



June, 27, 2017

Honourable Steve Thomson
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

BY HAND

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Re: Letter from Member for Abbotsford West

This morning the Member for Abbotsford West tabled a letter in the legislature, enclosed.

The Member has requested detailed advice from the Speaker of the Legislature related to the role of Speaker. The reasons for his request are political and transparent.

British Columbia's current government, of which the Member is a part, does not have the majority of the votes in the legislature. As a result, the government is very likely to lose a confidence motion that was tabled on Monday and will be called on Wednesday.

If the government falls, the Lieutenant Governor will have to determine whether to call a new election or to permit the party leader with the second greatest number of seats to form government.

Given the prospect of a government with a one-vote majority, part of her constitutionally protected consideration process will surely include a deliberation on the traditional role of the Speaker in British Columbia, which will include consideration of various parliamentary precedents from across the Commonwealth.

The Member from Abbotsford West has asked you to pre-empt the Lieutenant Governor's deliberative process by providing what amounts to constitutional legal advice to the legislature, based on the insulting proposition that Members are not able to collect and access their own information on this matter.

He has done so not just in the face of the majority of members who have repeatedly indicated their clear and unwavering desire for a confidence vote at the earliest opportunity, but also on a purely hypothetical basis.

The Lieutenant Governor has the job of determining the desirability or stability of any hypothetical governing situation in the event of the defeat of the government on a confidence motion. The advice the Member has requested from you to be delivered to the entire legislature would be in excess of your jurisdiction, would displace the constitutionally protected role of the Lieutenant Governor, and would risk bringing the office of Speaker into disrepute as a result.

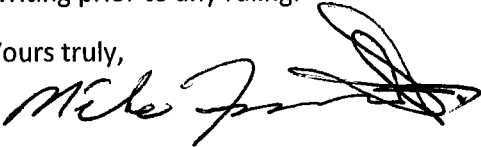
By providing this advice, using the weight of the office of Speaker, you would also weigh in on what has been an ongoing debate topic in the legislature, contrary to the explicit terms of Standing Order 10.

The majority of the Members of the House could as easily ask for your opinion on whether 44 votes in the legislature amounts to a greater or lesser number of voting members than 43. We will not do so, out of abundant respect for the nature of your office.

The Member's concerns are easily addressed by simply referring him to the Standing Orders until such time as a specific situation in the legislature requires an opinion on practice or decorum from your office.

In the event that you do decide to rule, I would appreciate the opportunity to make submissions in writing prior to any ruling.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Farnworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Farnworth
Opposition House Leader