

Ottawa Board of Trade Issues Urgent Call to Action to Declare Downtown Ottawa a Key Priority

Ottawa, June 9, 2023 - Sueling Ching, President and CEO of the Ottawa Board of Trade (OBOT) calls upon the Federal Government, the province of Ontario and the City of Ottawa to join OBOT as they declare Downtown Ottawa their top priority and work with stakeholders to build a roadmap to transformation for downtown core.

The Ottawa Board of Trade has long identified the lasting impacts of the pandemic on mobility patterns, as a unique and timely opportunity to reimagine the future of our downtown core.

“Downtown Ottawa is the heartbeat of the region. What happens downtown has a direct and immediate impact on every business, citizen and visitor. Without a focused plan, our current trajectory will negatively impact our property tax base and ability to provide key services like police and transit.” explains Ching. “The Ottawa Board of Trade is committed to a five-pillar action plan that identifies key areas that need to be addressed to ensure our downtown core remains a key driver of economic growth and community prosperity for all.”

Over the last several months, OBOT has convened stakeholders and contributed to various discussions about the downtown such as MP Naqvi’s Downtown Revitalization Task Force, the Mayor’s Economic Summit, and the Ottawa City Building Summit. At the federal level, OBOT also advocated for the development of a National Urban Strategy through their work with the Canadian Global Cities Council, a coalition of the largest city Chambers and Boards of Trades across Canada.

“We recognize and commend all the great initiatives underway. We are pleased to see a deepened understanding of why a vibrant and diverse downtown Ottawa is so critical to the whole region,” says Ching, “however, the time has come for the highest level of collaboration and support from all governments and stakeholders. Immediate action is needed to avoid a further hollowing of the core and avoid reaching a point of no return.”

“We cannot afford to wait and risk the devastating levels of abandonment, vacant buildings, and disinvestment we’ve seen in some US cities.” warns Ching, “The financial and social repercussions would impact every single citizen in Canada’s Capital Region, from increased property taxes, to decreased services to declining quality of life. We know a turnaround is possible with partners and a plan. Other large Canadian cities are leading the way.”

“Over the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to our public and private economic development partners, elected officials and residents to join us as we identify the work and resources needed to support the five-pillar action plan created by our economic development committee,” says Ian Sherman, Chair of the OBOT Board of Directors. “Our goal is to establish a roadmap for the transformation our city needs to create a diverse, sustainable and vibrant downtown, one that drives economic growth, strong neighbourhoods and community prosperity across the region.”

The transformation of downtown Ottawa requires a whole-of-community approach. The Ottawa Board of Trade has identified the following five pillars of focus:

1. Create affordable, walkable, amenity-rich communities
2. Flexible and efficient government regulation and approvals
3. Public and private investment in infrastructure
4. Support the growth of private and public sector employment
5. Ensure the safety and security of employers, residents and tourists

The Ottawa Board of Trade will be convening a Downtown Summit with all stakeholders in the fall of 2023 which will include an update on the action plan.

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The Ottawa Board of Trade is the voice of business and a key advocate for economic development in the national capital region. Our mission is to cultivate a thriving world class business community, one that drives community prosperity and builds an affordable, inclusive, and sustainable city. We also provide programs and services that help our members grow their business and their teams. We are an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit association. We work with partners, staff and volunteers that are aligned with our values of collaboration, determination, future thinking, integrity, and passion.