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Municipalities Concerned about the Loss of Authority Under New Bill

Fredericton, N.B. - Municipalities across New Brunswick are concerned about the government's introduction of Bill 45, *the Local Governance Commission Act*. The Association Francophone des Municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (AFMNB), the Cities of New Brunswick Association (CNBA), and the Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick (UMNB) have welcomed the introduction of Bill 45 but have serious concerns about certain elements of the bill, including proposed new powers that would allow the Minister of Local Government and Local Governance Reform to amend or repeal a municipal by-law. Together, our associations are calling on the government to modify the clause and protect the independence of local governments.

"If adopted, this would be a significant erosion of municipal autonomy that would give unprecedented power to the minister," said Andrew Black, President of UMNB. "Our members are concerned that this provision undermines the legitimate roles of councillors duly elected by their citizens," added Black.

Bill 45, introduced last week, proposes the creation of the Local Government Commission that addresses some issues that municipalities have long asked for like code of conduct and conflicts of interest. However, also included in this bill, is the ability for the minister to repeal or amend any municipal by-law.

"It is critical that the government fix this section of the bill before it gets passed by the legislature," said Adam Lordon, President of the Cities of New Brunswick Association. "This section of the bill muddies the water and could cause some serious delays on important developments in our cities and in municipalities across the province."

The *Local Governance Act* already lays out the public process that municipalities must follow when creating their by-laws. The bill proposes that the minister could override a by-law of council that has already gone through the public process and make decision which is binding without any input from the community.

"One of the goals of local government reform was to empower communities and create strong and vibrant communities, this clause seems to contradict the goal of the reform which all municipal associations supported enthusiastically," added Yvon Godin, President of the AFMNB. "We are united in our demand to see the province amend and clarify this section of the Act to ensure the autonomy of our communities."



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