



June 15, 2026

Mayor Josh Morgan

Chair, Big City Mayors' Caucus
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
24 Clarence Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 5P3

Re: OBIAA's Endorsement of the BCMC Vibrant Downtowns Initiative

Dear Mayor Morgan,

On behalf of the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) - the provincial network representing over 300 BIAs, more than 140,000 small businesses millions of square feet of commercial property, and billions of dollars in annual economic activity. The health of our downtowns and Main Streets is directly tied to employment, investment attraction, tourism, property assessment growth, and community prosperity - which is why I am writing to formally express our strong and enthusiastic endorsement of the Big City Mayors' Caucus Vibrant Downtowns initiative, released in June 2026.

The priorities your Caucus has advanced - coordinated investment in housing and homelessness, organized crime and public safety, and transit and infrastructure - resonate deeply with what OBIAA hears from our member BIAs every day. These are not theoretical policy gaps. They are daily realities confronting small business owners, property owners, employees, and customers across Ontario. In many communities, these pressures are now threatening business viability, discouraging private investment, and undermining decades of downtown revitalization efforts. Your Caucus has named the connections clearly and made the case for coordinated action with force and credibility. OBIAA is proud to add our voice in support.

Why This Initiative Matters to Ontario's Main Streets

OBIAA's mandate spans communities of every size - from major urban corridors to small-town Main Streets with populations in the hundreds. We note that the BCMC's initiative, while led by Canada's largest cities, speaks to conditions that extend well beyond them. The pressures your Caucus has identified - homelessness, safety, and infrastructure gaps - are reshaping

commercial districts in mid-sized and smaller Ontario communities with equal, and sometimes greater, force. Your initiative gives language and national legitimacy to a challenge that our members have been navigating largely without recognition at the federal level.

We are particularly pleased by the initiative's framing of vibrant downtowns as an economic and nation-building priority. Business Improvement Areas exist precisely because commercial districts do not sustain themselves - they require deliberate, coordinated investment and stewardship. The BCMC's call for all orders of government to treat downtowns as shared economic infrastructure is a framing OBIAA has long advocated for, and one we will carry forward actively with our provincial and federal government contacts.

How OBIAA Is Amplifying Your Priorities

OBIAA is not simply writing to endorse - we are actively working to extend the reach and impact of your initiative across Ontario. Specifically, we are:

- **Writing directly to federal and provincial ministers** - including the federal Ministers of Housing, and Small Business, and the provincial Ministers of Housing and Small Business - expressing OBIAA's support for your priorities and urging coordinated provincial and federal action.
- **Mobilizing our 300+ member BIAs** to send their own letters of support to their local mayors, MPPs, and MPs, grounding the national conversation in the specific conditions of their individual commercial districts.
- **Contributing OBIAA's research** - including our whitepaper [*Turning the Lights On: Looking for the Hidden Housing on Ontario's Main Streets*](#) - to government contacts as evidence of the housing and economic opportunity that exists within existing Main Street buildings across Ontario, complementing the BCMC's broader housing priorities.

An Invitation to Work Together

OBIAA recognizes that the BCMC's Vibrant Downtowns initiative is built on the perspectives of Canada's largest municipal governments. We believe there is value in broadening that coalition to include the small business and BIA sector, recognizing BIAs as frontline partners in economic development, place management, public realm stewardship, community safety, and business retention. We witness these challenges daily and can provide practical, on-the-ground insights that complement municipal and governmental perspectives.



We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and the BCMC to explore how OBIAA and Canada's BIA sector can contribute to the implementation of your priorities - whether through data sharing, joint advocacy, or participation in working groups as programs are designed and delivered. Strong nations need strong downtowns, as your Caucus has said. And strong downtowns need thriving small businesses. We look forward to building that case together.

Please do not hesitate to reach out at rachel@obiaa.com or 647-521-5341. We are proud to stand with the BCMC in support of vibrant downtowns for all Canadians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Braithwaite', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rachel Braithwaite
Executive Director
rachel@obiaa.com
647-521-5341