



**Attention: News Editors
For Immediate Release**

Amendments to Bill 21 Increase Municipal Flexibility but More Changes Needed

Edmonton, AB – November 22, 2016 The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) is pleased that the proposed amendments to Bill 21, the *Modernized Municipal Government Act*, empower municipalities to make local decisions about municipal infrastructure and services. A key example of the increased flexibility for municipalities is the province’s decision to remove unnecessary restrictions in the use of new offsite levies – a decision brought about in large part by the advocacy of AUMA and its members.

Bill 21 had expanded the scope of offsite levies to include community recreation facilities, fire halls, police stations and libraries. However, levies on this infrastructure could not be applied unless it could be demonstrated that at least 30 per cent of the benefit of this infrastructure accrued to the new development. Today’s amendments remove that 30 per cent barrier.

“When Bill 21 was introduced and new levy tools were provided to municipalities, it was clear that the majority of our members could never make them work because of the 30 per cent threshold,” says Lisa Holmes, AUMA President. “By removing this barrier, municipalities will be better positioned to build complete communities and ensure that costs for new infrastructure are distributed fairly.”

Additional amendments consistent with AUMA’s positions include improvements or clarifications related to decision-making timelines for development permits, municipally controlled corporations, Intermunicipal Collaboration Frameworks, and elected officials training. While appreciative of these changes, Holmes indicates that overall, today’s amendments to the MGA do not address a number of key issues that AUMA advocated for during the review, such as stability of revenue sources for municipalities and a requirement for the province to provide notice of changes to funding, legislation and policies that impact municipalities.

“It is difficult for municipalities to prepare municipal plans and long term capital and operating budgets when provincial funding and policies change every year. Municipalities need to be consulted on issues that impact them,” says Holmes. “But despite the absence of legislative solutions on municipal funding, we appreciate the Premier’s recent commitment to working with us to make certain that municipalities have stable and predictable funding. This is a top priority for municipalities and we are ready to work with the provincial government to ensure that this happens,” continues Holmes.

While we are pleased that the province has signaled its intention for further changes to the MGA in spring 2017 through the release of a discussion guide, there are a number of key issues that are notably absent from the guide. These items include shared responsibility for brownfields redevelopment and affordable housing, flexibility for municipal reserves and redevelopment levies, and increased protection for municipalities relating to joint and several liability. These outstanding issues remain important to municipalities and AUMA will continue to actively advocate on behalf of our members.



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“We know that a comprehensive MGA review does not happen often, so we need to get this right,” says Holmes. “AUMA will be active in ensuring our members are well-represented through this process, and through the ongoing work on MGA regulations. We will continue to offer solutions that position our communities to succeed,” concludes Holmes.

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About the AUMA

Founded in 1905, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association represents Alberta’s urban municipalities, including cities, towns, villages, summer villages and specialized municipalities. Our goal is to develop a strong partnership between all three levels of government through a shared vision, with long-term planning that facilitates social and economic growth, a strategic and stable funding matrix for capital projects, vital emergency and social services and implementation and coordination in the delivery of services to ensure the long-term sustainability of Alberta’s municipalities.

For more information:

Maegan Sheskey
Communications Coordinator, AUMA
780-668-2436



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