



NEWS RELEASE

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REORGANIZATION OF WORKERS' ADVOCATE OFFICE

(WHITEHORSE, Yukon) – Laurie Butterworth, President of the Yukon Employees' Union, has written to Marian Horne, Minister Responsible for the Department of Justice to protest the Yukon government's decision to reorganize the office of the Workers' Advocate.

The Workers' Advocate supports workers and protects their interests in dealing with the Yukon Worker's Health & Safety Board. The position also represents workers and dependents of deceased workers by communicating with and appearing before adjudicators, hearing officers, appeal committees and sometimes the courts.

The position of Workers' Advocate was created and filled in 1997. A panel of Union representatives and non-unionized workers participated in the incumbent's selection process. The position is now entrenched in legislation.

In his letter to the minister, Mr. Butterworth said that, "The Yukon Employees' Union is dismayed and profoundly concerned that the Yukon government has unilaterally decided to create and advertise a position of Manager, Workers' Advocate Office (WAO)." He reminded Minister Horne that the creation of this new position – which is currently being advertised – may contravene the Workers' Compensation Act.

President Butterworth further states that, "The installation of a manager's position, which will be part of the Department of Justice management team, will eliminate the independence and protection the Workers' Advocate now maintains from departmental or political interference."

The creation of this new position amounts to political interference. The current Workers' Advocate has worked throughout his tenure to support and protect Yukon workers, at times to the considerable consternation of your government. "It is impossible to ignore the fact that the incumbent publicly supported another political party during the last Yukon election", said Butterworth. "We can only conclude that this is a personal attack against the current Workers' Advocate, as well as an attempt to hamstring a strong and effective Workers' Advocate office."

The Yukon Employees' Union has called up the government to halt this hiring process immediately. If need for change in the delivery of this service is indicated, a return to the proven co-operative, consultative approach used to initially create the Workers' Advocate position is the only appropriate course of action.

For more information, contact Laurie Butterworth, President, Yukon Employees' Union, at 667-2331.