

September 17, 2018

Dear Municipal Colleague:

This morning, an editorial in the Toronto Star urged AMO to advocate for the City of Toronto, and against Ontario's newly elected provincial government, on the matter of Bill 31 (formerly Bill 5), which reduces the size of Toronto's City Council.

The public debate on the Bill and related use of the 'Notwithstanding Clause' is divided and emotional. The matter confirms that people are passionate about local municipal governance, taxation and public services. It has also put AMO in an awkward position.

The City of Toronto is not an AMO member, and since 2005, the City has made a point of being separate from us. It sought out and secured unique status with the Ontario government, and its own dedicated legislation: *the City of Toronto Act, 2006*. AMO has always respected the City of Toronto's decision to go it alone on governance and the authority of its Act. We certainly defer to the City of Toronto leadership on matters related to its relationship with the Government of Ontario.

Understandably, AMO focuses on service to the remaining 443 Ontario municipal governments that do not have the benefit of their own legislation. Our members have been clear about their top priorities: fiscal sustainability, recognition that one size does not fit all, working with us to improve services, and assurance that the Ontario government will not download its fiscal challenges onto municipal property taxpayers. In every regard, AMO members know that we can achieve far more working together, than we can by going it alone.

In August, we heard that the Province would not act in the same manner that it has with Toronto. We heard that it is committed to discussions with our membership and AMO, to understand what is working and what is not working. And importantly, we heard that consultation would inform future governance reviews. That commitment was repeated in a formal statement to AMO today.

In the four weeks since the conference, we have experienced the following: Minister Clark, a former mayor and former AMO President, is having meaningful discussions with us on long-standing municipal concerns, spanning several ministries. The changes to Toronto's Council have dominated headlines, and over the past week, remarks have suggested that the government is planning to impose further changes on municipal governments across Ontario.

Late last week, I wrote to Minister Clark to emphasize that relations between Ontario's provincial and municipal orders of government should be guided by facts and evidence, rather than by political rhetoric and emotion. His quick response reflects, in part, our shared belief in the benefits of maintaining an open, respectful relationship.

AMO has a clear mandate to ensure that the Government of Ontario benefits from, and experiences, the full weight of Ontario's municipal order of government as we move forward. Our mandate to weigh-in on an issue affecting the City of Toronto is less clear. We recognize growing anxiety across the province. We urge the Ontario government to clearly state its interests in having a governance review, and how it will proceed. And we urge the Ontario government to work with AMO and the municipal order of government to change requirements that undermine municipal finance, infrastructure investment, and efficient service delivery all across Ontario.

This is an important time for AMO and we all have a responsibility to make sure that Ontario's municipal governments are speaking with a strong, clear voice on the priorities that matter most to us all. Our next Board meeting is later this month, and we welcome any input that you wish to share with us as we prepare for it.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. McGarvey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jamie McGarvey
AMO President

Statement from Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing follows:

**Ministry of
Municipal Affairs
and Housing**

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Monday, September 17, 2018

Statement from Minister Clark

The government's regional review will take a broad look at the current model, which has been in place for almost 50 years. It's time to consider whether changes are needed to improve municipal governance in communities where populations have grown and the hard-earned dollars of taxpayers are being stretched.

The goal is to work together with municipal governments to give the people what they want; local governments that are working as effectively and efficiently as possible to support the future economic prosperity of their residents and businesses. The people of Ontario work hard for their money, and we want to keep as much of it in their pocket as possible while continuing the excellent level of service people have come to expect from their municipal and provincial governments.

We look forward to discussing with our many stakeholders, including our municipal partners, to determine what is working well in our current governance model, and what needs to be improved.

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