



NEWS RELEASE

ABmunis calls on provincial government to scrap Bill 20

May 8, 2024

EDMONTON – *The following statement is issued on behalf of Alberta Municipalities (ABmunis) President Tyler Gandam and the association's Board of Directors:*

From the moment Bill 20 was introduced on April 25, ABmunis has strenuously objected to the provincial government's attempted power grab and repeatedly signaled its eagerness to sit down with Minister Ric McIver and his team.

We have sought to discuss our members' many valid concerns and work together to find solutions that actually improve transparency and governance in local politics. As it now stands, Alberta Municipalities calls for Bill 20 to be rescinded.

Our members are especially concerned about the many unintended consequences that may arise from Bill 20. For example, it might tilt Alberta's political playing field in favour of candidates who enjoy the financial backing of corporations and unions. It might disqualify otherwise eligible voters from exercising their democratic right to vote. It might even negatively affect communities' efforts to build affordable housing projects.

Bill 20 is vast and extremely complicated. Because no consultation occurred, this provincial government seems unaware of or unconcerned about the long-term ramifications of this hurriedly constructed bill. ABmunis would welcome nothing more than the opportunity to present these shortcomings to the minister.

Despite our best efforts and reassurances from Minister McIver a week ago that the Government of Alberta would consult with associations like ours, as well as with municipal leaders and others on amendments to Bill 20, we are still waiting to hear from Minister McIver's office and the ministry.

We followed today's affordable housing announcement by Minister Jason Nixon and Minister McIver with interest. The changes made in Bill 20 to help accelerate affordable housing projects appear beneficial, but they could have been even better if the provincial government had consulted the experts – local governments. With input from municipal representatives, the provincial government could have done more and made further improvements.

The provincial government's silence and clear reluctance to meaningfully consult with us speaks volumes. Here's what it says to us – The Government of Alberta is still not listening to Albertans. Instead, it is blindly ploughing ahead regardless of what many Albertans think, want, and need, and

without thought to the greater impacts of the bill. When it comes to knowing what Albertans need and want, it acts like it knows better than Albertans themselves.

Albertans expect their local governments to conduct meaningful consultations whenever they're proposing major changes to their communities that require public support. Consultation, collaboration, co-operation and compromise are key components of democracy. Alberta Municipalities expects nothing less from the provincial government.

Alberta Municipalities calls on the Government of Alberta to scrap Bill 20 and go back to the drawing board. It cannot be salvaged. Bill 20 is rushed, deeply flawed, and full of half-baked changes that do not withstand scrutiny.

We ask Premier Danielle Smith and Minister McIver to abandon this misguided bill and work with municipal leaders from across Alberta to write legislation that reflects what most Albertans are saying they want and need.

Media contact:

Scott Lundy
Communications Manager, Alberta Municipalities
780.668.2436

scott@abmunis.ca

ABmunis.ca | [@ABMunis](https://twitter.com/ABMunis)

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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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