP for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, to discuss the priorities of our members in that region. We will continue to connect with relevant elected officials and stakeholders to advance our members' interests and promote the vital importance of Canada's downtowns and main streets.

Social Media Updates

Our Twitter page, [@IDACAN_Downtown](#) continues to be a valuable site of connection between members, stakeholders and political decision-makers alike. We continue our Spotlight Series and invite IDA members to complete a voluntary survey to share their challenges, successes and advocacy priorities. Responses will be shared via IDA Canada social media to raise awareness about the importance of downtowns and main streets and celebrate our members' hard work. To participate in the ongoing campaign, please fill out this [Google form](#).

August is Downtown and Main Street Month! We encourage IDA Canada members to use the toolkits to help promote your vibrant business communities, garner support from MPs, and engage with a wider audience on social media. The kit includes templates and examples for communications via email and social media, including key language and consistent messaging that will heighten the impact of Downtown & Main Street Month. Download the 2023 Member Toolkit ([EN/FR](#)).

Future Forecast

Downtown & Main Street Month is a chance to celebrate our vibrant downtowns and main streets and to raise awareness about their importance. This is an excellent opportunity for IDA Canada members to invite their MPs to visit their neighbourhoods, discuss shared priorities and celebrate small businesses in their community. We encourage members to take advantage of the House's summer recess and continue to reach out to their Members of Parliament to discuss the interests of local small businesses. IDA Canada will continue to build relationships with key decision-makers, and encourage our members to engage with their MPs during this time.

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Overview

The House of Commons sat for the duration of June until Members rose for a summer break at the end of June, and will resume mid-September. Before rising for the summer, the government made several announcements relevant to IDA members, including green transit, cultural investment, trade, and entrepreneurship.

During the summer break, MPs will spend time in their ridings making connections with local constituents and stakeholder groups. During this time, IDA Canada will engage with decision-makers, encouraging them to connect with members at a local level. We will also continue using social media to promote the interests of our members and connect with decision makers, and will feature several new campaigns in the coming months.

Our Work on the Hill

The House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) is seeking public consultation for the upcoming budget. IDA Canada is in the process of drafting a pre-budget submission that will bring the critical priorities of Canadian downtowns to the forefront of decision makers' attention, highlighting their importance to national prosperity which warrants strengthened and ongoing federal support.

We are also in the process of coordinating meetings with MPs who chair Regional Caucuses. IDA Canada is looking forward to productive conversations with important regional decision makers about our members' key advocacy priorities.

Social Media Updates

Our Twitter page, [@IDACAN_Downtown](#) continues to be a valuable site of connection between members, stakeholders, and political decision-makers alike. [@IDACAN_Downtown](#), saw approximately 3,500 views this month, and is home to several new campaigns highlighting our members' hard work. We look forward to expanding our presence over the summer through further engagement with members and politicians.

Throughout the month, we continued our Spotlight Series on Twitter, where we highlighted members' successes and promoted their advocacy interests. We are looking to continue this Series and invite IDA members to complete a voluntary survey where they can share their challenges, successes, and advocacy priorities. Responses will be shared via IDA Canada social media to raise awareness about the importance of downtowns and main streets and celebrate our members' hard work. To participate in the ongoing campaign and share your experiences, please fill out this [Google form](#).

Future Forecast

The House's summer recess means Members of Parliament will have more time to spend in their ridings and meet with stakeholder groups. IDA Canada will continue to build relationships with key decision-makers, and encourage our members to engage with their MPs during this time.

August is Main Street Month – a chance to celebrate our vibrant downtowns and main streets, and to raise awareness about their importance. This is a great opportunity for IDA Members to invite their MPs to visit their neighbourhoods, discuss shared priorities, and celebrate small business in their community. We will soon be sharing tools that both IDA Members and MPs can use to make the most of Main Street Month, and in the meantime encourage you to consider how your community might celebrate and promote the interests of local small business during the Month.

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Overview

The House of Commons sat through the first half of the month before adjourning for a week-long break on May 18, with the expectation to resume on May 29 and continue into June. The federal government made several announcements relevant to key IDA priorities, including municipal infrastructure, transportation, and the rising cost of living. IDA Canada continues to connect with relevant political decision-makers to advance the interests of our members.

Our Work on the Hill

IDA Canada representatives met with MP Kody Blois, Chair of the Liberal Atlantic Caucus, to discuss the critical role of BIAs in Atlantic Canada and regional advocacy concerns. We look forward to continuing to build our relationship with MP Blois and work with him on key initiatives.

Social Media Campaign

IDA Canada is excited to be using Twitter to promote the interests of our members, share their successes, and advocate for their challenges. Our Twitter page, [@IDACAN_Downtown](#), saw approximately 3,500 views this month, and is an active platform to connect with relevant stakeholders, including political decision-makers.

We circulated a voluntary survey asking IDA Canada members to share their challenges, successes, and advocacy priorities, which will be shared widely via IDA Canada social media over the coming weeks in order to increase awareness and celebrate our members' hard work. Share your own experience here:

<https://forms.gle/2ZRffhUvzhTBca9t8>

[@IDACAN_Downtown](#) continues to attract support from members, stakeholders, and political decision-makers alike, and we are looking forward to expanding our presence over the summer through engagement with members and politicians.

Parliamentary Activity Related to Our Advocacy

The government announced several investments in municipal infrastructure that will help communities maintain and upgrade critical public assets. On May 11, Public Safety Canada released the [first national-level disaster risk assessment](#), which will work to increase awareness and inform decision-making in response to the rising frequency and severity of risks like earthquakes, wildfires, and floods. As part of the ongoing [Municipal Asset Management Program](#) (MAMP) funded by the federal government and delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, several new funding initiatives were announced this month at approximately \$50,000 for each awarded municipality, located in PEI, Nova Scotia, Manitoba, BC, and Ontario.

Several new funding initiatives were announced as part of the ongoing Tourism Relief Fund. Notable investments include \$40 million for the [GTA](#), \$18 million for [Peterborough, Kingston, and SE Ontario](#), and \$6.3 across various projects in [Atlantic Canada](#). This funding will help to maintain and develop destinations across Canada for visitors and residents alike.

The federal government [announced](#) on May 18 that it is delivering on its Budget 2023 commitment to lower the fees that small businesses pay on credit card transactions. More than 90% of businesses who accept

credit cards will be eligible for the change, and they are expected to save eligible businesses approximately \$1 billion over five years.

New federal investments in transit included [\\$34.9 million for SkyTrain rail maintenance, active transportation in New Brunswick](#) and on [Vancouver Island](#), \$306 million to expand the [Trans-Canada Highway](#) in Newfoundland and Labrador, and \$780 & \$349 million to electrify transit in [Quebec](#) and [Toronto](#) respectively.

Further actions to address the rising cost of living were also announced: Bill C-46 – the Cost of Living Act No.3 – received Royal Assent on May 11, and the Budget Implementation Act works to prevent predatory lending and house flipping, in turn helping to make living downtown more affordable.

Future Forecast

The House of Commons will sit until June 23, then rise for the Summer, pausing legislative activity. The House rising means MPs will have more time to spend in their ridings and meet with stakeholder groups. IDA Canada will continue to build relationships with key decision-makers during this time.

Additionally, August is Main Street Month, a chance to celebrate our vibrant downtowns and main streets, and to raise awareness about their importance. Keep an eye out for tools to promote your business community and connect with decision-makers. We will have more to share soon!



Kate Fenske
Chair, IDA Canada
Chief Executive Officer, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

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The House of Commons resumed session after a two-week break on April 17th and sat through the remainder of the month. House committees frequently met through April and ended with Parliament passing the controversial Bill C-11, which seeks to regulate streaming and online content like traditional broadcasting in Canada.

Parliamentary Activity Related to IDA Advocacy

The Standing Committee on International Trade (CIIT) [met](#) twice in April to continue their study on how potential trade impacts of the United States Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 on certain firms and workers in Canada. The United States Inflation Reduction Act, through a mix of tax incentives, grants, and loan guarantees will pour billions into the American manufacturing sector. Canadian steel and automobile manufacturing companies have testified that the move will result in a flight of business south. Manufacturing representatives have argued the federal government must match the investments proportionally into Canadian industry to prevent vehicle manufacturing, battery manufacturing, and other industries from taking their business down South.

The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology (INDU) [met](#) several times in April to continue their study on the Development and Support of the Electronics, Metals and Plastics Recycling Industry. The study seeks to improve and develop guidelines to support a circular economy in Canada, committee members can be combative when discussing different government initiatives to meet sustainability goals in Budget 2023. The result of the study will likely release further recycling and clean energy guidelines that affect most businesses in Canada.

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (AGRI) continues to [meet](#) to study Food Price Inflation in Canada to ultimately determine whether or not the high rates Canadians see on grocery and food are entirely due to global conflicts and post-pandemic inflation or if price-gouging is contributing to the increased prices. The supply-chain wide inflationary effect is felt both by Canadians buying groceries and downtown and main street restaurants who are already dealing with soaring prices of rent and labour availability in downtown communities.

MP Scot Davidson's (York—Simcoe) Private Member's Bill C-280, the Financial Protection for Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Farmers Act, was tabled for second reading debate on April 19th. Widely supported by the produce and food sector, the act would seek to safeguard Canadian food security and our produce supply chain against rapidly rising costs. The consolidation and protection of the Canadian supply chain are necessary for both grocers and restaurateurs as food inflation continues to rise.

Future Forecast

All the aforementioned Parliamentary studies will continue into May. The CIIT study on impacts on the United States Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is close to finishing as the committee begins a draft report to present to the House of Commons and its recommendations will hopefully provide guidance to the Canadian manufacturing sector.

Parliament will sit for the majority of May as MPs enter the year's busiest period. In the coming month, they will finish as much committee and House business as possible before Parliaments' tentative date to rise for the summer (June 23rd). This date is always subject to change.

Funding Opportunities for IDA Members

[Grow Your Business Online Grant](#), applications are currently open for micro-grants of \$2,400 to either begin or grow your e-commerce platform. The grant can be put towards increasing sales, adopting security software, connecting with customers, improving social media marketing, or improving user experience for online customers.

[Financial Assistance for Hiring Students](#), applications are currently open to provide wage subsidy to cover up to 70% of the costs of a work term placement with a maximum of \$7,000 that provides post-secondary students with a position that is digital/technology immersive and that uses technology either entirely or in some capacity. The subsidy is a partnership with the Information and Communications Technology Council (ICTC)'s WIL Digital program.

[Grants to Hire a Student](#), this program is accepting program proposals from SMEs for-profits that would provide financial assistance to help cover the cost of hiring a post-secondary graduate (15 to 30 years old) for 6 to 12 months to work on projects with R&D, engineering, multimedia or market analysis components or the development of a new product or process.

Beyond these opportunities, there are many province specific grants available, and a partial list of what is available can be viewed [here](#).

For more information, please contact Impact Public Affairs:

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Overview

The House of Commons sat for three weeks in March, and committee work continued throughout the whole month. Several long-awaited reports were delivered from committees with recommendations, and the 2023-2024 Budget was released on March 28th. Impact Public Affairs has prepared a [separate memo](#) detailing relevant aspects for the members of IDA.

Parliamentary Activity Related to IDA Advocacy

On March 6th, The Standing Committee on Health (HESA) released its report *Addressing Canada's Health Workforce Crisis* to the House of Commons, in which there are 20 recommendations to improve the conditions of Canada's healthcare system and its workforce. Many of the recommendations focus on facilitating, licensing, education, and training for international healthcare professionals to practise in Canada, while also recommending human resource structure and incentives to alleviate burnout in the existing healthcare workforce. Many of the recommendations seek to improve and retain the workforce, which if implemented, will hopefully allow for a more productive labour force in mental healthcare and addiction care and ultimately reduce crime and activity in downtown neighbourhoods. The list of recommendations is on page 3 of the [report](#). The report is currently awaiting a government response.

The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology presented its report to the House of Commons *Small and Medium Enterprises in Canada: Charting a Competitive Future* on March 9th. Some relevant recommendations in the report were capping credit card transaction fees for small and medium enterprises, reducing barriers for foreign workers, and engaging in broad consultation for the government's review of the *Competition Act* with special emphasis on reducing power imbalances for smaller enterprises to be competitive. The full report is available [here](#), and the recommendations are on page 3.

The Standing Committee on Transportation (TRAN) presented its report on *Addressing Labour Shortages in the Canadian Transportation Sector*. The recommendations seek to pre-emptively address supply chain issues and transportation shortages in Canada and ultimately reduce. The full report is available [here](#), and the recommendations are on page 3.

On March 22nd, MP Andrew Scheer put forth an Opposition Motion to freeze the planned 6.3% increase of excise tax on beer, wine, and spirits. The Motion was sponsored by Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre. The tax increase will take effect April 1st, 2023.

On March 23rd, the Minister of Innovation, Science, and Industry tabled *Bill C-42: An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act*. The bill seeks to add a few amendments to the Act:

- Require the Director appointed under that Act to make available to the public certain information on individuals with significant control over a corporation;
- Protect the information and identity of certain individuals;
- Add, or broaden the application of, offences and provide the Director with additional enforcement and compliance powers; and
- Add regulatory authority to prescribe further requirements in certain provisions.

Future Forecast

The House of Commons will be taking a two week break from session and will resume sitting on April 17th.

The Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) continues their study on Inflation in the Current Canadian Economy, while the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food continues its study on Food Price Inflation.

For more information, please contact Impact Public Affairs:

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Overview

The House of Commons resumed session on January 30th and MPs are returning to Ottawa after six weeks away in their home constituencies for the holidays. Committee work is in full swing and pre-Budget consultations begin this week in the Finance committee, which Impact Public Affairs has drafted on behalf of IDA Canada.

February was a busy month on the Hill! The House of Commons sat for the first three weeks of February, while Committee work continued through the entire month, as they began their session after the six-week break over December and January.

Parliamentary Activity Related to IDA Advocacy

The **Standing Committee on Finance (FINA)** met four times during February to discuss the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2023 Budget. With support from Impact Public Affairs, IDA prepared a submission that highlights our highest priority advocacy goals for 2023.

The **Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food (AGRI)** continued its study on Food Price Inflation and met on February 13th. Olivier Bourbeau, Vice-President, Federal and Quebec, Restaurants Canada, spoke to his recommendations to ["extend and restructure the CEBA loans to make repayment palatable"](#) for the many restaurants that are unable to meet loan repayment schedules. He also recommended halting increases in alcohol excise taxes, a decrease of the federal small business tax rate from nine percent to eight percent, and, with respect to the new ban on single-use plastics, to ensure reasonable priced alternatives are available to restaurants. He was met with sympathy from members, though he fielded many questions on how his proposed recommendations will help decrease inflation on food.

On February 16th, the **Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities (TRAN)** concluded its study on reducing red tape and costs on rural and urban Canadian airports. It presented its [study](#) and recommendations to enhance the efficiency and affordability of Canadian airports which would allow for an increase in travel and tourism into our larger cities and downtowns. The recommendations are on page 47 of the PDF report.

The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities (TRAN) also met to begin their study on inner-city transport by bus in Canada. The study seeks to improve transport within downtown communities, a key aspect of a healthy main street community.

The **Standing Committee Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)** met to resume its study on the National Housing Strategy. Committee members drafting instructions to the analysts for a draft report.

Future Forecast

Looking forward, Budget 2023 will likely be tabled on March 28th and contain the Government's plan for the next spending year. We anticipate a shift away from pandemic style-spending and a focus on pocketbook issues as Canadians continue to struggle with inflation.

The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology (INDU) has finished their study on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) and will present their report in March to the House of Commons. They sought to examine unfair competition for SME's in Canada and other challenges faced uniquely by these businesses in Canada, and the report will contain recommendations to create a fairer playing field for small businesses in Canada.

The Standing Committee on Health (HESA) has concluded its study into Canada's Health Workforce, and will present its report to the House of Commons in March. The report will contain recommendations to improve the status and gaps of healthcare workers in Canada. Among this workforce is the backbone of the services available for vulnerable communities in main street and downtown communities in Canada, and the recovery of downtown cores are directly linked to the well-being of mental health and addiction services.

The Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities has concluded its study on anticipated shortages in the Canadian transportation sector and is presenting the report in March. The committee heard from witnesses who highlighted the major impact that these shortages have on supply chain fluidity. Some of the key shared concerns that were raised by representatives from various transportation sectors were recognizing transportation occupations as skilled trades, streamlining processes to allow foreign workers to fill vacancies, and addressing the need to diversify the labour force and attract workers from under-represented groups. Further interruptions in our transportation industry will exacerbate the supply chain issues that are impacting most businesses in Canada.



Kate Fenske
Chair, IDA Canada
Chief Executive Officer, Downtown Winnipeg BIZ

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Overview

The House of Commons resumed session on January 30th and MPs are returning to Ottawa after six weeks away in their home constituencies for the holidays. Committee work is in full swing and pre-Budget consultations begin this week in the Finance committee, which Impact Public Affairs has drafted on behalf of IDA Canada.

Parliamentary Activity Related to IDA Advocacy

The Standing Committee on Health (HESA) continues its study on Canada's Health Workforce. HESA is hearing from dozens of care providers on shortages in all aspects of the health sector, most relevant to IDA Canada being those stakeholders who work with people suffering addictions and mental illness. The shortages continue to affect the care available for those who are unhoused and struggle with these challenges, those who live primarily in the downtown cores of Canada's cities.

Many of IDA Canada's overall advocacy goals target a holistic approach to providing care and opportunities to the vulnerable Canadians in order to create a healthier and safer downtown core for both individuals and the body of downtown & main street business associations in Canada.

The Standing Committee on Finance (FINA) will begin their Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2023 Budget. IDA Canada, with support from Impact Public Affairs, prepared a submission that highlights our highest priority advocacy goals for 2023. Top on the list is a 100% CEBA loan forgiveness request and ensuring federal funds are best utilized by regional economic development agencies by ensuring resources flow to local main street and downtown businesses through their improvement associations.

MPs are returning from their constituencies and continue to witness the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their cities and towns. Downtown and main street businesses are a vital indicator of strong community and industry in Canada and this will be the best opportunity to build our advocacy foundation with the federal government.

Future Forecast

The Standing Committee on Industry and Technology (INDU) is continuing their study on Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME) most recently meeting on February 6th, 2023. They seek to examine unfair competition for SME's in Canada and other challenges faced uniquely by these businesses in Canada.

Funding Opportunities for IDA Canada Members

There may be funding opportunities for select IDA Canada businesses within the 2023 funding provided by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage's Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Sport Sector Recovery from the Impact of COVID-19.

[Support for Booksellers – Canada Book Fund](#), funding closed for 2022-23, but applicants looking towards 2023-24 can be notified of the application opening by email (sal-sfb@pch.gc.ca).

Museum Assistance Program

1. [Access to Heritage](#) 2023-24 funding remains open, which provides funding to heritage organizations for travelling exhibitions in Canada, and to promote access to heritage across different geographic regions.
2. The program is accepting applications on an ongoing basis (assists museums with the costs related to the hosting of travelling exhibitions originating from another museum or from a federal heritage institution and the borrowing of artefacts from any of the National museums of Canada.)



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