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**Sent:** Tuesday, April 14, 2020 5:37 PM  
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**Subject:** URGENT – Request not touse Whistler taxpayers money to pay RMOW staff full time during layoffs over the collective agreement limit of 10 days

April 14, 2020

Mayor and Council  
RMOW

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Dear Mayor and Council:

**URGENT – Request not to use Whistler taxpayers money to pay RMOW staff full time during layoffs over the collective agreement limit of 10 days**

I appreciate that this period of time in Whistler is immensely stressful for all of you personally, in your official capacity, and in your fiduciary decision-making duties to the citizens, and property and business owners in Whistler.

So many stresses, uncertainty and unknowns. There is obviously a potential existential threat to Whistler as an ongoing community in the future, the predicable fiscal distress in and on the community, on property values, on visitor restrictions, on temporary worker departures, on RMOW projected revenues, and current and long-term pandemic resurgences and impacts.

Given that this is a company town, and that Vail has closed for the Winter /Spring season and is deciding whether to open for the Summer/Fall season after taking many factors into account, that just accentuates the anxieties at all levels of the short term and long term consequences.

Whistler also has the transition to a new CAO of RMOW City Hall, being Ms. Virginia Cullen, starting on April 20. So lots of changes to add to the mix, along with learning curves and new dynamics.

### **Prudent Fiscal Responsibility Urged of Mayor and Council**

Obviously, all RMOW residential and commercial property owners are very concerned about the impacts that all the above events will have on the upcoming property taxes that have not yet been set by council, as I understand it. Clearly, RMOW cannot download the massive financial shortfall that Whistler will incur on to property owners. That would be onerous, inequitable and inappropriate. It would also be untenable and unsustainable.

I am sure that RMOW City Hall is going through the daily process of determining the myriad financial restraint and cost saving options, considering the pros and cons, and triaging the priorities and sequencing.

May I suggest the following obvious cost saving measures, amongst many, for consideration?

- **Reducing Muni staff and related expenses asap**
  - Determine how many RMOW staff can be temporarily laid off immediately and in phases and stages based on critical core duties and need criteria, to stop the financial pain to taxpayers asap.
  - Make sure that RMOW staff who are covered by a collective agreement with the CUPE union, only get the past negotiated payment days for layoffs. I believe it is currently up to 10 days.
  - Avoid the pressure from CUPE to try to leverage the recent City of Vancouver CUPE “renegotiated” collective agreement to extend the 10 days for up to 42 additional days of paid leave during the pandemic layoffs. This City of Vancouver CUPE “re-negotiation” also included continuing 3 months of benefits during the lay-offs. As well, it guaranteed seniority and the same job would be waiting upon return. You do not want to be fettered by that type of future commitment. It would be irresponsible. You want to have the flexibility of making pragmatic future decisions based on realities on the ground, in an evolving and unknown scenario.
  - Some other larger Lower Mainland municipalities have used the City of Vancouver CUPE formula to apply the same euphemistically termed “pay continuity”. It is forcing taxpayers to pay for municipal staff not to be working, staying at home, but getting paid

in full none the same. This is a lot of money and is morally and fiscally wrong. Taxpayers should be saving money, not expending money during lay-offs. Please don't fall into this classic whipsaw re-negotiating mimic trap. Let the federal government cover the layoff wages, not the local taxpayers of Whistler.

- Many municipalities will look to the provincial and federal governments for bail-outs or money in some form. There is a finite amount of financial resources that any senior level of government is prepared or able to financially contribute. I am confident that some creative and pragmatic provincial resolution to assist in some form will be considered due to predicable financial shortfalls. The province of B.C. would not take kindly to provide extra subsidies to a municipality who downloaded extra layoff costs to local taxpayers and then expected a provincial government to provide financial assistance to compensate for that. Will not happen, as it was an unnecessary and inappropriate bonus to employees at local taxpayers expense.
- RMOW Muni staff should simply apply for EI (Employment Insurance) enhanced coverage through the federal government, like everyone else who is eligible in these stressful pandemic times. The normal 2 week waiting period has been reduced to one week. The Province of B.C. also has a rental supplement program from \$200 up to \$500 for up to 3 months.

- **Undertaking a tough but realistic look at the future evolving and projected needs with respect to RMOW City Hall**

- With this evolving pandemic situation, over time it is time for a fresh new look at the needs of City Hall in the future.
- Possibly, the Muni could function efficiently with a lot less staff and therefore save overhead and direct and indirect costs – holiday time, sick time, pensions, etc?
- Possibly, the current and increasing salaries of management and numbers of management, should be reviewed for their appropriateness in a post-pandemic world?
- According to the RMOW Audited Financial Statements as of December 31, 2018 (posted online), the City Hall payroll was \$31, 521,643 during 2018. Who knows what it is now in 2020?
- I appreciate that it is beyond the skill or interest of a municipal council to perform an objective independent analysis, using professional benchmarks customized to the unique world of Whistler.
- I also appreciate it is a conflict of interest and potential risk of bias or self-interest for the CAO and senior management of the Muni to make recommendations to cut staff at Whistler. It would be inimical to the traditional mindset and pattern of a bureaucratic institution, which is to grow and expand, not contract.
- There are excellent and experienced municipal consultants in B.C, who perform the above objective and independent professional type of service for a municipal council on

behalf of the elected representatives of the public and taxpayers. That is, to provide a comprehensive third party analysis of the whole municipal institution within an expansive terms of reference, obtain public and stakeholder input through various forms, and make final recommendations in a detailed report. It is money will spent to save taxpayers money, and increase efficiencies and accountabilities in the future. It is a healthy, important and prudent process for any municipality to undertake. The obvious purpose is to protect the public interest, and ensure fiscal accountability and responsibility in a unique, unknown and evolving pandemic world. The time is right for Whistler to eventually consider this needed independent review.

I hope the above comments have been constructive and helpful.

Thank you for your time and service on behalf of the community of Whistler. It is greatly appreciated.

Best wishes,

Peter Reynolds  
Vancouver and Whistler, B.C.

[REDACTED]