

Dear Mayoral and Council Candidates:

October 11th, 2021

Re: Tax Situation at MacBride Museum and other Charities

The City of Whitehorse has three tax classes: “business”, residential and agricultural. All NPO/NGO/Charities who own land are taxed at the “business” rate.

Between 2012 and 2015 MacBride worked with Council and staff to develop and approve a tax solution that ensured MacBride would not pay going forward. Council passed this resolution, which is still on the books at the City: “2015-12-07 as amended by 2015-12-08 (June 15) COMMUNITY SERVICE GRANTS

It was duly moved and seconded:

THAT museums that hold title to their own property be exempted from the provisions of the Municipal Charges and Community Services Grant Policy and the City Grant-making Policy and be provided with a tax grant equal to the full amount of property tax owed;”

Then after almost 70 years of 100% exemption / abatement, in 2018, the City sent MacBride a tax bill. We believe that MacBride continues to be tax-exempt based on the Council vote 2015-12-08 however we do not have the financial or legal resources to fight City Hall. Our website has a section outlining the history of this issue.

MacBride is an entity that solely exists for the benefit of preserving history and showcasing it to our community and visitors. It is not financially viable for MacBride to pay taxes with the O&M that we receive and to remain open year-round.

As a candidate, we are asking the following questions

1. Will you honour resolution 2015-12-08, which has not been rescinded, and provide a 100% exemption to MacBride?

I believe that honoring stated policy is accountability. I believe that how you were communicated this change was deplorable. I believe that NGO's that own property but are making valuable if not essential contribution to community should be treated uniquely – in service of essential community service. I am committed to understanding the history, the value, the costs, the change, the communication or lack thereof.

2. Will you commit to a review of the tax classes at the City with a view to creating a tax class for museums at a rate of zero that does not harm the operations of the organizations in the first year of your mandate?

I am committed to advocating with my team to the review of tax classes. I am not sure that this review is solely driven for the benefit of museums alone....entering with an open mind, no historical bias and ready to critically think, learn and act.

3. We invite you to review the list of 23 charities/NGOS paying \$165K to the City in taxes in 2021. The City has been in a “surplus” position for many years yet taxes museums and service

organizations in our community. Will you commit to an immediate review (year one) of Municipal Charges and Community Services Grant Policy and the City Grant-making Policy?

Again, with my council, I will advocate for this review. We have been engaging in forums and in my professional and volunteer life with the NGO community and this, in addition to tax classes are primary ways in which the city can support the essential services and experiences provided by our NGO sector and community.

As candidates, we are invited to consider several policies, commitments, requests, statements and issues. I stand by my commitment to integrity to learning, with my team and being informed – from diverse voices – in support of best decisions for community, residents, business, the environment, relationships and more.

We would appreciate your reply by noon on Friday, October 15th. We will be sending replies to our members and posting them on our social media.

Regards,

Patricia Cunning
Executive Director