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Subject AMO Policy Update - Bill 8, Public Sector and MPP  
Accountability and Transparency Act, 2014

November 12, 2014

## ***Bill 8, Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act , 2014***

This Bill is proceeding through 2<sup>nd</sup> reading debate and is anticipated to be at a Legislative Standing Committee for public hearing before the end of the month. AMO will ask to appear.

The Premier has made it clear that she is committed to additional oversight across the broader public sector. If passed, the Bill will require mandatory municipal accountability officers and expand the Ontario Ombudsman's jurisdiction in the municipal government sector; introduce a Patient Ombudsman with oversight of hospitals and long-term care homes; make changes to the record-keeping requirements in the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act*, and provide for additional transparency and accountability rules for the province's own political and public service.

AMO supports accountability and transparency in local government and the broader public sector. In terms of Bill 8, the same steps are being followed when any other laws are tabled that affect municipal government - is its legal language clear, practical, effective and, is it efficient, would it create unintended consequences and if so, are there ways to mitigate them. Policy changes need to achieve the results that they are intended to achieve in a manner that is accountable and respectful to all.

AMO has a group of municipal lawyers and senior administrators looking at the proposed legislation and amendments that should be presented. Transparency and accountability are positive principles, but implementation will determine success or failure of this or any other legislation. We believe that the Ontario Government shares our commitment to working together on improvements to this Bill.

However, it is clear through media reports and social media that the Ontario Ombudsman appears to think that it is wrong for AMO or municipal governments to have any opinion on this Bill or how to improve it. AMO will continue to do this work no matter who tries to demean us or municipal governments. Groups or individuals with their own ideas should not be discredited. In this province, all voices are encouraged to be heard, even when creating new systems of accountability.

We expect the Standing Committee will hear depositions and read written submissions and that it will similarly share the basic goal - to achieve the intended results, earn public confidence, strive for systems that are efficient and practical, and make sure that any are cost effective.

If we differ with the Ombudsman, it is here:

- AMO believes that accountability can and should be achieved in a manner that respects municipal government. We don't improve Ontario by diminishing or belittling municipal government indiscriminately.
- AMO believes that good government is best achieved when municipal governments take on the difficult task of earning the trust and respect of the public that they serve. Every municipality that accepts that goal makes Ontario stronger and should be supported not vilified.

AMO will share with its members its submission to the Standing Committee as we hasten to meet the Legislature and Standing Committees timelines. We will advise the memberships when this is posted.

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