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Subject AMO Policy Update - Local Governments Summit: Common  
Advocacy for Greater Autonomy

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## **Local Governments Summit: Common Advocacy for Greater Autonomy**

In the run-up to the July meeting of Canadian provincial and territorial ministers of municipal affairs in Quebec City, the president of the Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ), Mayor Bernard Sévigny of Sherbrooke, today convened his colleagues from other provinces to discuss priorities in the municipal sector. The Local Governments Summit brought together the presidents of other associations representing municipalities in Canada's provinces and territories to engage in discussion on three major issues: autonomy, municipal fiscal condition, and economic development. Clearly, municipalities look to the future as true levels of government with the means and resources to meet the local needs of their citizens.

"This summit is a first, but it certainly won't be the last of its kind. Our talks on relations with our respective provincial governments, our need for autonomy, and our revenue sources and economic development, have helped us envision solutions for the future. It's our ambition to see municipal autonomy recognized in legislation to bring decision making closer to citizens, and let the economy prosper," the UMQ president said.

"There are many common interests and issues emerging from today's summit," said Gary McNamara, president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. "One overarching theme is that municipal governments are a mature order of government, elected to govern locally. Any added limits on municipal authority can work against how we meet the needs of our diverse communities."

"AAMDC, representing Alberta's rural local governments, appreciates learning from the other provincial municipal associations' municipal challenges and solutions in the areas of local autonomy, economic development, and fiscal tools. With our province currently consulting on a draft rewrite of its Municipal Act, we particularly appreciated learning how the other jurisdictions partner with their respective provincial governments or, alternatively, are encumbered by provincial legislation. By sharing and learning from each other, best practices can be determined to benefit all," says Al Kemmere, president of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties.

"SUMA always welcomes the opportunity to learn from other Canadian jurisdictions. Municipalities, wherever they may be in this great country, face similar challenges and their respective relationships with their provincial or territorial government evolve at different pace and with different focus. Much of what we do at the local level can be improved as we learn from each other's experiences", said Debra Button, president of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA).

"It's a great opportunity to discuss important issues to our municipalities including economic development, autonomy and new sources of revenues. This was a great way to engage in dialogue with association presidents and leaders throughout the country," said Ray Orb, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

"The Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) is pleased to meet with municipal colleagues from across Canada to discuss how important our role is in building a strong economy and strong communities for our citizens. Partnerships with the provincial governments are integral in achieving these goals," said Chris Goertzen, president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

"We congratulate the UMQ for organizing the Local Governments Summit. It's helped us to realize that the challenges and the realities we face are similar. We trust that this is only a first and that we'll have another opportunity to meet, so we can see the results of what we have learned from the comments and presentations in each of our jurisdictions," said Roger Doiron, president of the Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick (AFMNB).

"The time has come for the municipalities of this wonderful country to be recognized as a level and order of government. Let's finish what our first ministers began in 1867," said Eric Megarity, president of the Cities of New Brunswick Association.

Mayor Karen Oldford, president of the Municipalities of Newfoundland and Labrador, says that she is happy to be in Quebec City sharing MNL's successes with colleagues. "We have accomplished a lot with new revenue for municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador, but I am keenly aware that more work is needed to build autonomy for our sector," she said. "We need to strengthen our financial independence and our governance capacity. Meetings like this one are important to moving our cause forward."

"We have seen today that our challenges in regional economic development are much the same as those experienced by our colleagues in other provinces," said Jacques Demers, vice-president of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM), mayor of Sainte-Catherine-de-Hatley and warden of the Memphrémagog MRC. "The dynamic expansion of the vast Quebec and Canadian territory must be handled using an approach that combines intelligent economic development with the strengths of our great centres, regions, and municipalities large and small!"

After this historic first meeting and given the richness and relevance of the exchanges, the presidents of municipal associations from the provinces and territories have expressed a strong interest in continuing this initiative next year.

### **The voice of local government**

Since its founding in 1919, the UMQ has represented municipalities of every size in every region of Quebec. The UMQ mission is to provide provincial leadership for effective, autonomous local governments and uphold the fundamental role of those elected to municipal office. UMQ members represent over 80% of the population and land area of Quebec and are grouped into affinity caucuses comprising local municipalities, central municipalities, regional cities, major cities, and Montreal municipalities.

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