



June 15, 2026

The Honourable Rob Flack

Minister of Housing

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A2

Re: Ontario's Main Streets and the FCM Vibrant Downtowns Initiative – A Call for Provincial Alignment

Dear Minister Flack,

I am writing again on behalf of the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA), the provincial network representing over 300 BIAs and more than 140,000 small businesses across Ontario. We were recently in touch regarding the hidden housing opportunity above Ontario's Main Street commercial properties, and I am grateful for your office's attention to that file. I am writing today on a related but distinct matter: to formally express OBIAA's support for the priorities advanced by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Big City Mayors' Caucus (BCMC) in their June 2026 Vibrant Downtowns initiative, and to ask that Ontario align its housing and community policy with the direction this national initiative is setting.

What the BCMC Initiative Means for Ontario

The BCMC's Vibrant Downtowns initiative calls for coordinated action across all orders of government on three interconnected priorities: homelessness and housing, organized crime and public safety, and transit and infrastructure. Its central argument - that the health of Canada's downtowns is inseparable from national economic competitiveness and investor confidence - is one OBIAA has been making on behalf of Ontario's small businesses for years.

While much of the BCMC's call was directed at the federal government, the solutions it envisions require genuine provincial partnership. Ontario's housing policy, building code, and land use framework are among the most powerful levers available to make the vision of vibrant, economically productive downtowns a reality in this province. OBIAA is asking that the Province treat this national momentum as an opportunity to lead - and that your Ministry play a central role in that response.

We would also note that the BCMC's housing priority - reducing chronic homelessness and expanding deeply affordable housing through coordinated, multi-order government action - connects directly to the upper-floor housing opportunity we raised in our earlier correspondence. We are grateful that file is already on your radar, and we are hopeful that the broader national conversation now underway will lend further momentum to that work.

What We Are Asking of the Province

We respectfully ask that your Ministry champion the following within the provincial government:

- **Champion a provincial response to homelessness and housing instability** that matches federal investment intent, including sustained funding for mental health and addictions services, Housing First programs, and deeply affordable housing. Visible homelessness on Ontario's commercial corridors has a direct and measurable impact on the viability of small businesses and the perception of our Main Streets as destinations.
- **Align provincial housing strategy with the BCMC's Vibrant Downtowns direction** by treating Main Street housing supply, community safety, and downtown infrastructure as interconnected policy levers rather than siloed programs - and by ensuring that communities of all sizes across Ontario benefit from the investments that flow from this national initiative.
- **Align provincial infrastructure and transit investment** with the federal Vibrant Downtowns priorities to ensure Ontario communities receive the coordinated, multi-order investment that Main Streets of every size need to grow and attract the density and foot traffic that sustains local business.
- **Ensure BIAs and the small business sector have a meaningful voice** in provincial housing and downtown recovery planning, so that policy reflects the lived experience of the businesses and communities it is designed to support. OBIAA is well-positioned to contribute ground-level intelligence on where provincial investment is having impact and where gaps remain.

Ontario's 300+ BIAs represent the commercial and community fabric of this province - from major urban corridors to small-town Main Streets. When Canada's mayors are calling vibrant downtowns a national economic priority, Ontario has both an opportunity and an obligation to align. We are confident your Ministry can play a decisive role in ensuring that alignment translates into real results for Ontario's communities and the small businesses that anchor them.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your staff to continue the conversation we have already begun. I can be reached at rachel@obiaa.com or 647-521-5341.

Sincerely,



Rachel Braithwaite
Executive Director