

May 14, 2024

Honourable Ric McIver
Minister of Municipal Affairs
320 Legislature Building
10800-97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

via email: minister.municipalaffairs@gov.ab.ca

Dear Minister McIver,

The Town of Vegreville, like many towns and counties around Alberta, is very concerned about the recently proposed Municipal Affairs Statutes Amendment Act and recommends that the Government of Alberta rescind Bill 20.

Vegreville's Council feels best suited to gauge the needs of our residents and enact the priorities of our community as the government of proximity. We feel and hear the immediate impacts of Council decisions from our neighbours and community groups and are invested in creating a vibrant community. The possibility of the provincial government determining the validity of municipal bylaws puts the goals of the province ahead of the needs of our local community a move Council does not support. Local decision making is the hallmark of municipal government authority and Bill 20 erodes democracy in its purest form by allowing oversight and interference by the Province into matters of local decision-making. The Town of Vegreville is opposed to this type of over-reach and asserts Mayor and Council are responsible governors who regularly engage with local businesses and residents to reflect their voices in the decisions we make. Bill 20 undermines our authority, and we ask the Minister to reconsider.

We acknowledge Bill 20 has some positive changes that we support such as the expectation of mandatory training for municipal officials and recall petition signature validation to be a cost borne and administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. However, these improvements could be made as amendments to the regulations, decisions that could strengthen the skills of local leaders rather than undermine Albertans' trust in local decision making.

As a former City Council member, you certainly remember that decision making in Council chambers is very different than sitting in the Legislature or around a Cabinet table. The wide range of community builders who have devoted their time and energy to creating the Vegreville of today will become harder and harder to find under Bill 20. How do we encourage Vegrevillians to run for municipal government if Councillors can be removed without clear criteria at the whim of the Province? Encouraging community champions to put their names on a municipal ballot becomes extremely unappealing when the Provincial government's opinion is more powerful than the voice of local taxpayers. We maintain that Council and administration is responsible to Vegreville residents not to the province or outside influences and Bill 20 does not encourage or support the local voices and autonomous decision making that is the very essence of municipal government.

Council welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on these and other elements in Bill 20 and invite the Minister to future conversations with Mayor and Council so we can share our wonderful Town with you. Truly Vegreville has worked to demonstrate that people are our core, innovation is our strength, and community is our intention, and we would ask for you to reverse the proposed legislative amendments in Bill 20.

Sincerely,



Tim MacPhee

Mayor

cc: Honourable Premier Danielle Smith <premier@gov.ab.ca>
Honourable MLA Jackie Armstrong Homeniuk <fortsaskatchewan.vegreville@assembly.ab.ca>
AB Munis <advocacy@abmunis.ca>
Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) <rma@rmaalberta.com>