

BIA Levy and Communications Alternatives Across Canada

Commercial area improvement activities are funded using a levy payable by property and or business owners and collected by the municipality. Methods of administering the levy involve the assessment of property and or business premises and the application of a rate or charge that is established based on the budget needed to carry out a particular mandate. The revenues from the levy are then given to an association comprised of those who contributed towards the levy and proposed the budget for its use.

The assessment base and type of rate or charge used for the levy varies somewhat across Canada. In advance of the Notice of Motion, Administration surveyed other assessment authorities and compared provincial legislation and the legislation of large Canadian municipalities.

Property or Business Base

Required to use a business base	Required to use a property base	Options to use business or property base
Alberta and Manitoba	British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, and St. John's Newfoundland, which has its own Act.	Nova Scotia and Quebec

Levy Type

Most commonly, the levy is raised using a rate applied to an assessment value with legislation using a variety of terminology including special property tax, area levy rate, additional mill rate, business improvement area levy, business improvement district tax, or business tax.

Legislation in British Columbia and Quebec, and the City of St. John's all give the additional option of a flat or variable charge per premises or land parcel.

Major Cities

Amongst large cities outside Alberta, Vancouver and Toronto are the most comparable to Calgary and have enabling legislation similar to provisions The City requested during the MGA review and City Charter discussions. In addition to using the non-residential property assessment base, they provide for a dual membership structure that allows for balanced representation by businesses and property owners. Their BIAs' mandates include a focus on attracting businesses and retail customers, and activities that benefit long term property investment in the community. The table below shows the mandate, base for distributing the levy and method of communicating with businesses.

Vancouver

Mandate	Method	Communications to Businesses
Carrying out studies or making reports respecting one or more business areas, The improvement, beautification or maintenance of streets, sidewalks or city owned land, buildings or structures in one or more business improvement areas, The removal of graffiti from buildings or structures in one or more business improvement areas, The conservation of heritage property in one or more business improvement areas, and The encouragement of business in one or more business improvement areas.	The City of Vancouver uses a levy in addition to property tax payable by the owners of commercial or industrial property; the category is similar to Alberta's non-residential property category. The levy is payable by the property owner; tenants pay their share of the BIA levy through the landlord, according to the terms of their lease. Members consist of (1) commercial or industrial property owners that appear on the property assessment roll, and (2) the commercial or industrial tenants of those properties that operate a business under a valid City business license. Boards are representative of the types of businesses and property owners in the BIA. The proportions are determined by bylaws. At minimum each board must have at least one tenant director and one property owner director.	BIAs receive property owner mailing addresses from the centralized provincial assessment authority, BC Assessment, which has different rules for disclosure than Alberta. The City provides the lists of business licenses with owner/operator contact information. The City is not responsible for informing business or property owners of budgets or AGMs. The board notifies all members and all AGMs must take place in September. Once Council has approved the BIA's budget, the City mails a notice of the BIA levy to the board and property owners only. The City also mails the property owner notices regarding proposals to establish, change or disestablish a BIA.

Toronto

Mandate	Method	Communications to Businesses
To oversee the improvement, beautification and maintenance of municipally-owned land, buildings and structures in the business improvement area beyond City standard levels provided at the expense of the municipality generally; To maintain business improvement area-initiated streetscaping capital assets within the business improvement area; To promote the business improvement area as a business, employment, tourist or shopping area; To offer graffiti and poster removal services respecting building façades visible from the street, to all business improvement area member property owners who provide written consent, upon approval of the program by the business improvement area members; To undertake safety and security initiatives within the business improvement area; To undertake strategic planning necessary to address business improvement area issues; and To advocate on behalf of the interests of the business improvement area subject to the limits set out in this chapter.	The City of Toronto uses a levy in addition to property tax payable by the owners of commercial or industrial property; the category is similar to Alberta's non-residential property category. The levy is payable by the property owner; tenants pay their share of the BIA levy through the landlord, according to the terms of their lease. Members consist of (1) the owners of the taxable property that appear on the assessment roll, and (2) the tenants of the property. Boards must consist of one or more directors appointed by a council, and directors elected by members.	The City provides BIAs with mailing information for property owner members in hard copy format. Ontario has different rules for disclosure than Alberta. The list may only be used for newsletters and promotion materials. No business owner/operator information is provided by the City. Boards must use personal outreach, develop lists and or use services for unaddressed mail. The City mails notices regarding AGMs to property owner members only. The City also mails property owners notices regarding proposals to establish, change or disestablish a BIA. Property owners are legislated to provide copies of notices to their tenants. The boards also have a responsibility to notify tenant members of notice information.