



Reopen Wellington Street

It is time for Wellington Street to reopen.

The Sparks Street BIA and its members were surrounded by participants of the Trucker Occupation for three weeks last February. Once the trucks left, our businesses were inaccessible for an additional week as officials erected a fence around the entire Parliamentary Precinct out of concern protesters would return. Almost a year after the Trucker Convoy ensnarled downtown Ottawa, the rest of the city has moved on, yet businesses and residents of the downtown core continue to be reminded of that grueling month every day.

The current closure of Wellington Street between Bank and Elgin, as well as the closure of O'Connor and Metcalfe streets between Wellington and Queen streets have placed additional burdens on our members. The limited amount of surface parking in our area cannot be accessed by our members' clients and service providers. Loading zones are inaccessible, restricting deliveries. These issues add to the difficulty of operating a business in the downtown core.

Commercial and residential streets like Elgin, Gloucester, Lyon and Bank now host a regular flow of large trucks and other vehicles for which they are not designed to handle. For decades, these vehicles used Metcalfe and O'Connor streets to travel from Highway 417 and Quebec. As more workers return to downtown, their daily commutes are made more difficult. These issues will only grow as more people come back to the core and construction season gets underway in the spring.

In the Fall of 2019, Ottawa City Council approved a Public Realm Plan for Sparks Street. For the first time ever, the boards of the Sparks Street BIA and Mall Authority, the federal government, the National Capital Commission and City of Ottawa worked together to develop a much needed update for Sparks Street. Our request for federal funding in support of the engineering phase of the project was lost as government at all levels focused their efforts to combat the COVID-19 Pandemic. As we now move past the pandemic, it is time to get projects like the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan back on track.

The Sparks Street BIA plays a unique role downtown. We are the only organization that regularly works and engages with residents, local businesses, property owners, the city, and the federal government. We see how everyone uses the spaces around us and can provide a ground level perspective that we feel will be invaluable during the proposed study. The Sparks Street BIA and its members ask to be a part of the entire study as the City of Ottawa, the Federal Government, and their consultants discuss the future of Wellington Street. It is imperative that everyone who works, lives, and plays in downtown Ottawa have an opportunity to voice their concerns and ideas. We respectfully ask that everyone involved in this process come with an open mind, a willingness to listen, and committed to finding a solution suitable for everyone impacted. Until then, let's reopen Wellington Street and get downtown Ottawa moving.