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Alberta Liberals Announce Plan to Ensure Municipal Autonomy for Major Cities

Calgary – The Alberta Liberal Party released details of its plan today to enact a Big Cities Charter to ensure Calgary and Edmonton have a seat at the provincial table in areas of direct municipal responsibility.

Alberta Liberal Leader Kevin Taft says the plan will ensure cities are able to take part in budget decisions on issues like municipal funding, affordable housing, public transportation and other critical areas.

“Alberta’s municipalities should be partners in these discussions, not outsiders,” says Taft. “Our cities do not need the province looking over their shoulder, or provincial permission to take action on critical local issues. It’s time the provincial government recognized this.”

Taft says the charter will also help to ensure municipalities are provided with the sustainable, predictable funding they need to meet their infrastructure needs.

“Instead of budgeting appropriately for priorities like affordable housing, the current government’s approach has been to hand out unbudgeted crisis funding to municipalities. This is no way to treat our cities. We need to provide sustainable funding that cities can count on, not one-off funding announcements when an election is looming.”

Enacting the charter will return municipal autonomy to Alberta’s major cities through clearly spelled-out powers with respect to local matters and the authority to act independently within those areas of responsibility.

“Municipalities are the most in touch with the needs of their communities and their citizens,” says Taft. “In order for Alberta to remain effective on an international scale, the province’s major cities need the powers and authority to make decisions in the best interests of local citizens. The success of Alberta’s major cities on an international scale will benefit all Alberta’s communities, from big to small.”

Taft says the charter will also benefit the Alberta economy and increase jobs by enabling the big cities to enter into agreements with all levels of government and to form partnerships on major infrastructure projects.

“Local matters should be dealt with locally. By giving Alberta’s big cities more autonomy, it will ensure municipal governments are accountable to local citizens and that local governments have the authority they need to serve the interests of their citizens.”

“Unless the role of Calgary and Edmonton in the Alberta political system is recognized by a Big City Charter, the quality of our democracy, the efficiency of our public services and the equitable treatment of taxpayers are all compromised. Enacting this charter will help Alberta and its major cities achieve permanent prosperity.”

Other major Canadian cities have similar charters in place, including Toronto and Winnipeg.

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It's time.
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