



BIA Advocacy Positions

January 25	Letter in Support of SafeTO Implementation Plan and Recommendations	City of Toronto, Executive Committee
February 7	Downtown Toronto BIAs for a Healthy, Thriving Downtown Return	All Levels of Government
February 9	Healthy Communities Safety & Inclusion: 9-point Action Plan	General
March 3	Implementing Co-Fare Arrangements between TTC and GO Transit	Minister of Transportation
March 15	Main Street Innovation Fund - Letter of support	City of Toronto
May 6	Toronto Needs an Urban Champion	Deputy Prime Minister of Canada

Julie Amoroso
10th Floor, West Toronto, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Letter in Support of SafeTO Implementation Plan and Recommendations

Dear Chair and members of the Executive Committee,

This letter is submitted in support of the SafeTO Implementation Plan and Recommendations going before the City of Toronto's Executive Committee on January 26, 2022.

We support the SafeTO recommendations to resource mental health crisis response; gun violence reduction programs; and supports for individuals and communities impacted by violence. Perhaps most importantly, we support the recommendation to create a shared data resource that breaks down silos in reporting and drives collaborative, full-picture analysis from a multitude of different sectors and sources. We also strongly support of the recognition in SafeTO that healthy safe neighbourhoods and communities are critical for economic development.

The need for a Community Safety and Well-being Plan, like SafeTO, that addresses neighbourhood issues of both safety and inclusion is very much needed. The pandemic has only magnified this need.

As a business community, we understand and acknowledge the need to provide support and resources to the neighbourhood's most vulnerable community members. The Core BIAs have been working in partnership for numerous years on issues impacting Downtown Toronto, its economic resilience and ensuring it is a great City to Live, Work, Play, Learn and Shop.

At the same time, we are seeing an increase in behaviours related to substance use, mental illness, poverty and homelessness on-street, made significantly worse by the ongoing pandemic. Open drug use, along with erratic and aggressive behaviours and a lack of appropriate interventions and services is having

a profoundly negative impact on our neighbourhood's sense of safety, welcome and inclusiveness – for residents, businesses, employees, students and visitors.

As always, we stand ready and willing to play our part in community-led solutions to these complex challenges.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to submit this letter.

Sincerely,

Downtown Yonge BIA

Waterfront BIA

Downtown West BIA

St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA

Toronto Financial District BIA

Bloor Yorkville BIA

Cc Executive Committee

Mayor Tory

Deputy City Manager, Paul Johnson

DOWNTOWN



Mark Garner
Chief Operating Officer &
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toronto downtown west Business Improvement Area

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BLOORYORKVILLE

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TORONTO FINANCIAL DISTRICT

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Al Smith
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Downtown Toronto BIAs for a Healthy, Thriving Downtown Return

The COVID pandemic has been a challenge for everyone, everywhere. Our neighbourhoods and business communities in Toronto's downtown core are no different. As we look at how we move forward, a significant question has arisen:

After the pandemic, what is required to ensure the downtown core is welcoming for returning workers and visitors?

For a healthy recovery of our city, our province and our country, the return of a thriving downtown core in Toronto will be absolutely necessary. We will need to see a re-focused, common sense commitment with clearly defined goals. We will need this from all levels of government in the following areas:

BLOORYORKVILLE

toronto
downtown west
Business Improvement Area

DOWNTOWN



ST. LAWRENCE MARKET
NEIGHBOURHOOD BIA



TORONTO
FINANCIAL
DISTRICT



WATERFRONT
BIA

Streets that are clean, safe, inclusive and welcoming

Affordable housing, the need for supportive housing, mental health and addiction services have been more visible as workers and visitors decreased in downtown during the pandemic. We need a clear focus on providing housing and mental health solutions across the entire City of Toronto and the GTHA. We cannot have a healthy, thriving downtown core if these problems expand and drive more people in need to a few neighbourhoods downtown.

Preserving and expanding a 'destination' downtown for workers and visitors

The pandemic has changed the nature of every business and how they serve employees, customers and visitors. This is a higher cost environment. The post-pandemic economy requires a fair, equitable and transparent tax environment that does not punish one group of businesses over another. This includes sharing burdens of new service and investment across the entire City and province, and across all tax classes. Not just businesses.

Transit investment to ensure return (and growth) of the downtown workforce

450,000 worked in the Toronto downtown core prior to the pandemic. A healthy, thriving Toronto region will rely on their return, and the expansion of access to jobs with transit investment will be key. We will need to see all three levels of government continue to invest in new transit access. Construction mitigation will become even more important, and we must include direct support of businesses impacted to provide a chance to survive and thrive afterwards.

The Downtown BIAs are ready to do our part and support leaders who are committed to the success of the Toronto downtown core.

Briar de Lange
Executive Director
Bloor-Yorkville BIA

Janice Solomon
Executive Director
Toronto Downtown West BIA

Mark Garner
Chief Operating Officer
and Executive Director
Downtown Yonge BIA

Al Smith
Executive Director
*St. Lawrence Market
Neighbourhood BIA*

Grant Humes
Executive Director
Toronto Financial District BIA

Tim Kocur
Executive Director
Waterfront BIA

Healthy Communities

Safety & Inclusion: 9-point Action Plan

1. Coordinated service delivery

End the silos – all relevant agencies and departments, at all levels, must work together

- Education, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, supportive housing and law enforcement are integral components in a holistic approach.
- Police and outreach workers must work in tandem to get people the help they need.
- Municipal, federal and provincial roles need to be interconnected – not an excuse for deflecting responsibility.

2. Wrap-around services – not harm reduction alone

Stop treating harm reduction as an isolated focus

- Harm reduction facilities are inadequate – and ineffective – without the necessary wrap-around services to support them. Otherwise this is little more than harm *deferral*, creating a “revolving door” of repeat use.
- Without effective wrap-around services, not only do individuals not get the long-term help they need, harm reduction facilities become magnets for illegal activities and negatively impact experiences in the surrounding neighbourhood.
- The recognized four pillars of harm reduction services must *all* be in place:
 - Supervised consumption.
 - Partnership with law enforcement, to prevent exploitation of the vulnerable and keep the surrounding community safe.
 - Prevention and education programs, to keep usage from starting in the first place.
 - Access to treatment – detox and rehab facilities available when needed.

3. Relocate supervised injection sites near medical support facilities

Tourism and culture are *experiential*

- High traffic tourist areas are no place for a supervised injection sites. They should be moved closer to where medical support is immediately available.
- Similarly, place such as hotels, while necessary as temporary shelter space during the COVID-19 pandemic, is not a long-term solution. They should return to their original purpose.
- The ongoing success of downtown depends on a strong sense of safety and security for visitors, workers and residents.
- With arts and cultural spaces, hospitality, sports, theatres and other attractions, Downtown West is crucial to Toronto’s economic recovery. Image and perceptions matter.

4. Distribute support services across the GTA

Social services should not be concentrated in one area

- Intensive social service supports are disproportionately located in the downtown core. They should be decentralized, which would enable more stable delivery and ease the strain on downtown neighbourhoods.
- Social services – including supportive housing, and addiction and mental health facilities – should be equitably distributed across the Greater Toronto Area.

5. Objective, unbiased data

Establish consistent definitions, metrics and evaluation criteria

- Create an independent agency to compile, track and analyze data about street involvement, homelessness, drug use, crime.
- Eliminate confirmation bias and self-interested data collection.
- Base decisions and actions on neutral, empirical evidence.
- Show all the data – even when it's bad news.

6. Enforce the law

No exceptions for violent crime

- Regardless of an individual's situation, criminal and provincial offences must be prosecuted.
- Social services and law enforcement must work together – helping the vulnerable while targeting and prosecuting traffickers and gang-related crime.

7. Proportional resource allocation

Unique demands in Downtown West require targeted approaches

- Pre-pandemic, Downtown West had more foot traffic and activity than most other parts of Toronto – requiring more resources to maintain safety, security and cleanliness.
- COVID-19 was a major tipping point, exacerbating the need for proportionally higher resources.
- Economic recovery will radiate out from the city centre.
- Clarity is needed around Section 37 funds, to ensure timely decisions based on demonstrated economic and community priorities.
- Local BIAs and other community organizations should have direct input into resource allocation decisions.

8. Measure outcomes

Track investments, objectives and results

- All levels of government are contributing public funds toward community safety programs and initiatives, but these investments are piecemeal. They need to be more strategic, targeted and cohesive.
- Accountability is critical to ensure that investments address root causes and street-related issues.
- Specific outcomes need to be tracked on an individual basis – monitoring action taken for each individual, whether it has been effective and if further intervention is needed.
- Measuring inputs – money spent, staff time, meetings/consultations, number of outreach engagements – is meaningless without also tracking whether they make a positive difference.

9. Decisions based on reality, not ideology

Treat individuals as individuals, not symbols

- Provide help for those who need it and prosecute those who exploit them.
- Engage with communities to move forward inclusively, not focusing solely on the needs of one part of the population.
- Exercise duty of care for everyone.

March 7, 2022

Hon. Caroline Mulroney
Minister of Transportation
777 Bay St., 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z8

Dear Minister Mulroney:

RE: IMPLEMENTING A CO-FARE AGREEMENT BETWEEN TTC AND GO TRANSIT

Toronto's Downtown Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) represent neighbourhoods that include Canada's largest employment centre with more than 400,000 employees, its busiest transit hub, and vibrant concentrations of retail, hospitality, arts, culture, and tourism.

We are pleased with the Ontario Government's announcement on March 1, 2022, to eliminate double fares for several local transit agencies with connections to GO Transit. This is an important milestone toward achieving improved transit accessibility for the diverse range of commuters across the region who are returning to our downtown.

Our organizations have been working at the ground level to help Toronto businesses navigate the various challenges of the pandemic. We work diligently to encourage a broad return of Toronto's vibrant downtown and maintain a strong focus on ensuring Toronto's business environment remains competitive regionally and internationally. We are strong proponents of the four provincial priority transit expansion projects in Toronto and recognize that continued investment in transit is essential to economic recovery and long-term competitiveness.

We work closely with regional transit agencies, Metrolinx and TTC, to support a broad return of ridership. An important element of encouraging that return is removing barriers to accessing transit. Double fares between the TTC and GO Transit is a significant barrier to transit accessibility and to encouraging individuals to return downtown via transit. Double fares for Toronto commuters who rely on the TTC and GO Transit seriously impedes the ability of workers to find employment and for employers to attract and retain talent. As the largest local transit agency in the Toronto Region, the failure to include TTC into this fare integration plan, means the plan is far from complete.

We strongly support a fare integration plan between TTC and GO Transit, knowing the continued success and resilience of our region depends on it. The 2018-2020 TTC-GO Discounted Double Fares program was an important step to establishing fare integration across the region and we highly encourage a re-instatement of this program.

Best regards,

Al Smith
Executive Director
St. Lawrence Market
Neighbourhood BIA

Briar de Lange
Executive Director
Bloor-Yorkville BIA

Grant Humes
Executive Director
Toronto Financial District BIA

Janice Solomon
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Mark Garner
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Executive Director
Downtown Yonge BIA

Tim Kocur
Executive Director
The Waterfront BIA

cc: Associate Minister of Transportation Stan Cho
Mayor John Tory
Rick Leary, CEO, TTC
Phil Verster, President & CEO, Metrolinx

BIA Office
City of Toronto
100 Queen Street West
Toronto Ontario M5H 2N2

March 15, 2022

To Whom It May Concern,

As Executive Director of the Toronto Downtown West BIA, I am pleased to offer our support of The Bentway's Under-Gardiner Public Realm Plan.

Our BIA encompasses a significant part of the downtown area, generally bounded by the Financial District to the east, Queen Street West to the north, Spadina Avenue to the west, and the Gardiner Expressway to the south.

We recently began working with The Bentway on a project to transform key intersections under the Gardiner, and are excited that this work will continue through a major policy/planning endeavour. The Bentway's ongoing work to transform the Gardiner, from obstacle to gateway, will continue to enhance connectivity and access to and from Toronto Downtown West.

The BIA is pleased to be part of the continued re-envisioning of the Gardiner and is happy to endorse the Under-Gardiner Public Realm Plan.

About the Toronto Downtown West BIA:

With distinct architecture both old and new, Toronto Downtown West BIA is a thriving commercial hub of creative houses, hospitality and retail. It includes many of Toronto's most iconic cultural landmarks including the CN Tower, Steam Whistle Brewing, Ripley's Aquarium, Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Rogers Centre, Roy Thomson Hall, Princess of Wales Theatre, TIFF Bell Lightbox, and Bell Media. Our catchment has a growing population of 30,000 residents, 19 million visitors annually and a workforce of 90,000 – figure and people who have been deeply impacted by the recent public health pandemic.



Janice Solomon
Executive Director
Toronto Downtown West BIA

May 6, 2022

TORONTO NEEDS AN URBAN CHAMPION

To the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Freeland,

We are writing to invite you to become one of Canada's Urban Champions here in Downtown Toronto and in Parliament!

For two years, COVID decimated what our country used to know as the usual rhythm of day-to-day life. Even with loosening regulations, remnants of the pandemic leave many people apprehensive about returning to former routines. This is not only having a social impact on society, it is having a direct economic impact on businesses and their employees, and is significantly altering the historic role of our downtowns and main streets as the community meeting place, cultural showcase, and symbol of progress and prosperity. We need some dramatic actions to draw people back to the cores of their communities and we believe you can help!

Toronto's six large downtown BIAs and the International Downtown Association Canada [IDA Canada] are working together, with other downtown partners across the country, to create a League of Champions with whom we can work to address the many issues which have pre-existed or have developed in downtowns and on main streets during the pandemic. It is also the chance to capitalize on opportunities which exist to make the cores of Canadian communities stronger and more vibrant and vital.

The following are three specific challenges which business improvement associations have identified as significantly impacting our downtowns and main streets from coast to coast. We believe they are matters which the Federal Government can play a significant role in helping us to address.

1. Street Issues

Street issues are having a major impact on our downtowns and main streets. IDA Canada and its partners are asking the Federal Government to immediately take action by working with and providing funding to provincial and municipal governments and their partners:

a. To provide \$400 million to municipalities and their partners to support low barrier shelters and safe spaces for people with precarious housing needs to address the short-term housing crisis, the impacts of which are playing out in our downtowns and on our main streets. While there are

federal and provincial medium- and long-term programs to support building affordable housing, the benefits will not be felt for years down the road and do nothing to address the current crisis. A prime example of collaboration in creating shelter and safe space is N'Dinawemak – Our Relatives' Place - created in Winnipeg through temporary support by the City of Winnipeg and Province of Manitoba and operated by a collaborative of several community support groups.

b. To address the opioid and addiction epidemic in our downtowns and on our main streets, which have reached devastating proportions. We have called on the Minister of Health and the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction to work together and provide our municipalities and their partners on the streets with stable funding for in-patient addiction supports through the Canada Health Transfer. We are also asking the federal government to increase funding for harm reduction which would include provision of a safer drug supply and further funding for naloxone kits and continuing education.

2. Continued Small Business Assistance

The pandemic has devastated downtown and main street businesses. Offices have remained closed and foot traffic has dramatically decreased. We are thankful that Parliament has provided many critical supports to our small businesses. However, more support is needed not just to survive, but to rejuvenate these businesses.

a. IDA Canada is calling upon the federal government to expand the critical CEBA loans to small businesses from \$60,000 to \$80,000. We are also asking that the repayment period be extended to 2025 to give businesses more time to re-build. We are also asking that the forgivable portion be increased from 33% to 45% if it is repaid by 2025.

b. We request that downtown and main street-oriented incentive programs that have been introduced in Ontario [My Main Street] and Atlantic Canada [Rediscover Main Streets] be introduced in the remaining regions of our country.

c. We also request continued financial support for *shop local* promotional programs which would be available to be administered by both business improvement associations and chambers of commerce. In light of there being a \$27 billion or a 47% increase in online shopping between 2018 and 2020, we also need your support for more direct incentives to make local products and stores more appealing to Canadian consumers.

3. Infrastructure

For decades, municipalities have been running up a devastating infrastructure deficit that is only getting worse. As a way to help stimulate the Canadian economy and help further spur economic activity, IDA Canada is calling upon the federal government to allocate \$500 million annually from the Building Canada Infrastructure Program to specifically target and help revitalize our downtowns and main streets.

To accomplish this, we are calling on the government to put out a call for municipalities to revitalize our downtowns and main streets to make them more accessible, community-oriented, and sustainable. We believe this can be done as follows:

- a. Continue and develop easily accessible funding programs that can also be partnered with ongoing as well as new municipal and BIA streetscape projects for the redesign and creation of 'complete streets' and redesign and adaptation of public spaces for new cultural performances and social gatherings.
- b. provide assistance to business and property owners to redesign and reconstruct ground-floor building facades and openings in response to changing demands.
- c. encourage more green thinking by incorporating into the above designs: burying overhead wires, providing run-off water reduction & recapture, and power generation.

Downtowns and main streets are the hearts of our cities and towns and by addressing the above issues, we can re-imagine and re-energize our community cores, which will in turn, benefit the social cohesion and economy of our country.

We would like to request a meeting with you to further discuss these important issues and how we can partner together on this. We look forward to working together to address these matters and believe you can be a champion of these issues in our community,

Sincerely,

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Neighbourhood BIA

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