



## NEWS RELEASE

### ABmunis calls Bill 20 a power grab by provincial government

April 29, 2024

**EDMONTON** – Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) President Tyler Gandam presented the association's perspective on the provincial government's controversial Bill 20 at virtual news conference earlier today.

*The following statement closely resembles President Gandam's initial remarks at [this afternoon's media event](#):*

Bill 20 is an attempt by the provincial government to grab more power and wield more control over how people choose to live in their own communities. If passed, the proposed legislation will fundamentally redraw the blueprint of our local democracy and alter how people's local needs are met and who represents them.

The bill reduces the autonomy and authority of a recognized order of government – your local government. It also undermines the power of the local voter. Alberta Municipalities is concerned that the bill will intimidate and even silence legally elected officials who dare to criticize the provincial government.

If passed, Bill 20 will allow corporations and unions to fund candidates of their choice. The bill does almost nothing to improve transparency regarding financial donations to individual candidates and the money being raised and spent by third-party advertisers. Independent candidates risk being outspent and drowned out by party candidates who enjoy the financial backing of corporations and unions.

If the bill passes in its current form, local government elections will end up being about what influential corporations and unions want, not about what voters want. Essentially, Bill 20 puts local governments up for sale to the highest bidder. We know this doesn't sit well with Albertans, who have repeatedly said that "big money" has no place in local politics.

Bill 20 would allow the provincial government to remove councillors and repeal bylaws it doesn't like based on backroom cabinet decisions made without public scrutiny or accountability. The fact that cabinet decisions are confidential means that the public can never truly know why these decisions were made. Our association is speaking out about this because some of our members fear repercussions if they disagree openly with the provincial government. The possibility of a locally elected official being removed at any time, for any reason, is deeply unsettling and likely to have a "chilling effect" on councillors who might otherwise speak out against the provincial government.

Our question to the Premier and the provincial government is: Who stands to benefit from Bill 20? We ask because local governments and most Albertans have not been calling for these changes. Time and again, Albertans have said they do not want political parties at the local level. Who is the government listening to if it isn't Albertans? We call on the provincial government to answer these questions and explain its rationale for introducing Bill 20.

To date, the provincial government's reasons for introducing it have been flimsy. It has freely admitted that 70 per cent of Albertans don't want to see political parties in local elections. It says that 98 per cent of communities won't see it, as Calgary and Edmonton are the only places where the idea will be piloted. In truth, this "pilot project" will affect more than 2.4 million Albertans – half of all Albertans.

We've reviewed Bill 20 and we don't see how it will make local elections any more transparent, free or fair. Local government decisions are made in public. By contrast, Bill 20 would allow decisions to dismiss councillors and repeal bylaws to be made by provincial cabinet ministers in secret.

Bill 20 is an attempt by the government to centralize, strengthen and tighten the provincial government's hold on power. Bill 20 does not improve the lives of Albertans, it does not build up our province, and it does not make it easier for our communities to grow in unity and harmony.

The entire unedited [online media event](#) can be viewed here.

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*From the smallest village to the largest city, across every region of the province, Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) represents the communities where over 85% of Albertans live. ABmunis was founded in 1905 to provide urban and rural-region communities with a united voice. Alberta Municipalities now serves more than 260 of Alberta's 334 municipalities making it the province's largest municipal group.*

*We work with elected and administrative leaders of Alberta's summer villages, villages, town, cities, and specialized municipalities to advocate for solutions to their common issues.*

*And we help them build resilient and thriving communities by providing valuable services. We use our members' combined purchasing power to negotiate the best possible value and competitive pricing on employee benefits, insurance, energy, and other services needed to run an effective and efficient municipality.*

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