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Alberta Association of  
Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC)

*Ministerial Address*

*Tuesday, November 22, 2011*

*9:30 a.m.*

Recognize –

- President Bob Barss;
  - Vice-President Carolyn Kolebaba (*Co-lee-bab-ah*);
  - All AAMDC Directors; and
  - Executive Director Gerald Rhodes.
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- Intention is to initiate action, based on consultations with stakeholders.
  
  - **Funding Cycles** - Part of my mandate as Municipal Affairs Minister is to establish minimum three-year funding cycles for municipalities.
    - This is to be done in conjunction with the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and Enterprise.

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- **Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI)** – review and assess MSI.
  - Since 2007, MSI has provided \$3.1 billion of funding to enhance municipal viability and to enable municipalities to meet the demands of growth.
  - This includes \$886 million in funding for 2011/12.
  - Assure you that I am committed, and the Premier is committed, to the long-term funding commitment of the Municipal Sustainability Initiative.
  - Allotments for fiscal years 2012/13 to 2014-15 to be announced in Budget 2012.
  - Want to provide you with certainty of the budget dollars going toward MSI over the next three years
  - Review of the MSI program is with the goal of improving the program ...

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- to make it easier for municipalities to submit projects and... to remove unnecessary conditions from the program so that you can get the funding for priority projects in your communities.
  
- **Seniors Housing** – More than one-in-three of the seniors housing operated by housing management bodies is in rural Alberta.
  - Since 2002, the province has contributed nearly \$340 million in support of over 4,500 units in rural communities outside of the seven major municipalities.
  
- **Affordable Housing** - Local solutions key to meeting affordable housing needs and we continue to see local government play a critical role in a variety of ways.

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- Last week, we signed a 3-year joint funding agreement with the federal government for affordable housing solutions, throughout Alberta.
- I am pleased to tell you that in the first year of the agreement, an additional 408 affordable housing units will be built to continue on our 10-year commitment on affordable housing.
  
- **Municipal Government Act (MGA) Review** – We hope to begin a review of the MGA starting in 2012:
  - The review will be comprehensive and address all matters within the MGA including: **Governance**, **Assessment and Taxation** and **Planning**.
  - This will be a consultative process and AAMD&C will be a key stakeholder in this consultation along with the AUMA, and others.

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- It will include consultation on major cities powers and the possible use of creating city charters as a tool to enhance powers – but not at the expense of neighbouring communities.
- We have seen the power of collaboration and synergy in both the Capital Region and the Calgary Region.
- I do not intend to lose all that good work and those positive steps forward during the review of the MGA.
- We all have a stake in redefining our Municipal Government Act, just as we all have a stake in building better, healthier and vibrant communities for our citizens.

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- And that is a goal I know, from my work on the Rural Development Strategy that you folks in this room also hold dear.
  
- **New Alberta Emergency Alert** - New Emergency Alert program was launched June 28, and the first system-wide test was September 21.
  - New system uses digital technology and social media as well as TV and radio broadcasts.
  - The next system test will be December 21st.
  - We will continue to work with municipalities, first responders and others to keep improving this system...because as we learned earlier this year, in an emergency, every second counts...

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- **Slave Lake Recovery Plan** - Premier and I have both recently visited the Slave Lake Region.
  - It is a priority project for Premier Redford and our entire government.
  - The elected officials and municipal staff have risen to the challenge of rebuilding their communities over the past few months and I can't thank them enough for their incredible efforts.
  - I look forward to continue working with the Tri-Council to help them achieve recovery. Growth and prosperity.
  
- **Libraries** - All municipal districts in Alberta provide public library service.

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- Most work in conjunction with neighbouring municipal library boards to provide cooperative service to their residents.
- The province supports this essential service with operating grants to local and library system boards to serve residents at the local level.
  
- **Municipal Sustainability Strategy (MSS)** - The strategy proposes a new municipal viability review process which would replace the current dissolution study process.
  - Viability not about boundaries.
  - Need to embrace challenges.

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- Key elements of the proposed new process include:
  - Earlier engagement with Municipal Affairs;
  - Prior completion of the self-assessment toolkit by the municipality;
  - A more inclusive process, directly involving neighbouring municipalities and the municipal associations;
  - Focus on identifying key challenges, and options for addressing those challenges;
  - A focus on solutions, to move beyond the status quo;
  - Recognition of the importance of community identity; and
  - Building communities, not just municipalities.

## **Conclusion**

- I came into this position a little over a month ago, but while the title of “Minister” is new, those of you that know me, know that my commitment to communities throughout our province is long, deep and enduring.
- I am honoured to be the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and will work with you, and with our staff to build great communities that thrive, grow and prosper.
- Because if we are to build a better Alberta, it starts with each of us and each of our communities.
- Thank you for the opportunity this morning and I look forward to meeting you at the Municipal Affairs open house later today and throughout the conference.