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**Sent:** Wednesday, February 07, 2018 8:11 AM

**To:** corporate <[corporate@whistler.ca](mailto:corporate@whistler.ca)>

**Subject:** Letter to Mayor and Council re: private development of employee housing

Mayor and Council:

RE: Private development of resident-restricted housing

The current count stands at two. Two projects are either before the Planning department or Council for consideration under the guidelines adopted by the RMOW on 5-December-2017: *Guidelines for Evaluating Private Sector Rezoning Proposals for Employee Housing*.

The first, proposed by 1116130 BC Ltd., (Nordic) has so much wrong it took me three weeks to outline its deficiencies in *Pique NewsMagazine*. The second, put forward by Vidorra Developments (7104) is so vastly superior it managed to highlight those deficiencies by its mere presence.

7104 "fits" in the area it proposes to develop, sited next to Fitzsimmons Walk. Its proximity to shopping, the village and mountains and services, not to mention being north of the village, all fit within a desire to make Whistler less car-dependent. Its design speaks to a knowledge of how people live in this town as opposed to a design (Nordic) that looks as though it was parachuted in from any urban environment.

I'm not writing to support the 7104 project though. I'm simply using it as a counterpoint to Nordic and to underscore the dangers the RMOW is about to fall into by adopting an incremental approach to addressing the opportunities presented by the combination of the Mayor's Task Force on Resident Housing and the aforementioned Guidelines.

Nordic and 7104 are not the only two proposals you will have to consider. It is a poorly kept secret there are several more in various stages of preparation. I strongly urge Council to adopt a "Request for Proposals" approach to private development of employee housing that includes a cut-off date. This would afford Planning, Council and the residents of Whistler — since any rezoning of the magnitude of any of these projects will have to go to the public — the opportunity to weigh in on the best proposals presented instead of spending time and effort dealing with clearly unsatisfactory proposals on a one-by-one basis.

The danger and pitfalls of taking an incremental approach have been highlighted by the fortuitous appearance of 7104, a project so far superior to Nordic it seems a total waste of time to give Nordic any further consideration. What comes next?

An analogy not totally on point but illustrative of the dangers of incremental decision making can be drawn from the pitfalls Canada's banks got in to in the early 1980s, a subject about which I still have the occasional nightmare. The banks were falling all over themselves lending to South American countries, in particular Brazil. Each and every incremental deal made sense, met guidelines, seemed like a profitable thing to do at the time. At least until the banks woke up one morning and found their sovereign debt 'book' was so outsized it posed a serious threat to their profitability should anything go wrong in that part of the world.

You know what happened next. It wasn't pretty and it took a number of years and the intervention of the IMF to work out.

If the RMOW is wary of moving too quickly on building employee-restricted housing itself, or through WDC, which seems to be the gist of the comments recently made by CAO Mike Furey, it should be equally wary of moving both too quickly and too incrementally on private proposals, perhaps even more so.

If the concern is the RMOW could experience a soft uptake of employee-restricted housing, resulting in a debt overhang it has difficulty servicing, what would happen to a private development experiencing the same situation? I suggest one of the first proposals developers would make would be to allow them to abandon the "employee" component and rent their units to the market to avoid financial hardship.

If the RMOW is going to embrace private development as an alternative to developing employee housing itself, it has a duty to ensure the best projects are approved. The only way it can accomplish that is to have all the proposals on the table and evaluate their relative merits before approving any of them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

G.D. Maxwell

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Whistler