

Attention: News Editors
For immediate release

Progress on MGA appreciated, but bigger steps still needed for municipal success

(Edmonton, April 10, 2017) - While Bill 8 addresses some of the shortcomings of the Municipal Government Act (MGA) and enables greater regional collaboration, municipalities are concerned that it does not respond to our numerous requests to stabilize municipal funding so we can effectively plan for, and address, infrastructure and service requirements in our communities. "It is unrealistic to require municipalities to prepare three-year operating and five-year capital plans when we are so reliant on provincial grants that are changed without any notice", says AUMA President Lisa Holmes. "That's why we are disappointed that the province is ignoring our request to embed in the legislation a requirement for a three-year notice of municipal funding changes".

AUMA was dismayed by the province's statement that these amendments are the finishing touches to the Act. This Act is the foundation for everything that we do yet it seems that it is the province, not municipalities, who are able to determine priority changes. We will be reminding the province that there are many other important reforms that must be resolved after the municipal election.

Municipalities are uncertain on how many of the amendments will be realized since the details will be provided through regulations. "Similar to other MGA Bills, there is much that is yet to be determined based on what the regulations say and when they are released," said Holmes. "It took almost two years for the March 2015 Bill 20 regulations on public participation and corporate planning to be released for consultation and we are still waiting for regulations on council code of conduct and elected official training. We can't fully determine the applicability and feasibility of the MGA provisions without the details that the regulations provide," she added.

In particular, municipalities are looking forward to the regulations relating to collaboration. By enabling intermunicipal offsite levies, there is a greater ability for municipalities to work together and with developers on the planning and funding of new developments that impact multiple municipalities. As well, there will be stronger collaboration between municipalities and school boards on the planning and utilization of schools.

While some amendments in the Bill were not changes that AUMA was seeking, we are pleased that the province heard and acted upon our ideas in many cases, making these provisions more workable for municipalities. This includes correcting the timeframe for municipal development plans, outlining the scope of communication to Indigenous communities on land use planning, clarifying that the school boards' exemption from levies only relates to schools and simplifying the receipt process for property taxes.

There is much more work to be done to ensure this important legislation meets the needs of Alberta municipalities. As these amendments and the regulations are advanced, AUMA will continue to offer practical solutions on behalf of our members.



About the AUMA

Founded in 1905, the AUMA represents 269 urban municipalities including cities, towns, villages, summer villages, and specialized municipalities. We work with federal and provincial governments and business and community stakeholders on a broad range of issues to strengthen the economic, social, cultural, and environmental vitality of our member municipalities.

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