

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN CANADA



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# Executive Summary

Currently, all Canadian municipalities have economic development powers, but the extent and nature of these powers vary among provinces and territories, as defined by the legislative framework that governs them. This research identifies and documents Canadian practices in this area, highlighting both the provincial and territorial legislative landscape and the diversity of initiatives implemented by municipalities. The study covers twelve dimensions of economic development, ranging from strategic planning and support for innovation to attracting foreign investment and the creation of municipal corporations. It is based on a literature review combined with the examination of specific cases, in order to offer a representative portrait of existing practices at the local level.

When it comes to economic development, each province and territory sets its own economic development rules. Behind this diversity, however, are common foundations that define the margins of action of municipalities. All share the recognition of the role of municipalities in economic prosperity, although the tools available and the extent of interventions vary from one jurisdiction to another.

## **Economic Development Planning**

All provinces recognize a role for municipalities in economic development planning. In general, economic development strategies or plans set out the municipality's or region's priorities for economic growth, the means to be implemented, and the stakeholders who will work with the municipality to achieve its economic development objectives.

## **Support for Innovation**

Canada's legislative framework provides municipalities with a variety of tools to support innovation, research and technology development, such as targeted development funds, the power to create incubation hubs, and participation in public-private partnerships dedicated to innovation.



## Development and Management of Industrial Zones

Municipalities can strategically develop attractive industrial zones by leveraging their authority over land use planning, zoning regulations, and infrastructure investments to attract and facilitate the establishment of industries.

## Support for Local Businesses

In addition to direct financial assistance, municipalities can in some cases offer other resources to facilitate the start-up of a business as well as training.

## Attracting Foreign Investment

To make their municipalities or regions more economically competitive, municipalities have set up investment prospecting tools and specialized ecosystems to promote their competitive attractions. These include attraction strategies, advertising campaigns and the creation of specialized agencies.

## Financial Incentives

Targeted tax exemptions and credits are the most commonly used tax lever that allows for property tax reductions for specific projects. These can include property tax exemptions for equipment, tax credits for the construction or renovation of buildings, and the provision of strategic infrastructure financing for trade through future property taxes.



## **Establishment of Business Improvement Areas and Commercial Districts**

Municipalities also work directly with business organizations through business improvement areas. These organizations, financed by a special sector tax, can set up initiatives for economic development and revitalization of the commercial sector.

## **International Partnerships**

Municipalities' membership in different forms of partnership allows municipal stakeholders to have access to networks that can facilitate the sharing of best practices. Some international associations may also promote the interests of member municipalities, particularly in terms of economic development.

## **Ownership in Businesses**

Municipalities may acquire stakes in companies or partnerships as part of a previously adopted economic development program, subject to conditions set by the government. The objective is not to manage the company, but to support strategic projects, such as the support of essential and vital companies or the development of innovative sectors.

## **Municipal Corporations**

Municipal corporations are separate legal entities created or majority-owned by local governments to achieve public service or economic development objectives. These corporations, which include utilities, economic development corporations and tourism promotion agencies, allow municipalities to exercise their powers with greater operational flexibility.

## **Municipal Associations**


Bilingual municipal associations play a special role in mobilizing bilingualism as a lever for economic dynamism and cultural cohesion. These groups provide a space for consultation, sharing of practices and technical support to foster innovation, attract investment and support the growth of local communities.

# Background and legislative framework

There are more than 3,500 local governments in Canada, including regional structures whose powers are governed by provincial and territorial legislation. In most jurisdictions, municipalities have natural person powers. These powers generally do not give municipalities greater authority than they already had and do not confer or extend any legislative, regulatory or fiscal powers, since natural persons do not have such powers. Rather, they affect the authority and flexibility of municipalities in administrative or corporate matters. Essentially, a municipality can take any action that an individual or business could take to achieve its objectives, unless the law prohibits it or imposes limits or conditions on such action.

| Provinces and Territories | Provincial/Territorial Population | Number of Municipalities |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| British Columbia          | 5 000 879                         | 188                      |
| Alberta                   | 4 262 635                         | 338                      |
| Saskatchewan              | 1 132 505                         | 767                      |
| Manitoba                  | 1 342 153                         | 137                      |
| Ontario                   | 14 223 942                        | 444                      |
| Québec                    | 8 501 833                         | 1 166                    |
| New Brunswick             | 775 610                           | 89                       |
| Nova Scotia               | 969 383                           | 49                       |
| Prince Edward Island      | 154 331                           | 59                       |
| Newfoundland and Labrador | 510 550                           | 270                      |
| Yukon                     | 40 232                            | 13                       |
| Northwest Territories     | 41 070                            | 33                       |
| Nunavut                   | 36 858                            | 25                       |

Source: 2021 Census of Population, SMLG-SMAL (2025)



With respect to economic development, each province and territory sets its own economic development rules. Behind this diversity, however, are common foundations that define the margins of action of municipalities. All provinces and territories share the recognition of the role of municipalities in economic prosperity, although the tools available and the extent of interventions vary from one jurisdiction to another.

The most common mechanisms, such as targeted property tax exemptions or tax credits for renovations, help stimulate investment and revitalization. Some jurisdictions are also exploring innovative instruments, such as tax increment financing, to reinvest the benefits of major projects locally. An emerging trend now sees municipalities providing direct support for innovation, whether through the establishment of incubators, the provision of subsidized co-working spaces, or the creation of mentorship programs for local entrepreneurs. The popular Business Improvement Area (BIA/BID) formula, funded by merchants themselves, exemplifies the power of collective action and is remarkably successful across the country.

## **Powers to create and manage business districts**

In all provinces and territories, municipalities oversee commercial revitalization and local improvements, ensuring that economic development is promoted and urban spaces are modernized. In British Columbia, the Community Charter and the Local Government Act establish a general jurisdiction clause over economic development, with specific tools such as the creation of Business Improvement Areas (BIAs). This framework makes commercial revitalization a central and institutionalized field of action, largely mobilized by municipalities. Municipal laws allow for the creation of commercial districts. In particular, they allow municipalities to promote an area or district as a zone dedicated to retail trade or for commercial or industrial activities. A dedicated tax may be levied on commercial properties to defray the cost of expenses that benefit commercial properties in the area. Municipalities may also mandate organizations to promote these sectors. In Alberta, municipal authorities place emphasis on local autonomy and the ability to enter into inter-municipal agreements, particularly in metropolitan areas where cooperation is essential. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, municipalities also have general powers over economic development, but these are subject to stricter procedural and budgetary constraints, reducing the flexibility of their action and limiting the scope of revitalization initiatives, which are often limited to one-off programs.





## Financial support for businesses

In terms of direct financial support to businesses, municipalities may provide grants, loans or loan guarantees directly to businesses, with notable variations between provinces. British Columbia and Alberta allow grants through partnership agreements and local programs, while Manitoba and Ontario are expanding this capacity to non-profit organizations and a broader range of recipients, including small business-specific supports. Québec and major cities such as Montréal and Québec City are distinguished by a flexible approach, with the creation of dedicated investment funds and the use of para-municipal corporations to manage financial support. New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have some restrictions, with the latter even prohibiting any direct assistance to businesses. Saskatchewan allows for direct investment in commercial corporations and relies on mechanisms such as business improvement areas. Subsidies remain a popular tool, generally governed by conditions of transparency and often distributed via partnerships with organizations or other levels of government to effectively target projects while sharing risks.

## Economic planning powers

All municipalities have some form of economic development planning powers. In provinces with two-tier municipal systems, this power is shared between regional structures and local municipalities. In British Columbia, regional districts have the mandate to develop Regional Growth Strategies (RGS) that define a strategic framework at the regional level, allowing for interjurisdictional coordination and a vision that integrates the economic, social and environmental issues of the region. The urban plans of local municipalities must comply with this vision by translating this vision into concrete actions at the local level. In Québec, regional county municipalities (RCMs) and the Montréal Metropolitan Community have economic planning powers through land use and development plans that strategically guide economic development at the regional level. By assigning complementary land use and coordinating infrastructure investments, the RCMs ensure regional coherence and strengthen their ability to conclude development agreements with the provincial government and economic stakeholders.

## Powers to enter into agreements and partnership arrangements

Canadian municipalities use a variety of partnerships for their economic development, each framed by specific provincial legislation. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are permitted in all provinces. Partnerships with First Nations are explicitly permitted in British Columbia (Local Government Act), Ontario and Alberta (Municipal Government Act), aimed at territorial economic coordination. International partnerships are explicitly permitted in Québec and Ontario legislation. Finally, partnerships with non-profit organizations exist in almost all jurisdictions.

## Levers of municipal development in Canada's North

While all Canadian municipalities have economic development powers, their implementation is highly dependent on the provincial or territorial framework. In the territories, municipal autonomy is more regulated and often depends on the approval of territorial or federal ministers. In the Northwest Territories, municipalities may encourage the establishment and maintenance of businesses, incorporate or acquire shares in municipal entities, and provide grants, but they may not purchase shares, make loans or provide guarantees without specific approval. In Nunavut, municipalities may enter into agreements with public bodies, Inuit organizations or other municipalities, and operate commercial activities for profit when deemed to be in the public interest, but ministerial approval is required in the event of competition with the private sector. In Yukon, municipalities have similar powers, with a focus on co-planning with other governments, creating business improvement areas, and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation, as exemplified in Whitehorse's Official Plan. The main difference between the territories is the nature and extent of the approvals required and the way in which economic initiatives should be framed to avoid competition with the private sector. Thus, compared to the provinces, territorial municipalities have tools to stimulate the local economy, but their ability to act relies more on regulation, planning and ministerial oversight.



# Economic development planning

All provinces recognize a role for municipalities in economic development planning. In general, economic development strategies or plans set out the municipality's or region's priorities for economic growth, the means to be implemented, and the stakeholders who will work with the municipality to achieve its economic development objectives. In British Columbia, the Local Government Act (s. 428) allows for the adoption of Regional Growth Strategies that directly link economic planning and land use planning. In Alberta, the Municipal Government Act provides broad powers and emphasizes inter-municipal cooperation, including through metropolitan agreements. In Ontario, the Municipal Act, 2001, provides broad autonomy to define local economic strategies, and the City of Toronto Act, 2006, gives the City of Toronto a special status to experiment with new approaches. In Québec, legislation provides a framework for economic development planning, which is generally integrated into planning policies and can be implemented by partner organizations. Regional County Municipalities must develop a territorial vision of the economic, social and environmental development of the territory. The Montréal metropolitan community also has jurisdiction over the planning of major economic development issues in the metropolitan area. Manitoba and Saskatchewan recognize this role in their municipal legislation. In the Atlantic provinces, municipal laws also authorize economic development planning. Finally, in the territories, municipalities may adopt economic plans, but these are still subject to ministerial approval (NWT, Nunavut), except in the Yukon, where the Municipal Act allows for the more direct integration of economic objectives into master plans.

In some provinces, municipalities can develop comprehensive strategic plans, combining attractiveness, innovation, business revitalization and ecological transition, and sometimes integrate cultural and social dimensions. In Surrey, BC and Stony Plain, AB, for instance, municipal governments are mobilized to build strategies that support innovation and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Markham, ON combines economic development and cultural planning. Montréal and Granby (QC) developed structuring plans focused on ecological transition and revitalization. Saint John and Riverview (NB) and Charlottetown (PEI) show that planning, heavily dependent on provincial support, focuses on revitalization and tourism. Finally, in the territories, Yellowknife (NWT) and Iqaluit (NU) demonstrate that planning remains a key tool for economic affirmation and diversification.

## Surrey (BC) - Economic Strategy 2024

The City of Surrey adopted the Economic Strategy 2024 on January 29, 2024, with the goal of becoming a modern, highly livable city recognized as an investment destination and innovation hub. It has set an ambitious goal: to create a job for every residential worker in Surrey, which is fundamental in the context of population growth, with the city's population expected to exceed one million in the near future. To achieve this, the following strategic priorities have been established:

- Attract transformative investments and improve the city's readiness to welcome them, optimize land dedicated to employment (industries, offices, shops, and agriculture).
- Promoting innovation, talent and skills development
- Strengthen local businesses, the vitality and identity of neighbourhoods so that, with growth, the city remains resilient and alive.

## Stony Plain (AB) - Visionary Strategy

The Town of Stony Plain is launching an five-year Economic Development Plan structured around four strategic pillars:

- Infrastructure modernization to attract investors
- Development of public-private partnerships
- Increased support for local SMEs and startups
- Optimization of municipal services

This roadmap, developed with experts in territorial development, positions Stony Plain as a proactive community in the face of contemporary economic challenges. The strategy includes precise evaluation mechanisms with performance indicators and implementation timetable.

This master plan reflects the municipality's desire to build a resilient and inclusive local economy. The authorities emphasize that this initiative will create a favourable ecosystem for both established companies and economic newcomers. The strategy includes:

- A territorial attractiveness fund
- A support programme for entrepreneurs
- The digitization of business services
- Spaces dedicated to innovation

With this framework of action, Stony Plain is equipping itself with tools to stimulate its growth while preserving the quality of life of its citizens, thus affirming its position as a regional economic hub in the making.

## North Battleford (SK) - Economic Development Plan

Battleford City Council has officially approved a new economic development plan aimed at strengthening the territory's attractiveness and stimulating sustainable growth. This strategy is based on several key priorities: strengthening the attractiveness of trade and industry through improved infrastructure and targeted incentives, supporting entrepreneurship and innovation through tailored support programmes, as well as developing local skills in partnership with training institutions.

This comprehensive plan aims to make Battleford a competitive economic hub by focusing on concrete measures. Flagship actions include the implementation of strategic tax incentives, a programme for the revitalization of commercial districts, and the strengthening of collaborations with education and vocational training stakeholders. Elected officials emphasize that this structured approach will create an ecosystem conducive to investment and the creation of sustainable jobs, while allowing for rigorous monitoring of economic benefits through clearly defined performance indicators.

## Markham (ON) - Economic and Cultural Development Strategy

The City of Markham launched its new Economic and Cultural Development Strategy 2023–2027, titled Markham Is More. This innovative approach merges the economic and cultural dimensions for the first time, recognizing their interdependence to attract talent and stimulate innovation. The strategy is based on five pillars:

- business attraction,
- innovation ecosystem,
- support for startups,
- cultural investments and
- development of creative skills.

With its leading technology cluster (including semiconductors), the upcoming York University campus, and the Markham Innovation Exchange project on 1,900 acres dedicated to advanced manufacturing, Markham is building on its strengths. The city is leveraging its talent pool and quality of life to strengthen its position as a leader in innovation, while creating an ecosystem where culture and economy feed off each other.



## Montréal (QC) - 2030 Economic Plan

The City of Montréal has officially launched its 2030 Economic Plan, a strategic roadmap aimed at strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of its economy while accelerating its ecological and digital transition. This structuring plan is based on three main axes: the consolidation of strategic sectors (aeronautics, green technologies, and artificial intelligence), increased support for local and diversified entrepreneurship, and the development of skills for the jobs of tomorrow.

True to its status as an innovative metropolis, Montréal relies on the complementarity between international attractiveness and local roots. The plan includes targeted investments in innovation ecosystems, the deployment of specialized economic corridors and the creation of an economic recovery fund. Particular attention is paid to the revitalization of commercial arteries and the economic development of neighbourhoods, with the aim of reducing territorial inequalities. This strategy positions Montréal as a laboratory for the economic transitions of the 21st century.





## Saint John (N.B.) - Regional Strategic Plan

Envision Saint John is launching two structuring plans to accelerate the region's economic and tourism development, with the City of Saint John playing a pivotal role. The city is actively committed to the regional economic development strategy by aligning its urban planning and public investment policies with the five key levers:

- Workforce training
- Infrastructure modernization
- Support for local businesses
- Attracting investment and
- Improving quality of life

At the same time, for the Tourism Master Plan, the city will adapt its infrastructure and public services to diversify the tourism offer and improve the visitor experience, while ensuring that these developments also benefit residents.

The City of Saint John has been a key partner in the design phase, actively participating in the nine months of consultations (surveys, workshops, and analysis of global trends). It will continue to play a leading role in leading both strategies, in particular by:

- Coordinating its infrastructure investments with regional priorities.
- Adapting its land use planning policies to support economic and tourism objectives.
- Mobilizing its municipal services to facilitate operational implementation.

## Riverview (N.B.) - Community Strategy

The Town of Riverview is introducing its new Economic Development Strategy, developed through extensive consultation with residents, businesses and local partners. This action plan positions the municipality as a leader in balanced growth, articulated around three complementary pillars. The economic component aims to strengthen the resilience of local businesses through better access to land, adapted infrastructure and targeted support for existing startups and businesses. The municipality will play an active role in identifying labour needs and attracting new investment, while ensuring that the commercial and culinary offer is diversified.

Beyond the strictly economic aspects, the strategy insists on the quality of life, as a key element of Riverview's attractiveness. The city is committed to continuing its efforts in housing, mobility and access to health services, while building on its cultural and recreational assets to boost local tourism. This strategic framework, developed in response to new socio-economic realities, now guides municipal action towards smart and inclusive growth. The operational implementation of this plan relies on close collaboration between municipal departments, businesses and the community, making Riverview a model of integrated territorial development.

## Charlottetown (PEI) - A Strategic Plan 2022–2026

The City of Charlottetown has launched its 2022–2026 Strategic Plan, entitled “A Community for All,” which will serve as a roadmap for municipal priorities in the coming years. Structured around four fundamental pillars:

- community building and planning
- governance and civic engagement,
- inclusive economic growth,
- infrastructure and the environment.

This plan was developed through an extensive public consultation that included over 400 responses to an online survey, 100 open house participants, and 30 key informant interviews.

The plan takes a holistic approach to reconciling economic development, heritage preservation and climate resilience. Key commitments include expanding waterfront development, supporting immigration to stimulate population growth, and integrating sustainability criteria into all infrastructure investments. The city will also strengthen its partnerships with local economic and cultural players, while modernizing its municipal services through technology.

## Yellowknife (NT) - Economic Development Strategy

In response to the economic development strategy completed in 2013, the City of Yellowknife undertook an update to its economic vision in 2019. The City Council approved a budget of \$50,000 and established the Mayor’s Economic Development Task Force to guide this renewal process. This approach was informed by key informant consultations and a survey of local businesses to inform the new directions.

The new 2020–2024 Economic Development Strategy, adopted by the Council on April 27, 2020, reflects the city’s renewed commitment to engaging residents and businesses in community development. This updated strategy aims to position Yellowknife as a city open for business, with a diverse, dynamic and talented business community, by supporting partnerships and initiatives that foster a diverse local economy and attract investment. The Implementation Plan was adopted in March 2021 to implement these orientations and strengthen the city’s economic base.





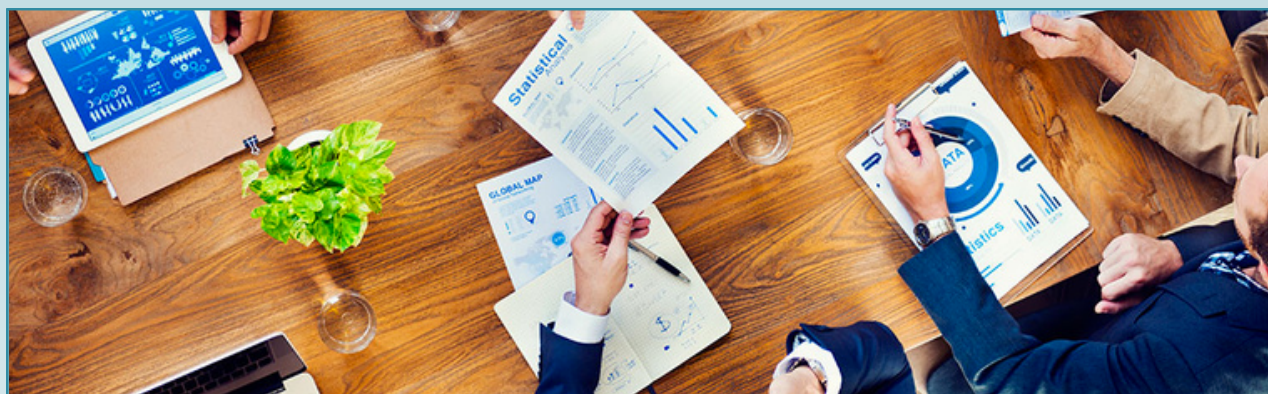
## Iqaluit (NU) - Community Economic Development Plan

In February 2016, the City of Iqaluit launched its first community economic development plan since 2001, the result of nearly two years of community consultation, and approved by the City Council the previous year. This ambitious plan, structured around eight key sectors, including business, crafts, tourism, education, renewable resources, infrastructure, mining, and cultural and social well-being, aims to transform Nunavut's capital into a more business-friendly environment. Under the leadership of the Economic Development Committee, the city is committed to revising its business permit bylaws to remove bureaucratic barriers, establishing a fair pricing system that differentiates between small and large businesses, and better supporting local artisans. This strategic initiative, designed to facilitate entrepreneurship rather than compete with the private sector, comes at an opportune time when the federal government is signalling its willingness to invest in major infrastructure projects, such as the deep-water port of Iqaluit.

# Support for innovation

Urban economic development is closely linked to innovation, which stimulates growth and jobs while posing challenges that cities must manage with the cooperation of different levels of government. Canada's legislative framework provides municipalities with a variety of tools to support innovation, research and technological development, with different levels of autonomy and mechanisms depending on the province. Québec's Municipal Powers Act (s. 13.1) and the Charter of Ville de Montréal, metropolis of Québec (s. 10.1) explicitly authorize municipalities to take stakes in venture capital funds, such as the Fonds d'intervention économique régional (FIER). This allows them to act as active investors in tech startups and SMEs, sharing the potential risks and rewards. Ontario, through its Municipal Act, 2001 (s. 108 and 110) allows municipalities to provide consulting services and make available space or services at a reduced cost, thereby supporting the startup and growth of innovative startups. In Nova Scotia, the Municipal Government Act (s. 65) provides the legal framework for municipalities to invest in dedicated infrastructure. This allows them to finance and manage technology parks and incubation centres, creating a physical ecosystem conducive to the concentration of skills and collaborative innovation. Manitoba is banking on the flexibility of financial assistance. Its Municipal Act (s. 261.2) delegates to local governments the power to create customized assistance programs, including grants or conditional loans, tailored to business modernization and R&D projects. British Columbia allows experimental partnerships.

In practice, many Canadian municipalities are actively engaged in innovation. Calgary, AB inaugurated the country's first 5G test area, Medicine Hat, AB launched an Energy Innovation Challenge, and Fredericton, NB, through Ignite Fredericton and Planet Hatch, became a regional hub for incubation. To the east, Charlottetown, PEI is driving the entrepreneurial ecosystem through LaunchPad PEI, which also welcomes immigrant entrepreneurs through the federal Startup Visa Program. Finally, Halifax, NS, with the Halifax Partnership, exemplifies a hybrid public-private model that is strongly integrated into the municipal strategy.



## Calgary (AB) - Calgary 5G Discovery Zone

In June 2024, the City of Calgary inaugurated Canada's first downtown 5G test environment, called the 5G Discovery Zone. This project, developed in collaboration with Rogers Communications, Platform Calgary and Calgary Economic Development, aims to enable researchers, developers and companies to design, refine and test new applications exploiting the advantages of 5G networks. The initiative is aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as startups, and aims to address municipal issues in the areas of transportation, public safety and environmental sustainability, while stimulating the local economy. Three programmes structure this area: Connect & Test, which selects and supports pilot experiments; Connect & Test Plus, offering mentorship and technical support; and thematic challenges on mobility, public safety and the environment, for which successful projects will receive funding to develop a prototype. The city hopes that this public-private collaboration will pave the way for innovative solutions, such as smart intersections that optimize traffic, emergency response supported by real-time data, and environmental monitoring that enhances sustainability, helping to build a more resilient and prosperous city for all Calgarians.

## Medicine Hat (AB) - Energy Innovation Challenge

In 2024, the City of Medicine Hat partnered with Decentralized Energy Canada (DEC) to launch the Energy Innovation Challenge Program, receiving \$2.4 million in funding from public and private capital. This program aims to find solutions to solve the problems of congestion in the electricity grid and to use these investments as a lever to attract new development projects. It takes place in three phases:

- the innovation challenge, where participants submit proposals that address the identified energy challenges
- community demonstration, offering funding to test pilot projects and measure emissions, and finally
- the investment phase, facilitating project leaders' access to potential investors to ensure the large-scale deployment of their solutions.

This structured approach enables small and medium-sized organizations to overcome commercialization hurdles and bring their distributed energy innovations to market. At the same time, the City of Medicine Hat is gaining hands-on experience with cutting-edge technologies through pilot projects. This program is an example of how municipalities can harness the expertise of innovators and entrepreneurs to address local challenges, foster collaboration, and support the creation of a sustainable and resilient energy future, while serving as a model for other communities.

## **Brandon (MB) - agricultural research, university innovation for local development in Brandon**

In Brandon, Manitoba, the Brandon Research and Development Centre (BRDC), managed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and established in 1886, is a key centre for agricultural research, focusing on plant breeding, genetics, agroecosystem resilience and soil health, contributing to innovation and growth in the regional agri-food sector. Brandon University complements this ecosystem with its applied research programs through centres such as the Tourism and Recreation Research Centre and the Rural Development Institute, which address regional issues and support sustainable development, particularly in rural and Indigenous communities. At the same time, Economic Development Brandon, the city's dedicated economic growth agency, facilitates the retention and attraction of businesses, investment and talent, while promoting Brandon as a competitive location for investment. Together, these institutions create an integrated network that supports research, drives innovation, and fosters local economic prosperity, strengthening Brandon's ability to develop a sustainable and vibrant economic ecosystem.

## **Kitchener (ON) - Kitchener's SDG Idea Factory (North America's first social innovation incubator)**

In April 2024, the City of Kitchener, Ontario, announced a major investment to support innovation and revitalize its downtown through a renewed partnership with Communitech. This initiative comes at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the way people work, leading to a sharp increase in downtown office vacancy rates. The program, provides \$500,000 in annual funding from the Economic Development Investment Fund for 2024 and 2025, with a possibility of an extension until 2027. The objective is to boost the local startup ecosystem through face-to-face activities and programs, promoting entrepreneurship at all stages, from creation to income generation. A portion of the funds will be set aside to support underrepresented groups. This partnership builds on Communitech's long tradition of supporting Kitchener's entrepreneurial and technological culture, and aims to drive collaboration, innovation and local economic growth.

## **County of Simcoe and Town of Innisfil, ON - AI Entrepreneur Training Camp: Training for Local Businesses**

In May 2024, the Town of Innisfil, Ontario, launched a Contractor Training Camp for entrepreneurs and business owners from across Simcoe County. Organized by the DMZ Innisfil Business Accelerator, in partnership with Nottawasaga Futures and the County of Simcoe, this program took place in three weekly sessions, from May 30 to June 13, and aims to demystify artificial intelligence while showing how it can optimize operations and drive business growth. The workshops, Introduction to AI for Business, AI for Marketing, and Implementing AI in Operations and Beyond, combine theory, practical tips, and direct interactions with AI tools, accessible to all levels, including beginners.

This initiative is part of Innisfil's strategic economic development plan, which focuses on creating an innovative economy and strengthening the community by pooling local resources and expertise. Funded in part by the County of Simcoe Entrepreneurial Innovation Fund, this training camp demonstrates Innisfil's commitment to positioning itself as a city that is ready to welcome new investment and promote the empowerment of its companies.

## Laval (QC) - TEMMRA Collaborative Initiative for Innovation Support and Competitiveness

In 2024, the Government of Québec, the City of Laval and the Centre intégré de Santé et de Services sociaux (CISSS) de Laval entered into a three-year sectoral agreement worth more than \$3.1 million to implement the TEMMRA collaborative initiative. This project aims to accelerate local innovation approaches in order to stimulate economic development, support the digital transformation of businesses and strengthen their competitiveness. Targeted sectors include digital infrastructure, agribusiness, and retail, with feasibility studies planned to develop innovative projects. The CISSS de Laval is also investing \$100,000 in the Luci project, a web application dedicated to the prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Aligned with the Québec Strategy for Research and Investment in Innovation and the Québec Bio-food Policy, TEMMRA is part of Laval's 2023–2027 economic development strategy, which aims to make it the capital of opportunities and a territory of experimentation. The initiative mobilizes various government and municipal partners to foster collaboration, encourage innovative practices in strategic sectors, such as sustainable mobility, manufacturing and low-carbon technologies, and thus generate lasting benefits for the Laval community.

## Fredericton (N.B.) - Innovation and Business Support

The City of Fredericton has been a driving force behind the creation and growth of two major regional economic development initiatives: Ignite Fredericton and Planet Hatch. By providing the region with an agency dedicated to supporting businesses and a physical incubator for startups, the City has gone beyond its traditional functions to position itself as a true catalyst for innovation.

Ignite Fredericton, founded as the municipality's official economic development agency, has a mandate to support entrepreneurs every step of the way. It offers targeted programs for the internationalization of SMEs, support for immigrant entrepreneurs and the strengthening of the local ecosystem. Its efforts are to diversify the regional economy and strengthen Fredericton's attractiveness on the national and international scene. Planet Hatch was launched in 2013 by Ignite Fredericton, with the support of the City and its regional partners. Located in the Knowledge Park, this incubator offers a collaborative workspace and mentoring services that have allowed hundreds of startups to grow. By leveraging local and international bridges, such as its partnership with the Walnut Accelerator organization in China, Planet Hatch exemplifies Fredericton's ability to be part of global innovation networks.

## Halifax (NS) - Halifax Partnership Development Agency

The Halifax Regional Municipality plays a central role in the creation and operation of the Halifax Partnership, the region's public-private economic development agency, designed in collaboration with a network of private, public and post-secondary partners. The Halifax Partnership is implementing the 2022–2027 Inclusive Economic Strategy, co-developed with the municipality and approved by the City Council in April 2022, following a consultation involving more than 2,500 stakeholders. The presence of municipal representatives, including the Mayor, the Chief Administrative Officer and two councillors as ex officio members of the Board of Directors, ensures direct accountability to the municipality and alignment with its strategic priorities. The agency plays a key role in long-term economic planning, aimed at population and GDP expansion, infrastructure development and inclusive prosperity. It offers personalized support to local businesses through SmartBusiness, a coaching service that provides advice, diagnostics, resources, and access to financing programs to help businesses start, grow, and scale effectively. Meanwhile, the Halifax Connector Program facilitates the integration of local and international talent, connecting newcomers and skilled professionals with employers in the region, promoting recruitment, career mobility and career development.

The agency attracts local and international talent, publishes benchmark economic data such as the Halifax Index, and works with Invest in Canada and Invest Nova Scotia to promote Halifax globally. Recognizing its impact, Halifax Partnership received several international awards for excellence in economic development from the International Economic Development Council in 2023, including for its COVID-19 Economic Response and Recovery Plan, solidifying its position as a central driver of Halifax's economic development.

## Charlottetown (PEI) - Supporting Startups and Entrepreneurial Immigration With LaunchPad

The City of Charlottetown plays an important role in supporting innovation by collaborating with organizations such as LaunchPad PEI, an innovative business incubator run by Innovation PEI. Created in the 2000s and active for several years, LaunchPad offers comprehensive support to local and international entrepreneurs, including access to professional offices and laboratories equipped for bioscience, personalized mentoring by development officers, and referrals to provincial funding programs to limit the risks associated with business expansion. Since 2013, it has also supported entrepreneurial immigration through the startup Visa Program, issuing letters of support for foreign entrepreneurs wishing to settle in Prince Edward Island. LaunchPad supports companies at all stages of their development, from creation to expansion, by offering networking, marketing and recruitment services, and by integrating them into a regional network of academic, municipal and industry partners. Through its role in providing support, access to modern infrastructure and linking to local and government resources, LaunchPad contributes significantly to the dynamism of Charlottetown's innovation ecosystem and the region's economic growth.



## Corner Brook (NL) - The Empowerment and Smart Market Project

The Corner Brook Empowerment and Smart Market Project, submitted in 2018 to the Canadian federal government's Smart Cities Challenge, is a municipal initiative led by the Department of Community Services to reduce the local unemployment rate by 10% to levels comparable to the rest of Atlantic Canada by creating a digital entrepreneurial ecosystem that transforms residents into active economic actors. The central mechanism is based on three interconnected components:

- a collaborative mobile app that functions as a “digital public square” for citizens to share ideas, reconciling their skills, creating mutual aid networks and accessing micro-donations to finance their projects;
- a physical maker space equipped with smart technologies where entrepreneurs can develop their products, access to technical training and benefit from personalized support and finally,
- a smart marketplace that uses advanced technologies (interactive tablets, unified payment, and data analytics) to enable new entrepreneurs to test their products in the market with minimal financial risk while receiving analytical data on their business performance.

The ultimate goal of this municipal proposal, which called for \$5 million in federal funding over five years for this community of 19,806 people, was to create a buzz where citizens naturally move from ideation to the creation of viable businesses, thus generating sustainable local economic diversification while developing a community entrepreneurial culture that can be replicated autonomously beyond the duration of the program.

## Yellowknife (NT) - Entrepreneurship Week to Boost Local Innovation

The City of Yellowknife, in collaboration with Prosper NWT, hosted Yellowknife Entrepreneurship Week from November 18 to 22, 2024, as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week (GEW), which fosters the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship globally each November. This initiative aims to encourage local innovation by highlighting inspiring entrepreneurs from various economic sectors of the city. Each session, free of charge and accompanied by a Q&A period, presented online tools for growing a business and provide information on available financial and local supports.

# Development and management of industrial zones

The development of industrial zones in Canada is based on four main tools granted to municipalities by provincial legislation. Zoning makes it possible to dedicate specific areas to industrial, commercial or mixed uses. Official plans set out long-term objectives for industrial location and transportation infrastructure development. Targeted tax exemptions encourage brownfield revitalization and new settlements.

- Public-private partnerships facilitate the financing of critical infrastructure. In the case of industrial parks, the role of municipalities is to establish a dedicated area that is attractive to businesses because of its location (proximity to transport infrastructure, their suppliers or its market).
- Several innovations characterize provincial approaches. For brownfield revitalization, in Alberta, the Municipal Government Act (s. 381.1) allows municipalities tax exemptions to encourage land remediation. In Ontario, the Municipal Act, 2001 (s. 110) gives municipalities the authority to enter into tax-exempt public-private partnership agreements. Tax-based financing is permitted in several provinces, including Saskatchewan (Northern Municipalities Act (s.261.5)) and (Cities Act (s.259.5)) and in Alberta (Municipal Government Act (s.381.1-381.5)), which institutes the Community Revitalization Levy to finance infrastructure through new taxes generated. Municipalities in Québec have the ability to establish special economic zones based on the Municipal Powers Act (ss. 13.1, 126.1). In Manitoba, the Municipal Act (s. 261.3) provides provisions for new tax funding programs. A municipality can promote the establishment of industrial uses on its territory by using its powers to develop industrial parks, acquire buildings and finance activities and organizations in this field (Government of Québec, 2025).

Municipalities are increasingly prioritizing public-private partnerships to maximize the value of their land assets, such as in Squamish and Borden-Carleton. There is also the use of targeted, repayable tax incentives that are contingent on job creation or the value of investments as exemplified by St. Albert and Greater Sudbury. Finally, a strong integration of sustainability and innovation objectives is emerging, whether through the conversion of wasteland, support for clean technologies, or collaboration with research institutions, as seen in Regina, Lorneville and Deschambault.





## St. Albert (AB) - Lakeview Business District

In 2025, the City of St. Albert, Alberta, broke ground on the Lakeview Business District, a new industrial park of nearly 600 acres located west of the city. This light to medium duty zone is designed to meet the high demand for development-ready land in the Edmonton metropolitan area. The City Council approved a \$62.7 million investment in initial infrastructure, including road improvements and the construction of off-site municipal services, in January 2025. In addition, the City is working with the Government of Alberta on the doubling capacity of Ray Gibbon Drive, a major trade corridor.

To stimulate development, the city recently announced a Development Accelerator Program offering repayable incentives of up to \$110,000 per acre for the construction of industrial and commercial buildings. With a budget of \$8 million, this program will open its registrations in January 2026. Ultimately, the Lakeview Business District is expected to generate approximately 5,000 jobs and attract nearly \$1.5 billion in private investment. It will host innovative industries in advanced manufacturing, clean technology, logistics, transportation and life sciences. Strategically located near national trade corridors, the railway and Villeneuve Airport, the district will facilitate access to regional, national and international markets while diversifying St. Albert's industrial and commercial tax base.

## Regina (SK) - Regina Research Alliance to Drive Innovation and Economic Development

The Regina Research Alliance, launched in April 2022, is a collaborative initiative between the University of Regina and the City of Regina, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding. This alliance aims to strengthen the local community by mobilizing university research capacities to address the city's social, economic and environmental challenges. It is part of an economic development strategy aimed at stimulating innovation, supporting the growth of local businesses and attracting new high-value-added activities to the region.

The alliance's priorities include environmental sustainability, the development of innovative infrastructure and the improvement of residents' well-being. Several projects are already underway, such as sewage sludge reclamation in partnership with Buffalo Pound Water Treatment Corporation, the use of recycled materials for road reconstruction with Saskatchewan Polytechnic, and studies on the adoption of clean technologies such as solar panels and electric vehicles, supporting the city's goal of becoming a net-zero emissions community by 2050.

The alliance also involves other institutional partners, such as the Saskatchewan Health Authority and the University of Saskatchewan, to develop interdisciplinary solutions and foster local innovation. Through this collaboration, the City of Regina and the University of Regina are directly contributing to economic growth, the creation of new technology companies, and the strengthening of a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

## **Brandon (MB) - VicEast Industrial Park development**

The Municipality of Brandon played a pivotal role in the development of VicEast Industrial Park, supporting Crane Steel Structures' private project through the provision of municipal land, facilitation of planning, infrastructure development (water, sewer, roads) and the provision of tax incentives for businesses moving to the site. This 25 to 30-acre industrial park is a strategic step for the economic development of the city and the region. Developed by a local family business, the park offers 19 fully serviced lots, ranging from half an acre to nearly nine acres, meeting a long-standing demand for ready-to-use industrial land. The park fills a critical gap in industrial land in the city and region, with modern infrastructure and access to a skilled workforce from institutions such as Brandon University and Assiniboine College. Positioned as a regional hub serving more than 190,000 people and close to economic drivers such as agriculture, Manitoba's oil fields and CFB Shilo, VicEast Industrial Park is poised to become a catalyst for growth, diversification and job creation for Brandon and its region, exemplifying the effectiveness of a public-private partnership in local economic development.

## **Greater Sudbury (ON) - Community Improvement Plan for Industrial Development**

In July 2023, the City of Greater Sudbury adopted the Industrial Land Community Improvement Plan, and a tax incentive program to stimulate industrial and commercial development. This plan allows developers to benefit from a partial refund of property taxes resulting from new construction or expansion for a period of up to ten years, according to a points system based on the value of investments, the creation or maintenance of jobs, as well as the location of the projects. Eight strategic areas are targeted by the programme. Projects in the clean technology and life sciences sectors also receive additional points, as these areas aim to reduce pollution and improve air and water quality, in line with the Community Energy and Emissions Plan. Initiatives in tourism, cinema and television also benefit from a slight advantage.

To develop this program, the City conducted a public consultation process and drew on the practices of thirteen other municipalities. This Community Improvement Plan is a continuation of the Industrial Lands Strategy adopted the previous year and marks the first initiative of its kind dedicated to attracting and expanding economic investment in the region. This measure aims to diversify the local economy, strengthen employment and encourage sustainable growth in Greater Sudbury's key industrial sectors.

## **Deschambault-Grondines (QC) - The Sustainable Development Strategy for the Thérèse-Sauvageau Eco-industrial Park**

The Municipality of Deschambault-Grondines received an investment of \$109,575 to develop a Sustainable Development Strategy for the Thérèse-Sauvageau Eco-industrial Park, a project valued at \$182,626. The park is already home to the Alcoa aluminum smelter and has 5.7 million square metres. It needs additional planning to attract more companies, particularly in the strategic sectors of aluminum and bioenergy. The objective is to promote sustainable economic development by maximizing the potential of this site, which could become a major economic driver for the Portneuf RCM, located west of the Québec City metropolitan area.

## Dartmouth (NS) - Burnside Industrial Park

Located in Dartmouth, the Burnside Industrial Park is one of Nova Scotia's most powerful economic engines and a concrete example of the City of Halifax's strategic role in economic development. Established in 1969 and still managed by the Halifax Regional Municipality, the park covers more than 3,400 acres and is home to more than 1,000 businesses, employing approximately 17,000 people. The city plays a key role in the development and planning of land, the development of municipal infrastructure (roads, water, sewer, and utilities) and the enhancement of the park to attract new investors. With its strategic location close to the Port of Halifax, Stanfield International Airport and major highways, Burnside has become a major centre for logistics, manufacturing, distribution and services, strengthening the municipality's tax base while driving employment and innovation throughout the region.

## Borden-Carleton (PEI) - Industrial Site Conversion

Once used as a manufacturing site, the sprawling Borden-Carleton industrial site has long been a symbol of manufacturing activity in the region. Abandoned after its original use, the municipality, in partnership with the provincial government, launched an initiative to transform this site into a modern industrial park. Its prime logistics location allows for the reception of new companies, stimulating innovation and creation of sustainable jobs. The project is based on a concerted approach: the local community is consulted to ensure that the future development reflects its needs and aspirations, while private developers are invited to propose viable projects that are aligned with the municipal vision. Through this initiative, Borden-Carleton seeks to revitalize a brownfield site and make it an engine of economic growth, focusing on sustainability, attracting investment and creating a space for business development.

## Conception Bay South (NL) - The Gateway Project Development

The Municipality of Conception Bay South has developed 130 acres of land for the development of The Gateway, a regional project combining retail, office and light industrial parks. By signing an exclusive mandate with Colliers International for the marketing of the site, the municipality is looking to attract retailers and investors from across Canada to boost the local economy. Located in an area of high potential, served by recreational facilities and a network of integrated walking trails, The Gateway aims to become a major economic hub for the municipality, while meeting the needs of residents and visitors. This initiative is an example of how the use of municipal land can stimulate economic growth, increase tax revenues and enhance the attractiveness of a community.



# Support for local businesses

Canadian municipalities have a variety of tools to support local businesses, although their powers are regulated by provincial and territorial legislation. Direct financial support, although limited by general prohibitions, is organized around specific mechanisms. For example, Alberta's Municipal Government Act allows, subject to conditions, loans and guarantees to non-profit organizations (ss. 264, 265). In Québec, the Act respecting municipal taxation (CQLR, c F-2.1) allows municipalities to adopt tax credit programs for construction or renovation projects (ss. 92.1 to 92.3), and the Municipal Powers Act (CQLR, c C-47.1) provides a framework for participation in the Regional Economic Intervention Fund (FIER) (s. 13.1). However, this assistance is limited by the general prohibition on support for commercial enterprises, as indicated in the British Columbia Community Charter (s. 25) and the Ontario Municipal

- • • • Act, 2001 (s. 106). Section 84 of the City of Toronto Act, 2006, allows the City of Toronto to support small businesses by providing advice, creating or participating in development programs, providing municipal premises, grants or services, and administering these initiatives through boards or not-for-profit organizations.

- • • • In-kind support often offers greater flexibility. These can include contributions such as the transfer of land at a reduced price with mandatory public notice. Development is also facilitated by planning tools, such as Business Revitalization Development Permit Areas, under section 488 of the British Columbia Local Government Act.

With respect to partnerships business development corporations and non-profit associations working to develop an industry and represent industry merchants are widely used tool in several jurisdictions.

Several Canadian municipalities are great examples of the existing diversity of support for local businesses. In Alberta, the Town of Whitecourt produces local market analyses to inform its economic development strategies. The City of Winnipeg has transformed its seasonal patio program into an ongoing initiative to support local businesses and encourage summer activities. Kingston, ON, promotes local commerce to tourists and consumers through the Love Kingston campaign. To support commercial development corporations affected by municipal infrastructure work, the City of Montréal offers grants and planned support before, during and after construction. Finally, Yellowknife, NWT is simplifying the process for entrepreneurs through the BizPaL platform, which centralizes information and makes it easier to start businesses.

## Whitecourt (AB) - Economic Development Survey

Whitecourt launched a public engagement campaign supported by a \$70,000 grant from the Government of Alberta's Small Community Opportunity Program. This funding will be used to conduct an in-depth analysis of the local market, focusing on consumer spending, gaps in services, and opportunities to maintain, expand, and attract businesses. To this end, Whitecourt is encouraging local companies and organizations to take part in a questionnaire to explore how economic growth can better align with workforce development and enhance business initiatives. Responses to this survey will inform strategies to strengthen existing businesses and attract new ones to the community.

In addition, a survey for consumers and residents is open, in order to collect their purchasing habits and the factors that influence their purchase decisions locally or elsewhere. This feedback will help Whitecourt adapt its economic development strategies by focusing on attracting businesses that meet the needs of the community.

## Winnipeg (MB) - Permanent Patio Program

The City Council approved the transformation of the temporary patio program to a permanent program, allowing local businesses to open seasonal patios at no administrative cost. This program aims to support local businesses and encourage outdoor activities during the summer. It ensures adequate supervision and is an important source of revenue for restaurants. The annual cost to offer this program free of charge to businesses is approximately \$110,000. Initiated in 2020, to meet the health requirements related to the pandemic, the program continues to support local businesses, with 41 businesses registered in 2023.





## **Kingston (ON) - Buy Local campaign**

To encourage residents and tourists to shop locally and discover the city's attractions, Kingston City Council approved the launch of the Love Kingston campaign, which had helped the local economy during the COVID-19 crisis. This initiative aims to strengthen local trade, explore new supply chains and facilitate access to global markets for businesses.

In 2024, the city welcomed about 2.7 million visitors, spending nearly \$514 million. The majority of tourists come from Toronto, Ottawa and Montréal, and 90% of visitors are Canadian. With the prospect of impending tariffs, the campaign seeks to mobilize consumer support for local businesses and attract visitors who would cancel their trips to the United States. The program will include special offers and promotions to encourage people to discover what Kingston has to offer, while highlighting the importance of supporting the local economy as a targeted economic strategy in the face of looming challenges.

## **Montréal (QC) - Assistance Program for Businesses Affected by Infrastructure Work**

The City of Montréal has launched a new financial support program for commercial development corporations (SDCs) affected by major infrastructure work, with a total investment of up to \$6.5 million over three years. The program is structured in two parts: support upstream of construction sites, up to \$150,000, to plan mitigation measures, provide training and conduct economic studies, and support during construction, with grants of \$53,000 to \$350,000 to maintain traffic and inform customers. A third component, to be developed soon, will aim to revitalize the commercial areas following the conclusion of construction.

This initiative responds to the needs identified at the 2023 Construction Summit and a survey of the population, confirming the importance of better communication and coordination around the work. By supporting the SDCs and their members before, during and after construction, the City aims to preserve the economic vitality of neighbourhoods, promote local purchasing and ensure better predictability for businesses, while improving the quality of life of Montréal residents.

## **Yellowknife (NT) - BizPaL Service**

The City of Yellowknife recently began rolling out the BizPaL Business Permits and Licences service, an innovative online platform that centralizes information on the permits and requirements needed to start and run a business. This service, a collaboration between the federal, territorial and municipal governments, aims to simplify the process for contractors by reducing the time spent navigating the regulations. BizPaL is free, with permanent open access, and allows companies to spend less time on administrative procedures. Since its official launch in October 2016, Yellowknife has been preparing to integrate this solution to provide more effective support to local entrepreneurs.

## **York Region (ON) - The York Small Business Enterprise Centre**

The Regional Municipality of York operates the York Small Business Enterprise Centre (YSBEC), an economic development initiative specifically targeting small businesses with fewer than 10 employees in six northern municipalities: Aurora, East Gwillimbury, Georgina, King, Newmarket and Stouffville. This centre offers a full range of entrepreneurial coaching services, including training programs, assistance in developing business plans, mentoring services and strategic consulting to support both the startup of new businesses and the growth of existing businesses.

The centre offers one-hour consultations with experienced business advisors to answer specific questions about business growth, hiring, and marketing techniques. It also offers business incubation programs that provide entrepreneurs with mentorship and support services to develop their business plans and improve their products or services. In 2024, the centre received an additional \$59,600 in funding on top of its base allocation of \$227,500, allowing it to continue to offer business consultations, seminars, mentorship and training, as well as micro-grants. YSBEC is managed by the Economic Strategy Branch of the Regional Municipality of York in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development.

## **Southeast Regional Service Commission (NB) - A Guide to Entrepreneurship in the Southeast**

The Southeast Regional Service Commission's (SHRC) guide to entrepreneurship in southeastern New Brunswick illustrates a desire to structure and strengthen the region's local economic ecosystem. This initiative contributes to the vitality and resilience of the regional entrepreneurial fabric by supporting both the creation and takeover of businesses, and the CSITS participates in the emergence of innovations. It acts as a lever for coordination between economic actors. The guide offers entrepreneurs methodical and comprehensive support, from the emergence of the idea to the development of the company. This includes targeted training, access to specialist tools, personalized advice and referrals to financial and institutional partners. It also covers the legal, tax and regulatory aspects, which are essential to secure the procedures. Finally, it promotes networking and mentoring, thus facilitating the integration of entrepreneurs into a dynamic and supportive ecosystem.

# Foreign investment attraction

Municipalities have developed strategies to attract foreign investment, combining territorial marketing, the creation of specialized ecosystems, and administrative facilitation. North Vancouver exemplifies the integrated approach with four strategic axes: optimization of available land, regulatory simplification, creation of attractive public spaces and targeted development of sectors such as tourism and creative industries. The City of Grande Prairie demonstrates the importance of inter-municipal collaborations through its InvestNW campaign, combining resources for coordinated regional promotion, which avoids rivalry between neighbouring municipalities.

- • • • The creation of specialized ecosystems is a major lever of attraction. Regina and Winnipeg are
- • • • developing world-class logistics hubs with the Global Transportation Hub and CentrePort Canada,
- • • • building on their status as international trade zones that allow for the deferral or elimination of tariffs
- • • • for investors. This infrastructure facilitates the integration of foreign companies into supply chains.

Proactive trade missions complement these schemes, as demonstrated by Richmond Hill with its targeted participation in international events, such as Hannover Messe 2025, to prospect foreign investors directly.

The legal and operational tools are diversifying with the creation of dedicated structures. Montréal uses the specialized organization Montréal International to coordinate investment attractions, offering specific financial incentives of up to \$500,000 per project with clearly defined mandates. The development of strategic areas involves the conversion of brownfield sites, such as Halifax, with the transformation of the former Coast Guard base into COVE Centre which is dedicated to innovation in global marine technologies. Administrative facilitation is becoming crucial, with Saint John illustrating the importance of supporting implementation processes through streamlining procedures and coordinating with port authorities.

Three key trends emerge from these practices. Sectoral specialization leads municipalities to target niches where they have a comparative advantage, whether it's ocean technology in Halifax, logistics in Winnipeg or artificial intelligence in Richmond Hill. Inter-territorial cooperation is developing to pool the costs of promotion and avoid destructive competition, with Alberta partnerships being a prime example. Integration into global value chains takes place via foreign trade zones and logistics platforms that facilitate the integration of foreign investors into international trade networks.



## North Vancouver (BC) - Integrated Business Attraction Strategy

In April 2024, the City of North Vancouver adopted a new economic strategy specifically focused on attracting and retaining businesses, responding to the recommendations of the Business Advisory Working Group formed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy, which extends over a period of five to ten years, implements several strategic axes to attract investment. These include optimizing economic zones and workspaces by adopting a business-friendly municipal approach, simplifying regulations and procedures governing companies, as well as creating best-in-class multifunctional public spaces, such as shipyards. This strategy aims to facilitate the establishment of businesses by ensuring the hosting of sustainable and innovative industries, with annual monitoring to measure the effectiveness of these investment attraction initiatives.

## Grande Prairie (AB) - The InvestNW Alberta Campaign

Launched in September 2024, the InvestNW Alberta initiative is a regional economic marketing partnership between three municipalities in northwestern Alberta: the City of Grande Prairie, the County of Grande Prairie and the Municipal District of Greenview, who collaborated to attract investors and businesses to their region, rather than maintain a competitiveness. This joint marketing and promotion initiative pools resources and shares costs for advertising, promotional events and trade shows, based on the belief that a major investment in one municipality generates positive economic spinoffs for the entire region. The initiative provides potential investors with a single point of contact and a coordinated approach, while being complemented by the Work NW Alberta partnership, which, in collaboration with the Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce and Northwestern Polytechnic University, is dedicated to developing a skilled workforce to support regional economic growth in the natural gas sectors, forestry, petrochemicals and agriculture.

## Saint John (N.B.) - Americold Investment Attraction

The City of Saint John, New Brunswick, played a strategic role in attracting investment from Americold Realty Trust, a U.S.-based company specializing in temperature-controlled logistics. In May 2025, Americold announced an investment of \$75 million to \$80 million to develop an import-export hub at the Port of Saint John, aiming to offer approximately 22,000 pallet locations, the equivalent of more than 800 truckloads of temperature-sensitive cargo. This project is expected to create up to 100 jobs by 2029 and contribute up to \$37 million to the provincial GDP.

The city supported this initiative by facilitating access to strategic land and working closely with the Saint John Port Authority, operating at the site, as well as logistics partners, such as DP World and Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC). This partnership has strengthened the port and rail infrastructure, making the site more attractive to foreign investors.

## Halifax (NS) - Attracting foreign investment to COVE

The Halifax Regional Municipality is using the Centre for Ocean Ventures and Entrepreneurship (COVE) as a strategic lever to attract foreign investment to the “blue economy”. Since its inauguration on June 6, 2018, COVE has attracted several international companies, including Kraken Robotics (specializing in underwater drones and maritime robotics), which has chosen Halifax as a base to develop its activities in North America. The type of investment attracted is focused on ocean and marine technologies, a globally growing sector. The City is supporting this momentum by funding the ecosystem through the Halifax Partnership, facilitating access to the rehabilitated site (former Coast Guard base), and working with strategic partners, such as the Halifax Port Authority, to provide a competitive environment for foreign investors with state-of-the-art port and research infrastructure. By investing in COVE, Halifax is positioning itself as an ideal gateway for foreign capital and technology to access North American maritime markets.

# Financial/Tax incentives

Provincial legislatures have created legal tools for municipalities to support economic development through targeted, conditional and reversible mechanisms. Municipalities often seek to offer financial incentives to businesses to secure investments in their territory. However, only some provinces, including New Brunswick, Québec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, explicitly allow municipalities to offer tax incentives for economic development, and often within limits.

Targeted tax exemptions and credits are the most commonly used tax lever that allows for property tax reductions for specific projects. In Alberta, municipalities can grant exemptions under the Municipal Government Act (s. 364) for industrial machinery and equipment, as well as for properties owned by not-for-profit organizations. Québec has a similar regime under the Municipal Powers Act (ss. 92.1 to 92.3). These sections allow municipalities to introduce tax credit programs for the construction, renovation or revitalization of buildings, subject to conditions and a specified maximum period. In British Columbia, the Community Charter (s. 226) sets out a detailed framework for tax exemptions for revitalization initiatives. A bylaw must define the objectives, eligible properties, scope and maximum duration (10 years) of the exemption, which must then be agreed upon with the owner. Some provinces allow municipalities to create specialized tax classes. Ontario now allows a small business tax class, specifically designed to protect retail on major arteries.

Financing through new property taxes captures future tax capital gains to finance infrastructure. Saskatchewan allows municipalities to establish tax-leveraging funding programs in designated areas. Alberta has developed a separate scheme in its Municipal Government Act (ss. 381.1 to 381.5), known as the Community Revitalization Levy. This mechanism allows local governments to borrow against future property tax revenues to fund infrastructure such as roads, sewage systems, and other critical infrastructure—in a designated district. Municipalities have the authority to coordinate directly with business organizations through Business Improvement Districts. These are official associations of local merchants, sanctioned by municipal governments, that impose a mandatory additional tax on property owners in a designated neighbourhood to fund economic development initiatives that complement the public services offered by the City (including business attraction, crime prevention, and improvements to public spaces and accessibility).

In the case of investment and venture capital funds, this approach allows the municipality to invest directly in the economic ecosystem. In Québec, municipalities can take a financial stake in a development fund, such as the Fonds FIER (Fonds d'intervention économique régional). In addition, regional county municipalities (RCMs) may take any measure to promote local and regional development, including the creation of funds.

In terms of heritage management powers, municipalities can use their land reserves as an incentive. Municipal laws in many similar jurisdictions govern the disposition of municipal land or buildings for less than market value. This assistance is conditional on the publication of a public notice detailing the nature and terms of the agreement, thus guaranteeing transparency.

The examples identified confirm this diversification of approaches. Vancouver is experimenting with a pilot project offering tax relief of 50 percent to mall business. Boyle, Alberta is removing the exemption caps for vacant buildings, and Prince Albert, Saskatchewan is applying a progressive municipal tax exemption from 75 percent to 25 percent over three years.

Corner Brook in Newfoundland offers a total exemption for women entrepreneurs through its AWESOME program, while Thetford Mines in Québec modulates its credits from 100% to 0% over ten years depending on the location. Greater Sudbury uses a points system for partial refunds, and Burlington offers interest-free tax deferrals for six months. These practices illustrate the increasing personalization of incentives according to target audiences, territories and sectors of activity.



## **Winnipeg (MB) - Economic Development Grants**

The City of Winnipeg's Heritage and Economic Development Incentive program offers grants based on new property tax funding to support development projects that align with the OurWinnipeg 2045 vision and the city's COVID-19 response and economic recovery plan. The program consists of awarding grants to eligible projects based on the additional municipal taxes generated by the development. In other words, these are the annual municipal property taxes to be paid after obtaining the occupancy permit, minus the property base taxes, i.e., the annual municipal taxes payable in the year of project approval. Provincial education taxes are not included in the calculation of incremental or base taxes. This program is an example of a municipal initiative to encourage local economic development by making construction projects more attractive and financially viable.

## **Burlington (ON) - Industrial Property Tax Deferral Program**

The City of Burlington, Ontario, has approved a six-month interest-free property tax deferral program for local industrial properties affected by U.S. rates. The application-based program allows eligible homeowners to defer tax payments until November 30, 2025, without penalty or interest. Eligibility criteria and the application process have been posted on the City's Tax Rebates and Deferrals webpage.

This initiative aims to support local businesses during times of economic uncertainty, providing a crucial financial boost for businesses to adapt, remain competitive, and maintain jobs and investment in Burlington. Affected industrial properties account for about one percent of the city's properties, while commercial and residential properties account for 4% and 95%, respectively. This program reflects Burlington's commitment to protecting local economic resilience in the face of international tariff pressures.

## **Thetford Mines (QC) - Industrial Development Tax Credit**

The City of Thetford Mines has launched a tax credit program designed to stimulate industrial establishment on its territory. This program is aimed at private companies and cooperatives that invest in the construction, renovation or modernization of industrial buildings. The tax credits, granted over several years depending on the size of the work and the location of the buildings, are intended to revitalize the local industrial sector and support the city's economic growth.

New buildings in designated industrial parks are eligible for up to a 100% property tax exemption for the first three years, with a sliding scale for up to the tenth year. Renovations with a minimum value of \$500,000 within the urbanization perimeter are also eligible for five-year graduated credits. This program is a strategic financial lever to attract new businesses, support existing ones and create quality jobs, thus strengthening the industrial attractiveness of Thetford Mines.

## Vancouver (BC) - Small Business Tax Reduction

The City of Vancouver approved the Development Potential Tax Relief Pilot Program in March 2023, becoming the first municipality in British Columbia to implement it. This program aimed to support small independent businesses and community partners who pay disproportionate taxes due to the development potential of their properties. For eligible properties, a portion of the property value was taxed at 50% of the usual general rate for light commercial and industrial buildings.

Approximately 1,360 properties were eligible for the program, subject to a declaration of occupancy as of October 31, 2022. The council also approved the continuation of the five-year property assessment averaging for approximately 7,570 residential properties and 3,200 light commercial or industrial properties to reduce assessment volatility.

## Boyle (AB) - Tax Exemption for Vacant Buildings

The Municipality of Boyle has removed caps on tax exemptions for new businesses moving into vacant buildings to encourage local business development. Prior to the amendment, business owners could receive a 50 percent reduction in municipal taxes in the first year, up to a maximum of \$2,000, and 25 percent in the second year, up to a maximum of \$1,000. From now on, no limit to the amount is applied for the first two years, the return to full taxation in the third year remaining unchanged. This measure is intended to make Boyle more attractive to businesses and to support the economic revitalization of the village.

## Prince Albert (SK) - Tax Relief

The Rural Municipality of Prince Albert has implemented a tax incentive program to encourage the construction of homes and businesses. New properties benefit from a progressive tax exemption: 75% in the first year, 50% in the second and 25% in the third, including the municipal and school portions of property taxes. This policy, adopted in September 2024, aims to attract new residents and support existing development projects in the region. In particular, the municipality wishes to revitalize commercial areas and economic development projects as well as the commercial and industrial subdivisions south of the city. This initiative is part of a desire to encourage companies already established and those in the process of setting up, while reducing tax competition with neighbouring municipalities.



## Corner Brook (NL) - Tax exemptions to support women entrepreneurs

The City of Corner Brook is launching a program to support women entrepreneurs in small and medium-sized businesses, called Assistance to Women Entrepreneurs of Small or Medium Enterprises (AWESOME). This program allows new women-led businesses or businesses created in the last three years (with some exceptions) to benefit from a two-year exemption from trade taxes, to facilitate their growth and consolidation. The aim is to reduce financial barriers to startups, such as access to capital, and increase the chances of success for women's businesses.

The program is already generating interest in the local community, where women entrepreneurs see the initiative as a valuable opportunity to grow their business without the pressure of upfront taxes. Experts point out that this type of measure could be a model to be replicated in other regions, promoting the growth and sustainability of women-led businesses, while stimulating local entrepreneurship and economic diversity.





# Establishment of Local Improvement Areas and Commercial Districts

Municipalities also work directly with business organizations through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Business improvement areas are formal associations of local businesses, recognized by municipal governments, that impose a mandatory additional tax on property owners in a designated neighbourhood to fund economic development initiatives that complement the public services provided by the City (including business recruitment, crime prevention, and improvement of public space). Toronto was the first city to create a BIA in 1970; there are now more than 500 across the country (Eidelman, Hachard and Adade, 2022, p. 2).

That said, Canadian municipalities generally have powers to establish and manage local improvement areas and commercial districts. These measures share common characteristics with a rigorous consultative process, including public consultations and notices to owners, a precise territorial delimitation and adoption by the municipal council by a qualified majority. In Ontario, the Municipal Act, 2001 (s. 204) authorizes the creation of Business Improvement Areas that allow municipalities to impose a levy on local businesses to fund community projects (revitalization, promotion, and events). In British Columbia, similar provisions are found in the Community Charter (Part 7). Local improvement areas or commercial development areas are unique instruments, as they are based on the principle of compulsory co-financing of companies in a sector to improve their immediate economic environment.

Alberta's Municipal Government Act (Division 5, ss. 50-53) imposes direct civil liability on business improvement area board members, making directors personally liable for unapproved expenses (s. 52), and introduces the Community Revitalization Levy (Division 4.1, ss. 381.1-381.4), an increased property value-based tax. In Manitoba, the Municipal Act (ss. 310-315) requires a detailed plan specifying costs, calculation methods and duration of taxation (ss. 314-315), with the possibility of a partial assumption by the municipality (s. 315 (3)). In New Brunswick, the Local Governance Act (2021, c. 44, ss. 122-127) provides for notice to property owners and mandatory public hearings in the event of an objection (ss. 124-125), and unpaid costs becoming a special privilege (s. 127).

Financing is based on special taxes levied on properties within the perimeter, with ceilings and limited periods ensuring the proportionality between contributions and profits. Saskatchewan, through its Cities Act (ss. 38-39), imposes detailed regulatory content specifying objectives, governance and accountability (s. 38(2)), with a mandatory prior hearing (s. 38(4)). In Yukon, the Municipal Act (S.Y. 1998, Chapter 19, Section 287) establishes self-governing boards for development and promotion (Section 292 (a)). Prince Edward Island, through its Municipal Government Act (2016, c. 44, ss. 200-201), grants boards complete freedom to determine costs and methods of apportionment (ss. 201 c-d).



## **Steinbach (MB) - Opening of a new farmers' market**

The municipality has approved the opening of a new farmer's market in the downtown area. The market will be held in an L-shaped parking lot along two main streets. It will offer a variety of products, including agricultural producers, artisans and homemade food producers, to offer a wide choice to visitors. Municipal officials emphasized that this initiative supports local businesses and revitalizes the downtown core. The market will provide an incubator for small businesses, providing traders with the opportunity to sell their products directly to the community and locals with regular access to fresh and local produce.

## **Hamilton (ON) - Economic Development Financial Incentive Programs**

The City of Hamilton offers more than a dozen financial incentive programs to support local economic development, including the unique "Hamilton Made" program, which offers interest-free loans equivalent to 25 percent of the construction budget, up to a maximum of \$4 million per project. These incentives take the form of municipal loans and grants, and are also accompanied by programmes on innovation, training and employment, and energy efficiency. Many of these programs are reserved for businesses located in Business Improvement Areas and cover areas such as downtown, trade corridors identified in renewal plans, and the Mount Hope/Airport Gateway area.

For properties designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, additional incentives are available, including a reduction in municipal development fees in targeted areas and the possibility of an additional 10 percent exemption from development charges if an equivalent contribution is made to the Downtown Public Art Fund. These measures allow municipalities to stimulate real estate development while encouraging innovation, culture and neighbourhood revitalization.

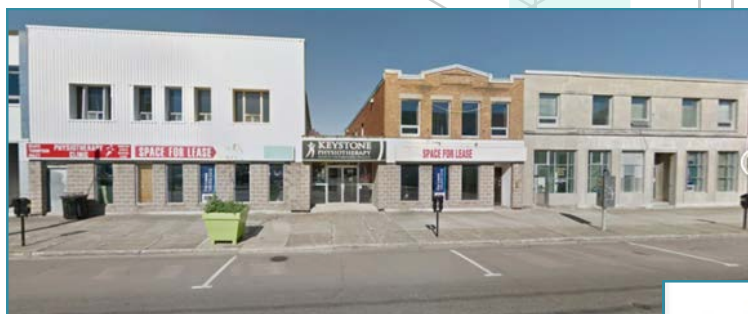
## **Québec (QC) - Saint-Roch Neighbourhood Business Support Fund**

The City of Québec, in partnership with the provincial government, has launched a \$1 million fund to support businesses located on Saint-Joseph Street in the Saint-Roch district. This initiative aims to promote the economic growth of existing businesses while attracting new establishments, thus contributing to the commercial vitality and animation of the neighbourhood. The funding, from the Capitale commerce component of the Québec 2030 Entrepreneurial Vision, can reach up to \$75,000 per project, representing 50% of eligible expenses. It is intended for retail businesses, restaurants and tourism service businesses located and is mainly aimed at establishments with 50 employees or less, including some local franchises with up to five branches. New businesses can benefit from startup support, including assistance for the first two years of rent, while established businesses can receive assistance for the purchase of equipment, leasehold improvement work, marketing actions, or consulting services for strategic issues.

This fund is part of the broader Québec 2026 Entrepreneurial Vision, which aims to make Québec City the national capital of entrepreneurship. Focused on innovation, growth, financing and support, this vision brings together various programs and financial assistance measures to support business development and stimulate the local economy. According to municipal and provincial authorities, this funding represents a concrete and targeted investment to strengthen Saint-Roch's economic vitality, support existing merchants in their development and attract new visionary entrepreneurs. It demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainable, inclusive and innovative growth, helping to position the district as a dynamic and attractive commercial hub for citizens and visitors alike.

## Moncton (N.B.) - Facade Improvement Grants

The Downtown Moncton Centre-ville Inc. (DMCI) Facade Improvement Grant Initiative represents a strategic approach to urban economic development aimed at revitalizing downtown Moncton. This program provides commercial owners and businesses in the business improvement sector with financial support of up to 50% of improvement costs (up to \$3,000) for exterior beautification and safety projects. The objective is twofold: on the one hand, to improve the attractiveness of the area as a commercial destination and reduce the number of vacant buildings by attracting and retaining tenants, and on the other hand, to strengthen the sense of community while promoting environmentalism and local crafts. This initiative encourages the use of sustainable and eco-friendly materials that require little maintenance. In doing so, it helps create a more beautiful, greener and more welcoming urban environment that stimulates local economic activity and promotes the long-term prosperity of downtown Moncton.



## Whitehorse (YT) - Whitehorse Summer Public Square Project

The City of Whitehorse has implemented a summer waterfront public space pilot project for its 2024 Townspace project, replacing the Main Street block that was closed the previous summer to provide shaded seating areas, expand restaurant patios and provide other amenities. At the February 12 City Council meeting, the administration recommended moving the town square to the waterfront to reduce traffic disruptions and the loss of parking spaces, while addressing concerns expressed by local merchants.

# Intergovernmental and international partnerships

Some Canadian municipalities are active on the international scene to promote the economic development of their region and attract international investment. Initiatives put in place by municipalities include partnerships with economic promotion and export assistance organizations, missions abroad, and twinning with foreign cities. Some initiatives also aim to attract specialized workers to improve the competitiveness of local businesses.

- • • • Fourteen major Canadian metropolitan areas have their international promotion agencies responsible for attracting investment and promoting key sectors of their economies. These agencies have the mandate to promote the region, make representations and provide certain services for potential investors.

- • • • In the case of twinning, the objective is often to forge and deepen economic, cultural and organizational ties with international communities. In the context of the critical need to diversify markets, twinning with cities in emerging markets can help improve the region's competitiveness.

## **Edmonton (AB) - Hydrogen Partnership between Edmonton Global and Ulsan Free Economic Zone: Hydrogen Partnership**

Edmonton Global is a not-for-profit organization created and funded by 14 municipalities in the Edmonton metropolitan area, including the City of Edmonton, to strengthen the region's international competitiveness by attracting foreign investment and supporting the global expansion of local businesses. Meanwhile, the Ulsan Free Economic Zone (UFEZ), located in the industrial city of Ulsan in South Korea, is a special economic zone that offers regulatory and tax benefits to attract investors and develop innovation hubs in strategic sectors such as hydrogen, next-generation batteries and sustainable maritime industries. In November 2024, these two entities signed a memorandum of understanding to accelerate the use and innovation of the hydrogen sector, focusing on the sharing of expertise, joint project development and increased trade between their regions. This partnership builds on Edmonton's role as Canada's leading hydrogen production hub and Ulsan's strategic position as an industrial hub in Asia, establishing a model for international cooperation in the energy transition.

## **Brandon (MB) - Twinning With Chervonohrad (Ukraine) to Boost Local Economy**

In June 2024, the City of Brandon formalized an international partnership with Chervonohrad, Ukraine, as part of a twinning to strengthen cultural, educational and economic exchanges. Beyond the symbolic significance and international solidarity, this agreement opens up prospects for economic development by promoting trade, the sharing of skill and mutual tourism promotion. Based on this official framework, the municipality intends to develop joint projects in sectors such as tourism, local entrepreneurship and creative industries, in order to boost its attractiveness, diversify its economic relations and encourage new investments.

## **Caledon (ON) -Strategic Partnership With Isola Del Liri for Economic Development**

In June 2025, the Municipality of Caledon, Ontario, strengthened its twin city partnership with Isola del Liri, Italy, by organizing an international trade mission. This delegation, supported by the Government of Canada's CanExport Community Investment Program, the Trade Commissioner Service and the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Ontario, aimed to expand existing cultural and tourism cooperation towards a strategic area of economic development. With a particular focus on the agri-food and food processing sectors, the mission provided an opportunity to engage in direct dialogue with Italian companies interested in establishing a presence in North America.

This initiative is in line with the municipality's objectives in terms of attracting foreign direct investment and creating quality jobs, in accordance with its strategic plan. By highlighting the local food and beverage ecosystem, its strategic location in the Greater Toronto Area and its transportation infrastructure, Caledon seeks to solidify its position as a competitive destination for business. This international partnership is an example of how twinning can serve as a lever not only for cultural exchanges, but also to stimulate innovation, foster economic cooperation and generate lasting benefits for the local community.

## **Greater Sudbury (ON) - Mining Partnership with Moquegua (Peru) for Innovation and Sustainability**

The partnership between Greater Sudbury and the Moquegua Region of Peru marks an important milestone in international cooperation between two mining capitals. Signed at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference, the letter of intent aims to strengthen ties between the two regions by fostering innovation and competitiveness in the global marketplace. The agreement encompasses various sectors, ranging from economic development and workforce training to battery and microprocessor research, remediation technologies and academic knowledge transfer, providing new opportunities for businesses and citizens on both continents.

This partnership builds on a collaboration that has already been underway since 2019, when the Governor of Moquegua visited Canada and learned about Sudbury's experience in environmental remediation. Among the alliance's flagship projects is the innovative remediation program in the Coralaque-Tambo watershed, which applies the lessons of the Sudbury "ecological miracle" in Peru. This project, involving scientists and companies involved in the regeneration of Greater Sudbury, has the potential to reach up to two million people in the Moquegua and Arequipa regions, consolidating a model of north-south cooperation in sustainable mining development and environmental protection..

## **Richmond Hill (ON) - Trade Mission to Germany**

Richmond Hill's participation in Hannover Messe 2025 is a proactive strategy to attract international companies to the municipality. By going to the world's largest industrial show in Germany, where Canada was the guest of honour. The main objective of the mission was to seek to convince foreign companies to establish Canadian operations in Richmond Hill. The specific objective of the trade delegation was to attract foreign direct investment by highlighting Richmond Hill's attractiveness as a leading technology hub.

This attractiveness is due to its central location in the Greater Toronto Area, the high qualification of its workforce (79% of active residents having completed higher education), and its ecosystem of nearly 5,000 innovative companies in the automation, robotics and artificial intelligence sectors. Using the local success of Maple Advanced Robotics Inc., winner of the show's 2025 Robotics Award, as a showcase for the city's technological excellence.

## **Montréal (QC) - Attracting Foreign Investment**

Montréal stands out as a leading example of attracting foreign investment supported by the municipality. In the first half of 2021, the city attracted a record \$1.8 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI), spread over 40 projects from 13 countries. This growth is largely due to Montréal International, a non-profit economic development organization that acts as the region's international promotional arm.

Montréal International, a non-profit organization funded by the private sector, the governments of Canada and Québec, the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM) and the City of Montréal, offers various incentives to attract foreign investors. These incentives include funding for international investment projects (up to CA\$500,000), research infrastructure (up to CA\$500,000), and support for the startup and pre-incubation of innovative startups (up to CA\$250,000). The City of Montréal is an active partner of the organization, contributing to its funding and governance, which makes it possible to align municipal strategies with those of international promotion.



## **Papineau (QC) - International Mission to Belgium for Sustainable Development and Territorial Attractiveness**

The Regional County Municipality (RCM) of Papineau recently conducted a mission to Belgium, from September 12 to 20, 2023, to strengthen its ties with the Province of Namur and to develop new collaborations in the areas of sustainable development, the social economy, tourism and public safety. This mission, which was attended by the warden, several mayors and employees of the MRC and CDROL-Outaouais, provided an opportunity to meet institutional partners and Belgian citizens wishing to settle in Québec. The visits made, in particular to the Ressourcerie Namuroise, the NID (Namur Sustainable Intelligence) and the University of Namur, are part of the MRC's 2023–2028 strategic plan, which places sustainable development and territorial attractiveness at the heart of its priorities.

## **Saint John (N.B.) - The City of Saint John joins the International Association of Cities and Ports (AIVP) for Port Economic Development**

In November 2021, the City of Saint John and the Saint John Port Authority formalized their membership in the International Association of Cities and Ports (AIVP), a global network of nearly 200 port cities committed to bridging urban development and port activities. This partnership is part of a sustainable economic development strategy aimed at strengthening regional competitiveness through infrastructure modernization, including the \$205 million container terminal expansion and modernization project. Joining the AIVP gives Saint John access to global knowledge sharing in areas such as innovation, urban and port integration, and sustainable development. This aligns with the UN's 2030 Agenda. This cooperation illustrates the joint desire of the city and the port to build a shared vision for the coastline and consolidate their role as an economic driver for New Brunswick and Atlantic Canada.

## **Halifax (NS) - International Construction Talent Recruitment and Retention Pilot Project**

The Halifax Regional Municipality launched and funded a strategic pilot project to recruit and retain skilled talent in April 2023, providing \$208,572 to the Halifax Partnership, the region's economic development agency, to address the critical labour shortage in the construction sector. In this international partnership, the municipality plays a facilitating and funder role, allowing the Halifax Partnership to hire a certified immigration consultant and international recruiter who works directly with local employers to develop recruitment strategies tailored to international markets. The city is drawing on its legislative authority over economic and industrial development to support this initiative, which aims to attract more than 1,000 job seekers to national and international recruitment fairs, including in the United Kingdom, France and Morocco. This pilot project is part of a five-year economic strategy. It represents a proactive approach to simultaneously solving the challenges of housing shortages and skilled labour. The city acts as a catalyst for collaboration between the private sector, provincial partners, and international organizations such as Destination Canada.



## **Yellowknife (NT) - Community Partnership for Economic Development (JEDS) with Yellowknives Dene First Nation**

The Yellowknives Dene First Nation (YKDFN) and the City of Yellowknife collaborated through the Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) program between 2019 and 2021 to develop a joint economic development strategy. This first participation in a two-year accelerated model allowed the two communities to strengthen their partnership through joint workshops, the revision of a Memorandum of Understanding, securing funding from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor), and the co-design of an implementation plan. The strategy focuses on three main areas: support for local businesses and entrepreneurship, workforce development and tourism. The partnership exemplifies a reconciling economy approach, combining strategic planning, community mobilization and collaborative governance, and positions both parties to pursue sustainable joint economic development initiatives.



# Ownership in Companies

Canadian municipalities are generally not allowed to own shares in private, for-profit companies. For example, in the Northwest Territories, section 68.2 of the Cities, Towns and Villages Act states that “no municipality shall purchase shares, make loans or provide security for the purpose of encouraging economic development.” In British Columbia, the Community Charter (s. 183) states that a municipality may only invest its funds in secure financial instruments, such as government securities, mutual funds or bank deposits. Section 185 authorizes, however, as an exception, the creation or acquisition of shares in a private corporation, but only with the approval of the inspector or if permitted by regulation.

In Québec, where section 13.1 of the Municipal Powers Act allows municipalities to take stakes in companies or partnerships as part of a previously adopted economic development program, subject to conditions set by the government. The objective is not to manage the company, but to support strategic projects, such as the rescue of essential and vital companies or the development of innovative sectors, such as the company BIXI, which operates a bike-sharing service. In Alberta, the City of Edmonton has been the sole shareholder of EPCOR, a public utility company operating in the electricity, water and gas sectors, since 1902, illustrating how a municipality can own and manage a business that is essential to providing strategic public services.

## Victoria (BC) - Municipal Acquisition for the Preservation and Support of an Iconic Music Centre

The City of Victoria acquired the Hermann’s Jazz Club and View Street Social building to preserve this iconic downtown music venue and support the local arts scene. This \$3.95 million purchase, funded by the City Reserve for the sale of land, is part of the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan as well as Victoria’s Music Strategy and the “Create Victoria Arts and Culture” plan. Through collaboration with Arts on View Society, which continues to occupy the ground floor, the city is committed to keeping this cultural centre in operation by looking for a new tenant for the upper floor. This investment reflects the City’s commitment to strengthening the cultural offering and revitalizing the downtown core through the OUR DWTN program.

## Edmonton (AB) - EPCOR

EPCOR is a public utility company whose sole shareholder is the City of Edmonton. EPCOR builds, owns and operates electricity, natural gas and water transmission and distribution systems, water and wastewater treatment facilities, sanitation and stormwater systems and infrastructure in 180 communities in four Canadian provinces and the United States.

## Toronto (ON) - Toronto Hydro

In 1911, the City of Toronto purchased several private electricity companies to create the Toronto Hydro-Electric System, marking one of the first examples of utility municipalization in Canada. The initiative aimed to unify a fragmented grid, ensure a reliable supply of electricity and protect citizens from abusive tariffs imposed by private operators. By assuming responsibility for the ownership and operation of the system, the municipality has not only strengthened a service that is essential to urban functioning but has also fostered economic vitality and expansion through a reliable and affordable energy grid. Toronto Hydro remains wholly owned by the municipality today, illustrating the strategic importance of municipal utilities to local energy planning and security.

## Montréal (QC) - Acquisition of BIXI for Service Continuity and Urban Mobility

Following the bankruptcy protection of the company responsible for the bike-sharing system, the City of Montréal has chosen to buy back its assets in order to ensure the continuity of service. This decision was a response to a twofold imperative: to preserve a mode of transportation that has become essential in the daily lives of Montréalers, with tens of thousands of trips made every day, and to protect the investments already made by the City, which was the organization's main creditor. The takeover, financed by compensation for the company's debt, was also intended to prevent the abrupt end of service from compromising sustainable mobility, intermodality and economic development efforts in the city. The self-service bicycle system is thus perceived as a lever for urban attractiveness and the revitalization of local shops. To ensure the rapid resumption of operations and prepare for the next season, management has been entrusted to a non-profit organization, pending the definition of a sustainable governance model.



# Municipal Corporations

Municipal corporations, also known as municipally controlled corporations, are separate legal entities created or majority-owned by local governments to achieve public service or economic development objectives. These corporations, which include utilities, economic development corporations, housing authorities and government procurement, allow municipalities to exercise their powers with greater operational flexibility. The framework governing their creation and operation varies considerably across Canada, reflecting constitutional and political differences between provinces and territories.

In British Columbia, section 185 of the Community Charter allows municipalities to incorporate corporations, including for-profit corporations, but subject to the prior approval of the Inspector of Municipalities, who acts as the guardian of the public interest and financial risk.

- Alberta, through its Municipal Government Act (ss. 75.1-75.5) also provides a framework for the creation of corporations with a simple obligation to notify the Minister once the decision has been made.
- Saskatchewan (The Cities Act, s. 158) and Manitoba strictly regulate the objectives of these entities. In Manitoba, the Municipal Act (s.261) allows municipalities to financially support Community Development Corporations (CDCs), but the Corporations Act (ss. 263 and 264) imposes a strict limit on only one corporation per municipality and prohibits the distribution of profits without provincial authorization.

In contrast, section 1 of the Municipal Assistance Prohibition Act in Québec explicitly prohibits cities from incorporating or providing financial assistance to any for-profit corporation. To stimulate economic development, Québec municipalities must therefore turn to other tools provided for in other laws, such as the creation of convention centres, public markets or the granting of tax credits.

In the Atlantic provinces, the power of municipalities is more limited and focused. New Brunswick relies on section 8 of its Local Governance Act to allow corporations to be formed for public services or economic development, but expressly prohibits their purpose being to make a profit. Nova Scotia (Municipal Housing Corporations Act) and Newfoundland and Labrador go further. Nova Scotia only makes an exception for municipal non-profit housing corporations. Newfoundland and Labrador, in its Towns and Local Service Districts Act, allows for the creation of water and sewer service companies, however, it reaffirms the prohibition of any intention of profit. In Prince Edward Island, section 181.1 of the Municipal Government Act is more permissive, allowing controlled corporations for any municipal purpose, with strict financial regulation. In practice, major development projects are often carried out in partnership with the province, which generally owns the majority of them.

Finally, in the Northwest Territories (Cities, Towns and Villages Act, s. 67) and Nunavut (Cities, Towns and Villages Act, s. 53.95), municipalities have the power to incorporate corporations for municipal purposes, but this decision is conditional on obtaining the prior approval of the Minister. Yukon takes a different approach in section 4(3) of its Municipal Act, a municipality simply cannot be a shareholder in a corporation that carries on activities that it does not have the authority to carry on itself.



## Calgary (AB) - ENMAX

ENMAX provides electricity, natural gas, renewable energy and related services to the City of Calgary. The company has existed under various names since 1905, when Calgary founded it as the City of Calgary Electric System. On January 1, 1998, the City approved a proposal to make the Electric System a fully fledged municipal corporation. ENMAX also operates Versant Power, a power transmission and distribution company in northern and eastern Maine. In 2024, ENMAX paid more than \$103 million in dividends to the City of Calgary.

## Regina (SK) - Community and Social Impact Regina

The City of Regina has created a municipal corporation called Community & Social Impact Regina (CSIR), which will exist separately from the city and will have more autonomy, flexibility and the ability to adapt and respond to the needs of the community. Through collaborative approaches, the CSIR will develop, facilitate and monitor coordinated community and social impact strategies to support the well-being, health, safety and social inclusion of residents of Regina and the region. The governance of the CSIR is ensured by a Board of Directors. The City of Regina is the sole shareholder, and the organization operates independently but in collaboration with the City through a member agreement.

## Thompson (MB) - Community Development Corporation

The goal of the Thompson Community Development Corporation is to promote economic development in the Thompson region, while ensuring the sustainability of the organization. The Thompson CDC focuses its activities around four main areas:

- Economic development
- Diversification
- Development and implementation of marketing projects
- Advocacy support and collaboration with stakeholders

## Hamilton (ON) - Farmers' Market

The Hamilton Farmers' Market is a municipal service corporation, established in accordance with the specific requirements set out in the Municipal Service Corporations Regulation, O. Reg. 599/06 made under the Municipal Act, 2001. A "municipally controlled corporation" is defined as a corporation in which 50% or more of the issued and outstanding shares are owned by a municipality, or a majority of the directors of which are appointed or approved by a municipality.

The Hamilton Farmers' Market's letters patent established it as a not-for-profit corporation without share capital. The city is the sole shareholder and voting member. In addition, the City appoints the entire Board of Directors. The Hamilton Farmers' Market has adopted rules of procedure governing its council meetings, as set out in its operational agreement with the city and its procedure bylaws. Under this agreement and bylaws, meetings of the board of directors must be public, unless otherwise provided by law. Before holding a closed session, the council must pass a resolution setting out the general nature of the matter to be considered at the meeting.

## Charlottetown (PEI) - Charlottetown Area Development Corporation (CADC)

The Charlottetown Area Development Corporation (CADC) has been active in the provincial capital since 1974. The initial allocation of its common shares was 75 percent for the Province, 15 percent for the City of Charlottetown and 10 percent for the Regional Planning Council. The mandate of the CDAC is to bring innovation, investment and expertise to economic and social projects that neither government nor the private sector are willing to carry out alone. The CDAC fulfills two essential roles: to act as a catalyst for the private sector and to bring together various players in the business community to launch development and urban renewal projects.

# Municipal Associations

Bilingual or French-speaking municipalities can organize collectively in certain provinces within associations aimed at strengthening their capacities and enhancing their local specificities. Among these, bilingual municipal associations play a special role in mobilizing bilingualism as a lever for economic dynamism and cultural cohesion. These groups provide a space for consultation, sharing of practices and technical support to foster innovation, attract investment and support the growth of local communities. Organizations such as Eco-West Canada complement this ecosystem by supporting municipalities in the planning and implementation of green economy projects, illustrating the diversity of strategies used by municipalities to promote sustainable and inclusive economic development.

## Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities

The Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (AMBM) brings together 16 bilingual municipalities that together represent Manitoba's bilingual municipal leadership. Officially incorporated in 1995, this organization's main objective is to strengthen economic development in these municipalities while promoting Manitoba's and Canada's bilingual identity. As early as 1994, the AMBM commissioned an exhaustive research project entitled "Reconciling Language and the Economy: A Study on Economic Development in Manitoba's Bilingual Municipalities," which became the roadmap for the development of its first comprehensive economic development plan, "Global Vision, Local Action," published in 1995. The AMBM focuses on the added value of bilingualism in the local economy and coordinates its efforts through the Economic Development Council for Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities (CDEM). Owned by the AMBM, the CDEM acts as a true economic catalyst for bilingual municipal governments and their community economic development corporations. In terms of its representational work, the AMBM advocates for reliable tools and opportunities that help bilingual municipalities and their community leaders innovate, compete and grow for a more prosperous economic future, thus building livable environments.



## Eco-West Canada

Eco-West Canada (SWC) is a national not-for-profit organization, established in 2008 and based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. A member of the Association of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities, its mandate is to promote the sustainable economic development of Canada's rural and urban municipalities through the planning and implementation of green economic infrastructure.

The organization supports municipalities and other partners in the design and implementation of projects aimed at reducing gas emissions and carbon footprint. Its interventions focus on several sectors, including; the development of low-carbon municipal clusters and the circular economy.

Among the services offered, Eco-West Canada offers project management and monitoring, GHG inventories, the development of local action plans on climate change, as well as the preparation of funding applications. The organization also connects municipalities with green technologies tailored to their needs.

## Association of Bilingual Municipalities of Alberta

The Bilingual Association of Alberta Municipalities (ABMA) brings together 19 member municipalities that, recognized as officially bilingual or committed to the promotion of bilingualism, consider linguistic duality to be a strategic lever for their development. Created to support and promote the role of English and French in the economic and cultural vitality of communities, the ABMA is now a major player in Alberta's municipal landscape. Its vision places bilingualism at the heart of municipal strategies that promote job creation, access to a more diverse workforce, the solidity of municipalities and the enrichment of cultural communities. The association acts as a hub for information, education, celebration and action, where member municipalities share their experiences and build solutions to economic challenges together. By collaborating with local, provincial and even interprovincial partners, as evidenced by the strategic partnership with the MRC de Montmagny in Québec, the association illustrates how bilingualism can strengthen bridges between regions, stimulate tourism, attract new investment and showcase Alberta's cultural richness.

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# **SMLG•SMAL**

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Secrétariat de la Table des ministres provinciaux et territoriaux responsables des administrations locales.

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