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Subject: RMA Member Backgrounder - Bill 18
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Hello RMA mayors/reeves and CAOs,

Please share this email with councillors and relevant staff

As you are likely aware, the Government of Alberta introduced Bill 18: *Provincial Priorities Act* for first reading earlier this week. As Bill 18 has the potential to impact the ability of municipalities to enter into agreements with and access funding support from the federal government, RMA wants to ensure members understand the Bill's intent and are prepared to speak to it with local media, as well as question local MLAs and government representatives. Please find attached a short member backgrounder containing an overview of the Bill, RMA reaction, key messages, and questions for consideration.

Please let the RMA advocacy team know if you have further questions.

Have a good weekend.

Thanks,

Wyatt Skovron

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RMA Backgrounder – Bill 18: *Provincial Priorities Act*

April 2024

What is Bill 18?

[Bill 18: Provincial Priorities Act](#) was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on April 10, 2024. Bill 18 is intended to ensure the Government of Alberta reviews and approves any funding agreements made between the federal government and “provincial entities” (including municipalities) to ensure that the funding aligns with provincial priorities. If passed, Bill 18 will apply to all public bodies in Alberta, including public agencies, municipalities, crown-controlled organizations, post-secondary institutions, schools boards, regional health authorities and Covenant Health.

The Government of Alberta has stated that Bill is intended to ensure any federal agreements with municipalities do not contradict provincial priorities or infringe on provincial jurisdiction. Bill 18’s intent is similar to Quebec’s [Act Respecting the Ministère Du Conseil Exécutif](#), which also requires any federal funding agreements with municipalities to be approved by the provincial government.

Based on RMA’s interpretation of Bill 18, it is unlikely to impact federal funding administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, or federal grant programs that include the province as the co-funder or initial receiver of the grant funding. RMA is seeking confirmation of this from Alberta Municipal Affairs.

RMA Initial Reaction:

The RMA has several concerns regarding with Bill 18. The requirement for provincial approval of all funding agreements reduces municipal autonomy, increases red tape, and could delay or even exclude Alberta municipalities from receiving federal funding support for local events and projects. At a time when municipalities of all types across Alberta face growing infrastructure deficits, heightened expectations to accommodate residential and industrial growth, and downloaded responsibilities from other levels of government, adding more red tape to funding access is the last thing Alberta’s municipalities need.

While the RMA is hopeful that there will be an opportunity to work with the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs to develop exemptions and design a streamlined provincial approval process, engagement with municipalities on this issue prior to Bill 18 being drafted may have led to an alternative approach to harmonizing provincial and federal priorities without introducing further risks to municipal sustainability.

Key Messages on Bill 18:

As Bill 18 is attracting significant media attention, RMA members may be contacted by media for comment. The messages below can be used, if needed, to help shape individual municipal responses to Bill 18.

- ♦ Bill 18 places additional red tape around federal-municipal funding agreements. Municipalities are reliant on provincial and federal grant funding to support local priorities. Any legislative or regulatory changes that make funding more difficult to access are concerning and contradict the province’s priority of reducing red tape.

- ♦ From a municipal perspective, Bill 18 implies that municipalities are unable to determine what is best for their residents. Although the Government of Alberta is responsible for advocating for what is best for the province as a whole, municipalities are closest to their residents and are in the best position to determine how to support their communities.
- ♦ Most federal-municipal agreements are small scale, supporting local community events and projects. RMA is concerned about politics interfering with these opportunities.
- ♦ The high-level nature of the legislation creates uncertainty for municipalities in terms of how current funding opportunities will be impacted. It is unknown whether regulations will be developed to exempt certain projects.
- ♦ Municipalities view themselves as partners of the provincial and federal government. Bill 18 instead further isolates municipalities from collaborating with other levels of government to support community needs.

Questions on Bill 18 Process:

RMA has several questions related to the Bill 18's implementation. Members are encouraged to seek answers to these questions from government contacts or local MLAs. RMA will share more information on Bill 18 as it becomes available.

- ♦ In what circumstances will exemptions be given by ministers?
 - ◇ Will exemptions be linked to a threshold, such as population, total funding amounts, or project type?
- ♦ How will the government approval process work to support applications and prevent additional red tape?
- ♦ How will the province ensure funding opportunities are not taken away from municipalities with the new legislation?
 - ◇ If provincial actions prevent federal funding from reaching municipalities, will the Government of Alberta commit to providing municipalities with an equal amount of funding for projects or initiatives aligned with provincial priorities?
- ♦ For non-municipal entities impacted by Bill 18 (such as housing management bodies) will the province commit to ensuring that municipalities are not required to off-set lost provincial funding through changes to requisitioning requirements, etc.?

What is RMA Doing to Support Members?

- ♦ As this bill is in the early stages of development, there are still many unknowns. RMA will continue to advocate to the Government of Alberta to reconsider this approach to intergovernmental relations.
- ♦ If the Bill is passed, RMA is hopeful that there will be an opportunity to work with the Premier and Minister of Municipal Affairs to develop regulations related to exemptions for certain projects and to design a provincial approval process that is as simple and streamlined as possible.
- ♦ RMA is continuing to monitor this bill as it moves through the Legislative Assembly and will provide updates to members as necessary.

Have Questions?

Contact Policy Advisor Karrina Jung at Karrina@RMAAlberta.com.