

# The case for a Whistler DOGE

**BEFORE MY INBOX** gets flooded with hate mail, let's get the obvious out of the way: Billionaires like Elon Musk, and his self-interested Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), are a cancer on society. The administration for which Musk did the work is corrupt as all hell, and flirting with fascism in a way never before seen in the U.S.

This is not a letter of support for anything currently taking place south of the border.

But lately I can't stop thinking about how Whistler might benefit from its own



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Department of Government Efficiency.

It's not a new concept. I've long held the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) would be very well served by an external audit of all its finances and operations—someone not on the payroll to tell us what works, what doesn't, what we can pawn off, and what we can do away with altogether. I suspect there's a lot (and I suspect I'm not alone in suspecting it).

To list some examples (with names and positions omitted for privacy): A longtime legacy staffer, now "manager," who no longer lives in the resort, manages no staff, and rakes in close to \$90,000 a year while working three days a week; and another—a senior manager who manages exactly zero staff—pulling nearly \$200,000 a year.

All told, there were 25 municipal staff members who made more than \$150,000 last year, and six who topped the \$200,000 mark—and that's not including the two members of the Whistler Fire Rescue Service who also pulled in more than \$200K.

Raise your hand if you expect to ever come close to making \$100,000 in a single calendar year.

The 2024 Statement of Financial Information report showed a total payroll of just under \$49 million—up from \$44 million in 2023, \$40 million in 2022, \$36.8 million in

2021, and \$33 million the year before that. But hey, what's another \$4 million?

Based on casual conversations with builders and others in town—basically anyone not directly feeding from the municipal trough—I know I'm not the only one who sees how absurd this all is.

And yet, the RMOW just keeps getting fatter, not content until it has its fingers in every last piece of the Whistler pie.

Meanwhile, many organizations in town have still not recovered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and likely never will—*Pique* being no exception.

The pandemic forced those of us who live in the real world to get leaner. Do more with less. But the RMOW does not live in the real world. When it realized it was facing "unsustainable workloads" in 2021, it opted to wave its magic wand and add more staff.

The additions were deemed necessary after a November 2020 leadership retreat with staff and council in which some clear themes emerged: capacity challenges, burnout, and too much work with not enough time to do it.

It's a fair point, and our municipality is not the only organization in town struggling

and resilient workplace.

He alleges the RMOW's workplace culture is problematic, rife with bullying, harassment and discrimination. He also alleges the RMOW uses non-disclosure agreements, like the one he declined to sign, to "silence whistleblowers and prevent open discussion about systemic issues."

"There is a prevailing culture of fear where retaliation is real, and internal policies intended to ensure a safe and healthy workplace are ignored," Creery wrote in a letter to *Pique*.

"Employees are terminated or pushed out while management roles with limited scope and questionable performance remain protected. There is little accountability at the top, and staff quickly learn that internal complaint processes are not designed to protect them—they are designed to protect the employer."

It's not the first time *Pique* has heard similar comments from disgruntled staff. It is, however, the first time anyone has been willing to say it on the record.

"Like any good employer, the RMOW does not tolerate harassment, bullying or discrimination of any kind. We have just

and resilient workplace.

"The RMOW is focused on supporting a work environment dedicated to kindness and respect. Our fast-paced and increasingly unpredictable world requires creative problem-solving and nimble adaptation, making this work one of our most important priorities."

It may be the disgruntled staff *Pique* has heard from are just that—disgruntled, with an axe to grind. But we know the culture of secrecy and control runs deep at municipal hall. No staffers are allowed to speak with the media or provide comment before their words are thoroughly sanitized by the communications department, lest some of the sheen accidentally come off. God forbid someone be allowed to speak honestly and openly for once. Lately they've taken it to a new level, with even municipal councillors—the people you elected to represent you—attempting to defer requests for comment to the mayor as the one true "spokesperson" of the RMOW.

Pardon my French, but that is just a whole new layer of unaccountable horseshit. But why say anything when it's so much easier to say nothing at all? Just have the mayor read

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with said challenges. But it is the only organization that has the option to raise taxes to fill the gaps.

The RMOW instituted a tax increase of 8.25 per cent in 2025, following increases of 8.18 per cent in 2024, 8.4 per cent in 2023, and 6.72 per cent in 2022.

Last month, we learned former longtime RMOW staffer Kevin Creery is suing the municipality for wrongful dismissal. In a termination letter shared with *Pique*, the RMOW offered Creery a higher severance on the condition he sign a waiver relinquishing his right to sue—or disparage publicly—the

conducted an equity, diversity and inclusion audit to seek guidance on how we can continuously improve, and the results were encouraging," a municipal communications official said in a statement to *Pique*.

"Our municipality is actively working to ensure we focus on growth areas to be a positive and inclusive environment for all staff. One of the aspects of the positive work culture identified in the audit is a team charter initiative led by our CAO Ginny Cullen. This initiative is aimed at fostering a responsive, open-minded and innovative culture and outlines the tenets of a healthy

from his pre-written talking points, while a communications staffer whispers in his ear, until the media goes away.

And we know former staffers have to sign NDAs to get their full severance packages, lest they cast their former employer in a bad light.

What would be revealed if staffers could speak their minds? If former staffers weren't gagged for fear of losing their full severance?

We'll never know. But I'm sure an external consultant would work wonders on Whistler's bloated budget.

Sadly it's likely the one consultant the RMOW will never hire. ■

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