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December 11, 2024

Honorable Jeremy Harper
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
and Chair of the Members Services Board

Dear Speaker Harper,

Further Management Board 'Non-Recommendations' to the Election Yukon Budget

This letter is to update the Members' Services Board (MSB) on the latest Management Board Secretariat (MB) non-recommendations to the Elections Yukon budget that MSB approved earlier this fall. In short, MB has not recommended six MSB-approved budget lines totalling \$361K. Two of the three major approvals made by MSB have been reversed by MB. The plebiscite funding was recommended but budget for an office move and the Communication and Training position were not included in the MBS recommendations.

I look to the MSB for guidance. Is Elections Yukon to negotiate directly with MB to justify and hopefully reclaim the MSB-approved budget? There is a disruptive uncertainty, but more important, I am concerned that Elections Yukon is not being given the support and tools it needs to do its job. I am not prepared to put Elections Yukon in an underfunded position and accept a level of risk prejudicial to readiness and the conduct of the next election.

Matters relating to the organization and structure of Elections Yukon has had considerable discussion over the years. This included funding shortfalls, capacity deficits, and an expanding mandate. There has been new challenges, and with it, growing vulnerabilities for an undersized organization that must meet significant demands. The MSB recognized that electoral administration has become more complex with changing elector expectations, the introduction of a permanent register, increased threats to integrity, and the evolution of operational processes. They made a budget commitment to support it. MB appears less convinced.

Right now, Elections Yukon staff is a CEO and an admin coordinator. Recruitment for vacancies are progressing slowly. We are in the throes of an election year and with little organization depth to compensate for lost capacity, there are points of failure. Readiness training for a possible early election is ongoing with current and revised electoral districts. The development of a plebiscite process is underway and the administration of two territory-wide school board elections is looming. There is much collateral work to do.

As CEO, I look to MSB to ensure I have the capacity and tools to deliver to my mandate. The responsibility to administer the electoral processes that determines political power in the Yukon is mine. Compromise of election readiness will not be mitigated by saying MB didn't think Elections Yukon needed that budget or capacity. That risk is with me. The 'non-recommendations' of MB signals their evaluation that the status quo of our office plus one additional position is sufficient. Respectfully, my perspective is different. The already fragile structure and major program workloads have capacity and talent shortfalls that remain worrisome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Maxwell Harvey", written over a horizontal line.

H. Maxwell Harvey
Chief Electoral Officer