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Downtown Business Leaders Call for Federal Action to Invest in Building Canada's Downtowns and Main Streets

OTTAWA, ON - As downtowns and main streets across Canada face persistent challenges related to infrastructure investment, social challenges, and public safety, IDA Canada, a national coalition of the International Downtown Association, is calling on the federal government to take an active role in addressing the pressures facing downtowns and main streets across the country.

Representing more than 500 Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) and over 250,000 business and property owners, IDA Canada is bringing the experience of its business improvement leaders and downtown communities directly to Parliament Hill. While downtowns act as Canada's major centres for employment and investment across the country, these areas are continuing to struggle with continuing challenges surrounding crime, public safety, mental health, and addictions.

In Montréal, 74% of downtown workers surveyed believed safety on the city's public transit network had deteriorated, while 47% of Metro Vancouver residents reported visiting downtown less frequently because of increased crime and violence. In Calgary, 94% agreed the City should do more to address downtown safety issues. In Toronto, 64% reported that their sense of safety downtown had declined over the previous year, while in Halifax, only 37% felt safe walking alone downtown at night.

"We need Canadians and visitors from abroad to feel confident they can visit, experience, shop, and contribute to our downtowns," said Paul MacKinnon, Chair of IDA Canada. "That means making sure people feel safe, and businesses have the confidence to invest in downtowns and main streets. Downtowns are critical to the Canadian economy, and the federal government must take steps to ensure that residents and visitors feel safe, not just for the health of their communities, but for Canada as a whole."

As a leading stakeholder in the development and passage of Bill C-14, IDA Canada is calling on the federal government to further invest in implementing the Bail and Sentencing Reform Act. This includes more Crown prosecutors and increased court capacity to reduce case backlogs, as well as direct federal funding to municipalities to increase police and frontline enforcement in key downtown areas.

But strengthening Canada's downtowns cannot stop at public safety. Years of underinvestment in public infrastructure have affected the shared spaces that help draw people and investment downtown. IDA Canada is calling for BIA-led projects to have a clear pathway to federal funding, including a simplified application process for smaller projects and greater flexibility in federal cost-sharing requirements.

Downtown communities are also on the front lines of Canada's homelessness and addiction crisis. IDA Canada is calling for a federally led action plan developed with provinces and territories, supported by

greater investment in treatment and supportive housing and tied to measurable outcomes in downtown and main street communities.

Downtowns and main streets are hubs for employment and investment, and places where businesses grow and communities come together. IDA Canada is calling on the federal government to embrace downtowns as an important part of Canada's economic future and ensure they have the support needed to remain strong and resilient.

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About IDA Canada

IDA Canada, a national coalition of the International Downtown Association, works on behalf of more than 500 Business Improvement Associationsrepresenting over 250,000 business and property owners across the country. IDA Canada advocates on behalf of Canada's downtowns and main streets to support strong, resilient communities and create the best possible circumstances for economic growth and opportunity.

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