

Summary of Media Coverage on Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act

Since Bill 21 was introduced in the Legislature on May 31, AUMA has had regular engagement with media to ensure that the public is aware of what the amendments to the MGA will mean for its members. Media coverage to date has included AUMA's voice in media articles or stories and most importantly longer feature segments on interviews by Alberta Primetime and 630 Ched's Ryan Jespersen Show.

Below are excerpts from earned media with comments from AUMA President Lisa Holmes, and Board Members Jim Stevenson and Maryann Chichak.

"The amendments realize one of our three key goals, which is to modernize legislation to reflect the importance of regionalization," Lisa Holmes, president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, said. "The mandatory long term inter-municipal funding agreements should enable municipalities to work together to ensure that they all contribute to the costs of infrastructure and services that their respective citizens and businesses use. We look forward to the public consultations so that we can discuss additional ways to ensure municipalities have the required resources to provide core services and can more collaboratively be engaged to work in partnership with the province to build sustainable communities for the future."

– Global News & Alberta Voice, May 31, 2016

"Our association is disappointed that the government does not plan to allow cities to apply any new taxes. 'We just have one revenue source right now, which is property tax,' she said.

Communities had hoped for new sources of cash, such as a hotel tax, for example, to help fund their operations.

'We also want to discuss how municipalities can share in provincial revenues,' Holmes said. Calgary and Edmonton may be granted new taxation powers as part of the Big City Charter negotiations, which are expected to go to public consultations in the fall.

But Holmes said the vast majority of municipalities will be excluded from those talks."

– CBC Edmonton, May 31, 2016

"The amendments are a great start but the province still needs to legislate base infrastructure funding tied to inflation" said President Holmes, adding legislation needs to give municipalities alternate tax powers, such as the ability to charge a hotel tax in resort towns.

She's disappointed the changes don't address how schools sites are assembled and used. The current wording still wouldn't allow anyone to build seniors homes or a recreation centre connected to a school on municipal reserve land, and doesn't require the province to consult with cities on which school projects move forward first."

– Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Sun & Calgary Herald, May 31, 2016

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“Cities will now be able to charge developers for libraries, police stations, fire halls and community recreations centres if at least 30% of the benefit from those new facilities goes directly to the new areas. The province is still writing regulations to ensure the cost to new homeowners is proportionate to the benefit.”

‘We’re not exactly sure how that’s going to work,’ said Councillor Jim Stevenson, one of two Calgary councillors on Alberta Urban Municipalities Association board.

‘We know that you just can’t lay a whole bunch of extra charges on the developer because then that gets passed on to the end homeowner.’”

– Calgary Herald & Calgary Sun, May 31, 2016

“AUMA President Lisa Holmes says inter-municipal discussions will help dive into cost and revenue sharing.”

– AM770 & 630 CHED, May 31, 2016

On mandatory regional collaboration . . .

“That’s a great step forward. It’s something that AUMA has been asking for a long time.”

“I think in most cases you’re going to see municipalities coming together. They want to work together. They want to have these agreements in place . . .”

On sustainable funding . . .

“We have two sources of revenue in municipal government . . . the property taxes and MSI grants or other grants . . . the MSI system is broken . . . we are at the mercy of whatever the province decides to give us each year . . . [the province] is saying make your plans for five years for capital projects but then we have no idea what kind of money we’re getting in one year . . . we’ve asked them to make it a legislated grant, something like the federal gas tax where it’s indexed, it’s predictable, we all know what we’re getting and we’ll all be able to deal with it, and that’s something they haven’t even approached us with yet.”

– Alberta Primetime, June 1, 2016

“The MGA is the guiding document that enables municipalities to do what they do, and it hasn’t been updated in 20 years, said Morinville Mayor Lisa Holmes, who chairs the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. ‘We view this as a good first draft, but there are a lot of changes that need to be made.’”

– St. Albert Gazette, June 4, 2016

“Lisa Holmes is the president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, which represents cities, town and villages, including those in Red Deer and Mountain View counties.

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'The amendments realize one of our three key goals which is to modernize legislation to reflect the importance of regionalization,' said Holmes.

'The mandatory long-term inter-municipal funding agreements should enable municipalities to work together to ensure that they all contribute to the costs of infrastructure and services that their respective citizens and businesses use.'

– Mountain View Gazette, June 7, 2016

"Whitecourt Mayor Maryann Chichak said she is not happy to see no long-term commitment to the Municipal Sustainability Initiative, which funds municipalities across Alberta for various capital and operating costs."

– Whitecourt Star, June 7, 2016

"A trend we've seen is this desire by the province to discuss new ways for municipalities to tax --but not new ways to be funded through provincial grants,' says Lisa Holmes, current president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) and Mayor of Morinville. 'There's this trend to download the burden of taxation onto municipal governments.'"

– The News from Alberta Counsel, June 9, 2016

On the topic of the Ombudsman . . .

"It's really not the best and most efficient use of that staff resource,' said Lisa Holmes, mayor of Morinville and president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

Holmes said the association is concerned about the watchdog's increased mandate and wants to see changes before the Modernized Municipal Government Act is passed.

'This position being created is going to have a lot of questions around it, a lot of misunderstanding from the public,' she said.

'This office is going to be flooded with complaints about decisions ... and really, it's not going to be an effective or a really efficient use of the dollars or the resources.'"

– Calgary Herald, June 10, 2016

Lisa Holmes, AUMA President, "...the current funding model is...not giving us funding to plan for capital projects...we don't want to leave this legacy of broken pipes etc....we need to find a new model of revenue...there is nothing in the [new Municipal Government Act] to address this".

– 630 CHED, Ryan Jespersen Show, June 13, 2016