

January 24, 2017

The Honorable Danielle Larivee
Minister of Municipal Affairs
204 Legislature Building
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Edmonton, AB
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VIA EMAIL

Email to: minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca

Subject: Continuing the Conversation: Further Topics for Discussion on the MGA

Minister Larivee:

Thank you once again for your Ministry's commitment to engage Alberta's municipalities in modernizing the *Municipal Government Act*, and congratulations on receiving 3rd Reading of Bill 21 on December 6, 2016! On behalf of Sturgeon County Council, we were appreciative of the opportunity to attend the summer consultation sessions on Bill 21, and to submit a response on the proposed changes. When the *Modernized Municipal Government Act (MMGA)* comes into force later this year, it will better equip Alberta's municipalities to provide quality, cost-effective services and infrastructure to meet the diverse needs of Albertans.

There are still a couple of concerns we have around implementing some of the changes associated with the *Modernized Municipal Government Act*. Namely capacity to deliver multiple ICF's within 2-3 years in addition to being a member of the Edmonton Metro Region Growth Management Board; and with Centralized Industrial Assessment, as you are aware. We look forward to providing comment and working with the Ministry through the process of drafting the Regulations, once the drafts are released later this year.

In regards to the new proposals identified within the "Continuing the Conversation" discussion paper, Sturgeon County Council offers the following comments:

1) Governance

Collaboration with Indigenous Communities

- Sturgeon County is supportive of the proposed changes, that will ensure continued and enhanced collaboration between municipalities and First Nations communities.

Enforcement of Ministerial Orders

- As proposed, ensuring that the proper authority exists for Ministerial Orders to be complied with is important to maintaining a high standard for local governance. Sturgeon County is supportive of the proposed changes.
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Parental Leave for Municipal Councillors

- The proposed changes would enable Councils to be more flexible in how they address parental leave for Councillors, which Sturgeon County supports.

Environmental Stewardship

- Sturgeon County would like more clarity on this topic, specifically, regarding the interface between Provincial and Federal Ministries that have environmental responsibilities, and what the impact of citing environmental stewardship as a municipal purpose would have on these responsibilities (if any), and if municipalities should be anticipating budgetary impacts.
- Although this purpose is currently not included in the *MMGA*, it is our belief that municipalities have always practiced environmental stewardship (these are our communities, and we need to take care of them). In fact, “Respect the Natural Environment” is a focus area in Sturgeon County’s 2012-2021 Strategic Plan.

Notification of Amalgamations and Annexations

- Sturgeon County is supportive of the proposed changes, which bring clarity to the notification process for amalgamations and annexations.

2) Growth

Collaboration with School Boards

- Sturgeon County supports the notion of collaborating with school boards, but would suggest that this ability already exists under the current *MGA*, as we have entered into such agreements.

Off-Site Levies

- We are supportive of the ability to enact an off-site levy for provincial transportation projects that serve the new or expanded developments. This will help to ensure that growth pays for growth.
- We are generally supportive of the notion of an inter-municipal off-site levy, but require further details on how this process would work in order to provide a more informed response. Particularly, we are unsure of the process given that each municipality sets its own levy rates; which municipality is responsible for the original development; what happens if one municipality has front-ended the development area; and, how will extended benefit be determined across municipal borders? More detailed examples would help to inform our position on this suggestion.

Conservation Reserve

- Sturgeon County is supportive of the proposed changes pertaining to Conservation Reserves.

3) Funding

Compliance with Linked Tax Rate Ratio

- This proposed change does not impact Sturgeon County, as Sturgeon County does not exceed the 5:1 tax rate ratio.
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Taxation of Intensive Agricultural Operations

- Sturgeon County is supportive of the Government's proposal to equip municipalities with the tools to levy intensive agricultural operations, should they choose, to compensate for the unique demands and requirements intensive operations may place on municipal services and infrastructure.

Access to Assessment Information

- Sturgeon County appreciates the proposal that would allow our Assessors access to the assessment information regarding Designated Industrial Property (DIP) assessments, and would add that this information should be made available *while* the assessments are being completed; not after the fact. We would further appreciate clarity on who will be responsible for supporting the cost of a municipal assessor evaluating the DIP assessments prepared by the Provincial assessor.

Assessment Notices

- Sturgeon County is supportive of the increased clarity and transparency this proposal suggests.

Clarity Regarding Tax Exemptions

- Sturgeon County is supportive of bringing clarity to provincial agencies exempt from municipal taxation.

Corrections to Assessments Under Complaint

- Sturgeon County is supportive of the proposal, which clarifies a process Sturgeon County has done well at practicing in the past.

Again, Sturgeon County Council thanks you for the opportunity to provide our perspectives and constructive concerns before finalizing policy decisions related to the *MMGA*; you can expect us to be active participants in the Regulation review.

Pending your availability in the coming weeks, Sturgeon County Council would like to extend an invitation to you to discuss more informally, the *MMGA*. Should you be able to do so, your staff can coordinate a time through Trevor Duley, our Senior Advisor, Intergovernmental Affairs (tduley@sturgeoncounty.ca).

Thanks again Minister Larivee.

Warm Regards,

Tom Flynn
Mayor, Sturgeon County

cc.

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