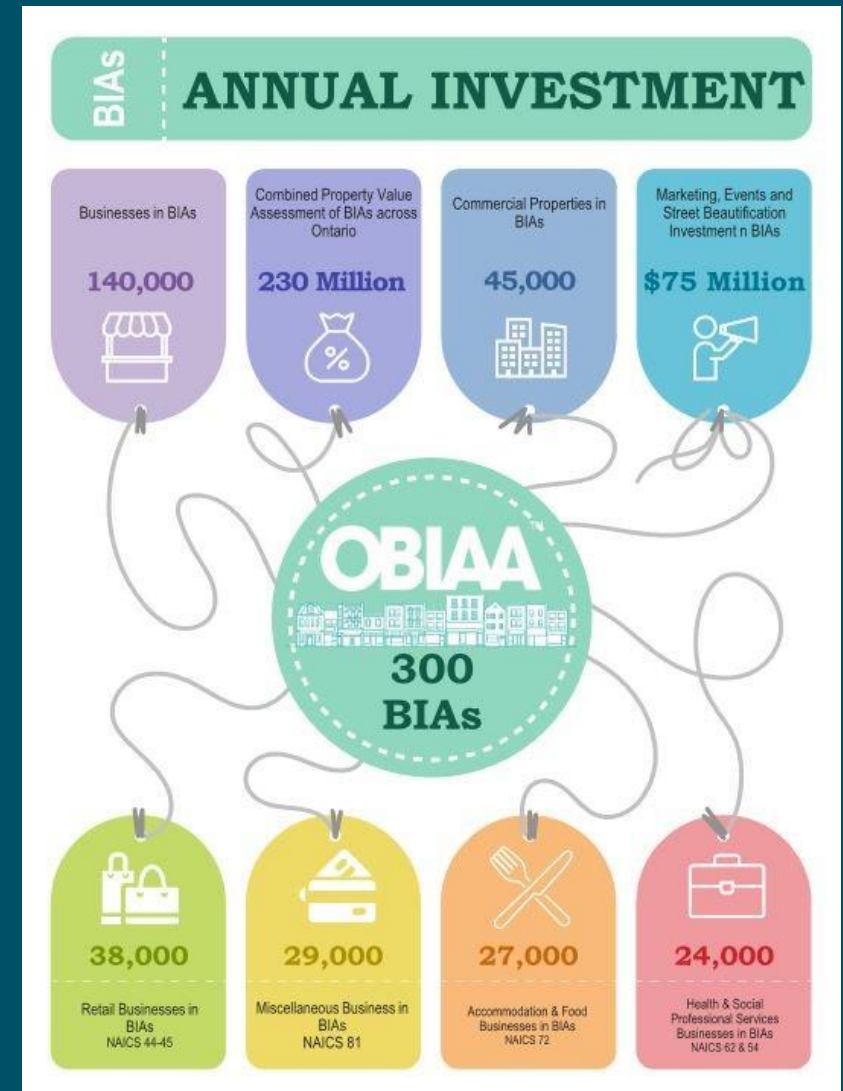


# Introduction

Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) play a critical role in the promotion of main street businesses in their respective communities.

We thank OMAFRA, MEDJCT and the Associate Minister of Small Business for your combined investment in Digital Main Street.

In our final report on the Ontario Grants Program of Digital Main Street (DMS), with OBIAA as the granting partner of the Ontario Government, we note an investment of **\$57,226,500** over six (6) years by the Ontario Government. Over those same 6 years, BIAs across Ontario invested upward of **\$75,000,000 annually** to support their local business community (through a special levy on the municipal tax bills), a total investment over the same 6 years by Ontario's 300+ BIAs is the staggering number of **\$450,000,000**.



# Summary

What OBIAA is asking of you, Associate Minister Tangri, Ministry - Small Business, is:

To champion the creation of a Main Street Entrepreneurship program, an entrepreneurship program could include (but not be limited to):

- a. Main Street Service Squads to identify gaps in the needs of small businesses who may:
  - i. Be looking to retire and require succession planning
  - ii. Be looking to connect with entrepreneurs who are looking for a turn-key operation to grow
  - iii. Require training in Business Planning, Mentoring programs
- b. Digital Main Street programming and training
  - i. Including Cyber Security and emerging digital technologies

Thank you for meeting with us, we have also met with the Minister of Red Tape Reduction and discussed Digital Main Street, the small businesses and Digital Service Squad Grants. This program, as administered by OBIAA, was recognized for supporting more than 87,000 small businesses over 6 years with minimal red tape.

We have asked the Minister of Red Tape Reduction to champion the need for a change to the Municipal Act of Ontario as it pertains to BIAs. This is a key priority for OBIAA and our Board. OBIAA has already begun work towards the Municipal Act refresh. BIAs are Local Boards of Council, however they are also a unique private-public partnership that raises funds, through a special tax levy, for the betterment of the public realm. They are limited in grant funding due to their status as a “corporation of the municipality”. In 2020, OBIAA engaged Professor Ben-Ishai to create a document that outlined the strengths and weaknesses of the Municipal Act. OBIAA is using Professor Ben-Ishai’s report as a cornerstone to recommendations on changes to the Act.

Lack of ability to access grants and funds for BIAs is, however, just one portion of the Municipal Act as it pertains to BIA, a full review of the Municipal Act to tackle the pain-points identified by Municipalities and BIAs alike is necessary. OBIAA is recommending that the Government confirm their intent to review the Municipal Act as it pertains to BIAs and consult and work directly with OBIAA in its efforts to update the Municipal Act. Further, BIAs should also be eligible for small infrastructure funds.





ONTARIO BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA ASSOCIATION

# “Driving Local Success...Together”

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