November 4, 2019

Hon. Sandy Silver
Premier
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Premier Silver,

RE: Electoral Reform

You still have not responded to many questions the Official Opposition posed in previous correspondence regarding electoral reform. We are of the firm view that in order for you to demonstrate you are working with all parties in good faith that you should answer these questions.

Refusing to answer simple and reasonable questions in writing only contributes to the perception that you are needlessly being secretive or purposely keeping information from opposition parties. You have now received the questions through multiple letters; I encourage you to please answer them.

As you know, the Official Opposition has been trying to work with you for almost two years to develop a collaborative electoral reform process that is fair and involves all political parties in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. It was only when the Liberal government unilaterally decided on an unfair approach that stacks the decks in the favour of the Liberal Party that this process went off the rails.

That said, and despite the fact that you so far have not been forthcoming or transparent throughout this process, the Official Opposition believes that it is in the interests of Yukoners to try and get this back on track. For that reason, I am suggesting that all three parties meet on November 8th at 12:30 PM to discuss a path forward.

The topic of electoral reform, as you know can be quite broad, but we interpret major electoral reform to mean any changes in law that would affect how and when Yukoners can vote or how their ballot is counted. As such, the current amendments to the Elections Act that reduce the opportunities for Yukoners to cast special ballots, we consider to be major changes. We are concerned that they are being proposed without any consultation with Yukoners. As you know this particular legislative change, if implemented prior to the last election, could have resulted in 206 ballots not being cast.

Past practice for amendments to the Elections Act was to achieve all-party consensus at the Members Services Board – a practice that was unfortunately abandoned in this instance. The Official Opposition is open to considering the merits of this proposal, however we believe that Yukoners should be consulted

on it and that the consideration of such a major change to the way we vote should be within the mandate of whatever electoral reform process is ultimately established.
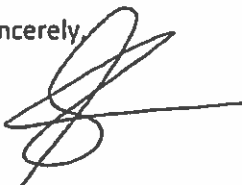
For this reason, I am requesting that as a gesture of good faith, you commit to not calling the Elections Act for debate until after we meet so that we can discuss a proposed amendment to the Act which would allow this proposal to be considered through the electoral reform process.

On the path forward, and as we have highlighted in the Legislative Assembly and in letters to you many times, we still believe that the best and fairest process is one similar to the existing Electoral Boundaries Commission or Members Services Board processes. In addition, another process we have pointed to in the past was one similar to the all-party committee process established by Canada several years ago.

That said, whatever process that goes forward, you should understand that there is a growing perception that the Liberal government is willing to shut down or force through any reform processes purely for electoral gain. In addition to your One-Party-Decides-All approach to electoral reform that you initially forced through, the Liberal government used its majority to shut down the recommendations of the independent Electoral Boundaries Commission to give a greater voice to rural Yukon.

Finally, as you know, the Yukon Party Official Opposition believes that any changes to the way Yukoner's ballots are cast and counted should be put to a referendum and I ask you commit to such.

Sincerely,

Stacey Hassard
Leader of the Official Opposition

C   Kate White, Leader of the Third Party