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## White paper on future of municipalities: UMQ launches consultations

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The Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ) today launched its consultations for the creation of a white paper on the future of municipalities – an exercise never before attempted for Quebec’s municipal sector. “This is the first time the municipal sector will be getting together to identify a shared vision of the future of municipalities over the next 20 years. It’s an ambitious project, but as an umbrella municipal organization it’s our duty to define the social, economic and environmental factors that face municipalities today and in the future. We also have a responsibility to think about solutions concerning our ability to meet the needs of our citizens,” said UMQ president Éric Forest, mayor of Rimouski.

The first consultations will be a meeting with the UMQ Large Cities caucus. “The local challenges imposed by new economic and environmental conditions will continue to grow. The aging of the population, immigration, new information technologies and workforce availability and mobility are just a few of the factors that are making deep and rapid changes to the environment in which municipalities operate. Large cities are facing these issues already and they need to find realistic, innovative solutions. The issue of municipal employee pension plans is a good example of the social issues that are directly confronting large cities, with major impact on their budgets,” said Gatineau Mayor Marc Bureau, who is chairman of the Large Cities caucus.

### Why a white paper?

During the past 50 years, the municipal sector has undergone a remarkable evolutionary change. Like the province of Quebec itself, cities and towns have experienced profound changes which have reshaped them into the municipalities we know today. A number of major reports on the municipal sector, including that of the Belanger Commission on Taxation in 1965, the study group on municipalities formed by the UMQ and chaired by Jacques Parizeau in 1985 and the Quebec Commission on Local Financing and Taxation (the Bedard Report) in 1999. The time has come for another major discussion, and that is what

the UMQ is proposing with a white paper on the future of municipalities.

“This initiative is a response to the municipal sector’s need for a renewed vision of the municipality of the future in a context marked by numerous transformations. After the large cities meeting, the consultations will continue through the end of March and will cover the full range of Quebec’s municipal sector in all its diversity, with regional cities, central municipalities, local municipalities and municipalities in metropolitan areas. This exercise will culminate in the Special General Meeting of UMQ members on May 11 in Gatineau, which will be part of the Annual Session and will feature discussions of the findings from the consultations and proposed solutions. The white paper itself will be submitted in the fall of 2012,” said UMQ executive vice president Danielle Roy Marinelli, mayor of Lévis.

In addition to discussions with elected municipal officials, the white paper project will seek ideas and suggestions from experts, comments from members of UMQ standing committees, suggestions from social and economic stakeholders and partner organizations, ideas from concerned citizens at the first Summit on the Municipal Sector, recommendations from its own *Comité de sages* (a strategic advisory group made up of five prominent Quebecers), and a vast public survey to be conducted in the weeks ahead.

### Working paper

The white paper will focus on the roles, responsibilities, powers and resources of municipalities. The working paper will serve as a basis for discussion and opinion gathering on the future of municipalities between now and 2030. It includes an overview of trends, lists basic facts and issues and raises questions regarding possible diagnoses and approaches to take. The paper is available online (in French) at [www.livreblancmunicipal.ca](http://www.livreblancmunicipal.ca).

Citizens and residents, as well as social and economic stakeholders, are invited to contribute to the discussion by submitting their own comments and suggestions about the working paper. The deadline for submissions is March 28. Municipal officials are invited to take part in the consultations at the scheduled meetings listed online.

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