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Hon. Caroline Cochrane
Premier
Government of the Northwest Territories
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife NT
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January 16, 2020

Greetings Premier Cochrane;

Re: GNWT Participation in Dehla Got'ine (Colville Lake) Self Government Negotiations

Thank you for your letter of November 25, 2019. We are pleased to know that Executive Council is developing a mandate to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We note that your response regarding steps to make progress on our self government agreement referred us back to the bureaucracy, and no explicit connection was made between implementing the UN Declaration and making progress on our agreement.

Therefore it is difficult to reconcile your government's stance on the UN Declaration with the GNWT's self government mandate. GNWT negotiators have made clear they will continue negotiating under mandates that do not implement the UN Declaration, until instructed otherwise, and offered no timeline. This includes insistence on the inclusion of Core Principles and Objectives, which in our letter of November 01, 2019 was identified as a mechanism fundamentally undermining the inherent right of self government.

A number of the present impasses at our table result from the growing policy gaps between the GNWT and Canada. The GNWT's unwillingness to align with Canada's negotiating mandate is blocking the UN Declaration being reflected in our self government agreement. The Dehla Got'ine are not willing to settle for something less than what Canada is offering, simply because the GNWT has not yet aligned its mandates with the UN Declaration.

At our last negotiating session, the GNWT offered neither a plan on how to move forward in a way that may prepare them for mandate evolution, nor an indication that they are willing to suspend current negotiating mandates (as Canada did when the federal government announced it was implementing the UN Declaration). Our views have not been sought on our perspective on what implementing the UN Declaration would entail. This is unproductive at

best, and at worst erodes the trust and relationship necessary for our governments to work together to move our community forward.

We have spent three largely unproductive years trying to advance negotiations with the GNWT. In the meantime, Canada has finalized a new fiscal policy for self governing Indigenous governments that would, by our calculations, see up to \$5M per year of new funding flow directly from Canada to Colville Lake for self government and land claim implementation. Attaining recognition as a self governing Indigenous government will enable us to access this significant new funding level, and access badly needed federal gaps-closing funding to address profound inequalities we experience in infrastructure, housing, and programs and services. We have an opportunity to conclude a self-government agreement and a long-term financing agreement with Canada that promises to immediately improve social wellness and economic stability in Colville Lake.

We don't believe the GNWT should be standing in the way of our ability to reach a self-government agreement with Canada. Given that there are now a number of precedents for bilateral self-government agreements between Canada and Indigenous parties in provincial jurisdictions, we are respectfully asking the GNWT to step aside while your government takes the time to determine how it intends to proceed on future subject matters that relate to GNWT jurisdictions.

We are proposing to conclude the governance provisions of our self-government agreement on a bilateral basis with Canada, and we have made a formal request of Canada to negotiate with us on a bilateral basis to conclude the core governance elements of our agreement.

We recognize that the resulting Indigenous government will not have public government responsibilities. We are prepared to proceed on that basis with Canada, and to defer consideration of matters which touch on GNWT jurisdictions to a later time. We remain ready and willing to work with GNWT on those issues once a renewed mandate is in place, but our community cannot afford to wait—and should not be expected to do so.

We will continue to welcome the GNWT to our table as an observer, and we will make ourselves available to discuss and to work with GNWT towards a renewed mandate, and to provide our views and technical advice on UN Declaration implementation. We expect GNWT undertake this work in a way that does not impact our ability to achieve an agreement with Canada as soon as possible.

In closing, we wish to emphasize that we see the self-government agreement as tool to restore opportunities to our people, and to rebuild our governance institutions that have been eroded by decades of colonial administration. We have an inherent right to be self-governing, and to work as an Indigenous government to find solutions that will help pull our people out of poverty and remedy the many problems that the GNWT administration has failed to understand, much less resolve.

We trust that the GNWT understands our rationale for wanting to move forward on the governance module of our self-government agreement, and will support our proposal to proceed bilaterally with Canada to conclude and implement such arrangements without further delay.

We look forward to your positive response. We are of course available to discuss this further with you.

Mahsi,



Wilbert Kochon
Chief



David Cozzi
President

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