



OBIAA's vision is for every Ontario community to have thriving Main Streets, where economic vitality, collaboration, and innovation drive local success. Our mission is to provide the resources, networks, and advocacy that support Main Street resilience and growth. Halfway through 2026, that work is well underway – and this report highlights what we've accomplished together with our members, organized around our three strategic pillars.

OBIAA AT A GLANCE

140,000+

Businesses Represented

18,000+

Property Owners

6 million

Employees & Jobs

\$70B+

Current Value Assessment

\$765M+

combined annual BIA levy investment

\$55M+

in public realm investment funds generated

OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION, 2025-2028

PILLAR 1

Strengthening Organizational Capacity

PILLAR 2

Empowering Advocacy

PILLAR 3

Building Member Capacity

A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT'S INSIDE

New policies, new revenue

OSUM & EDCO conferences attended, plus ROD and Canada Summer Jobs funding secured

17 letters, 1 whitepaper

15 government meetings and our Turning the Lights On housing research

11 mentorship matches

4 toolkits launched and a 327-delegate conference rated 94% excellent/good



PILLAR 1 STRENGTHENING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Enhancing OBIAA's operational resilience through diversified revenue, optimized resources, and strong risk management.

What We've Accomplished So Far

- ✓ Introduced new governance policies, including a Newsletter Content Policy and a Media Relations Policy
- ✓ Launched the OBIAA Advocacy Partner program to help boost our advocacy efforts
- ✓ Received funding from the Rural Ontario Development (ROD) program and Canada Summer Jobs (CSJ)
- ✓ Attended the OSUM and EDCO conferences to build partnerships and raise OBIAA's profile
- ✓ Welcomed two new board members, Kerry Baird & Wesley Found

Still in the Works

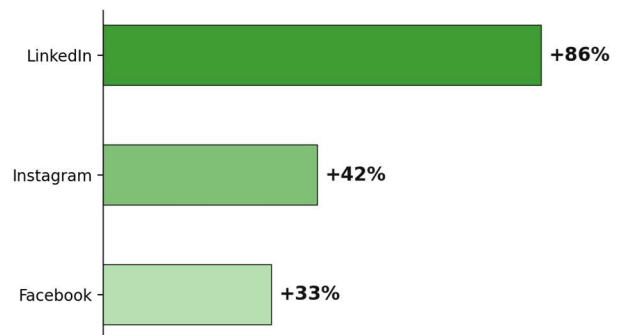
- Applying for 2–3 additional grants
- Establishing an HR Committee
- Attending the IDA conference and EDCO's Professional Development Day



Growing Our Voice Online

Follower growth, January–June 2026

A stronger social presence means more Main Streets hearing about advocacy wins, funding opportunities, and toolkits as soon as they launch.



Keeping Members Informed

This year we shared plain-language updates on the Big City Mayors' Caucus downtown priorities (with template letters of support), the Ombudsman Report, Bill 9, Bill 97, Bill C-14, the Ontario Budget submission, BYO alcohol policy, and member feedback to Metrolinx, through:

25

Newsletters

20

PD Announcements

13

Other Member Updates

6

Job Postings

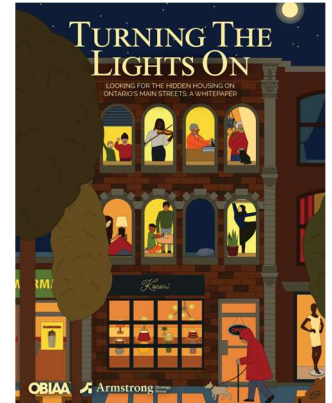
PILLAR 2 EMPOWERING ADVOCACY

Equipping members with the tools, resources, and data they need to amplify their impact on local economies and community development.

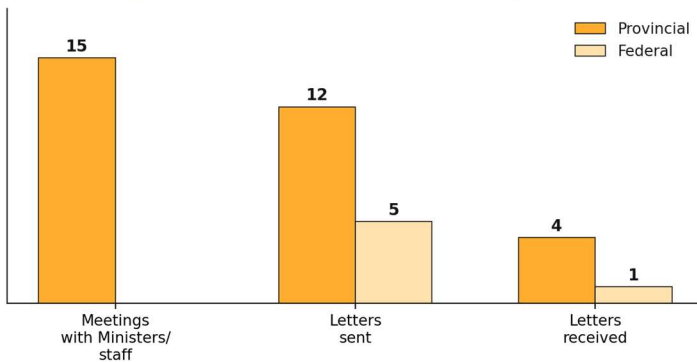
Turning the Lights On: Our 2026 Housing Whitepaper

Drafted in partnership with Armstrong Strategy Group and shared with provincial and federal ministers responsible for housing and small business, our whitepaper made the case for unlocking vacant upper-floor residential space above commercial properties on Ontario's Main Streets – a practical, place-based solution to the housing crisis. Our recommendations include establishing an adaptive compliance pathway within the Building Code, funding a province-wide upper-floor housing inventory, expanding supportive housing partnerships, and strengthening Community Improvement Plans to support conversions.

Template letters were shared with members to carry the message forward locally. [Read the Turning the Lights On Whatpaper](#)



Advocating on Behalf of BIAs, Municipalities, and Small Businesses



Upcoming: AMO Conference (3 delegations confirmed), IDA Parliament Hill Day, and TIAO Queen's Park Day.

Why Surveys Matter

OBIAA's member surveys give BIAs a collective voice on the policy issues that affect them directly. The data we collect shapes our advocacy, informs our resources, and helps government understand the real experience of Main Street operators across Ontario. This year we ran surveys and reports on audit fees, Integrity Commissioner obligations, and Bring-Your-Own (BYO) alcohol policy.

Sample Survey Data and Impacts

Smaller BIAs carry a disproportionate audit cost burden. 27% of respondents saw audit fees increase significantly – some more than double. Average audit cost: approximately \$5,940. Our BYO policy survey findings led directly to a meeting with the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the AGCO to advance BIA interests as the policy rolled out.

3
Surveys & Reports

1
Whitepaper

15
Government Meetings

17
Letters Sent

PILLAR 3 BUILDING MEMBER CAPACITY

Facilitating collaboration, best practices, and training so members can navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

Mentorship Program

11 matches made – connecting experienced BIA leaders with those newer to the sector. Thank-you to those who stepped into the role of mentor.

Toolkits Launched or Updated

- ✓ Construction Mitigation
- ✓ Municipal Elections
- ✓ BIA Board Elections
- ✓ Delegation

Toolkits in Development

- ✓ BIA 101
- ✓ Regional Connections
- ✓ Expanding/Starting a BIA

Conference 2026 – 327 delegates and exhibitors

New This Year:

- ✓ Minister Roundtables
- ✓ What Matters Café
- ✓ Conference app
- ✓ Highest number of Award submissions



Webinars & Learning

Completed

- ✓ Board Elections webinar
- ✓ CUI – Access to Data webinar

Coming Up

- ✓ Save on Energy webinar
- ✓ A Professional Development Day focused on partnerships & placemaking

Ongoing

- ✓ Weekly What Matters Calls featuring 7 guest speakers

Partnerships That Extend Our Reach

TABIA

Toronto Association of BIAs
All 85 Toronto BIAs receive full OBIAA membership; TABIA holds a voting Board seat and 6 complimentary conference registrations annually.

EDCO

Economic Developers Council of Ontario
Collaborate and advocate together through EDCO Queen's Park Day and cross-promotion of events, news, and awards.

TIAO

Tourism Industry Association of Ontario
BIA members access discounted TIAO membership; collaboration on research at the intersection of tourism and Main Street vitality.

Broader network: AMO, ROMA, OBCM, AMCTO, IDA Canada, CUI, Business Districts of Canada

Partnerships That Support Main Streets

TD Insurance: OBIAA members can now save on TD Insurance for business.

Main Street Advantage Project Launched

Funded through the Ministry of Rural Affairs and supported by a new Project Manager and two interns, this rural-competitiveness initiative is creating a Main Street Revitalization Toolkit for members and has established a new partnership with the Canadian Urban Institute to help members access data at a significantly reduced cost. For more information [Learn more about the Main Street Advantage Project](#)



OBIAA

Our Team for 2026

Rachel Braithwaite – Executive Director
Mason Ainsworth – Main Street Revitalization Project Manager
Erin Douglas – Administrative & Membership Manager
Kennishia Duffus – Events & Sponsorship Manager
Rosemary Watters – Finance & Grants Manager (contract)

Natascha Ibowski – Research Intern (Humber)
Benjo Mathew – Intern (Western)
Nadine Bongers, Hajirah Omar, & Lauren Smith – Interns (Brock)
Daniella Muir-Ames & Nina Seaman – Canada Summer Jobs

Our Board for 2026

Stephanie Hicks – Town of Lincoln
Salvatore Marchese – City of Sault Ste. Marie
Nour Mazloun – Peterborough Downtown BIA
Sara Porter – Southampton BIA
Doug Sams – Kerr Village BIA (Oakville)
Kerry Baird – City of Woodstock
Tasneem Bandukwala – Gerrard India Bazaar & Uptown Yonge BIAs (Toronto)
Wesley Found – Lindsay Downtown BIA
John Kiru – Toronto Association of BIAs
Andrew Marks – Downtown Timmins BIA
Susan Nicholson – Downtown Collingwood BIA
Vicki Smith – Downtown London BIA
Andrea Steenbakkers – Barrhaven BIA (Ottawa)
Donna Szpakowski – Hyde Park BIA (London)

Thank You to Our Members, Board, and Partners

Everything in this report is possible because of the BIAs, municipalities, and small businesses who show up for their Main Streets every day. We look forward to building on this momentum through the rest of 2026 and beyond.



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