

## **Office of the Leader of the Opposition**

### **For Immediate Release**

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Date: June 5th, 2019

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### **Address to the Legislature on the appointment to the position of Leader of the Opposition June 5<sup>th</sup> 2019**

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to address this Legislature and the public at large on this the occasion of my appointment as Leader of the Opposition, and my first meeting as such.

Mr. Speaker, firstly allow me to thank my colleagues for bestowing such trust in me to lead the Opposition. I am humbled by their expressions of trust.

Next, I wish to thank my family for their support and belief in me over the many years of my political involvement. I could not do this without that support. Mr. Speaker, each of us who has taken it upon ourselves to get into politics knows the sacrifices our family makes, and the abuse they take, many times unwarranted. That is the nature of this calling. Yet they continue to support us. They must be applauded for taking it fully on the chin while still being supportive.

Last, but by no means least, the people of East End. The trust that was reposed in me on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2000 cannot be underestimated, nor do I take it for granted. I will forever be indebted to them and will do my best to represent them in this new role as I have done in other roles during the last 18+ years.

Mr. Speaker, I well understand the role of the Leader of the Opposition. I understand that I will be called upon to participate in the governance of this country far greater than I have done before. As I indicated to the Premier in response to his congratulatory letter, I give my commitment, without reservation to work with the government on all matters pertaining to the wellbeing and advancement of our people and country. That commitment was also extended on behalf of the other Opposition members.

There is much to be done; importantly, we need to ensure our people feel a sense of value in their day to day contributions and do not feel marginalized alone. They are why we are here. We have been given the responsibility to manage their country and that requires us working together to provide opportunities so that they may prosper and to ensure

that the benefits of our development and growth extend to all our people, not just a select few.

However, I also made it clear, and I repeat here, that I take the responsibility of holding the government accountable seriously and it is my intention to continue to do so, but not merely for the sake of opposition. In that vein, I also understand that the government has responsibility for the management and distribution of the resources of the country on the people's behalf and it is our job on this side of the aisle to ensure that the people receive value for money and that the resources are distributed in a fair and transparent manner. It is my hope, founded on the basic principles of democracy, that the government does not use or abuse its majority to disenfranchise the voices of the people that we in the Opposition was also elected to serve. Democracy expects that there will be differences, disagreements, and dissent. However through debate, discussion, and dialogue we find consensus. In essence Mr. Speaker, we in this honorable house, regardless of where we sit, are all legislators and were elected on our ideas, ideals, and ideology. Let this Legislative Assembly reflect our mandate and the will of the people we were all elected to serve.

Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to briefly address the matter of my becoming the new Leader of the Opposition and the discourse surrounding Independents.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said on these 2 matters. Let me first address the matter of change of leadership.

Mr. Speaker, the change of leadership in political circles is not a new phenomenon; indeed Mr. Speaker neither is it alien to our own landscape. While I understand that politics being what it is allows for opposite sides to capitalize on issues at hand, it should never be done at the expense of our founding principles.

Mr. Speaker, for the sake of clarity please allow me to show the other side. In our recent history we have had many leadership changes without the fanfare this one has attracted.

1. Many of us will recall when the late Thomas Jefferson was overseas on official business and upon his return Truman Bodden had taken over as the Leader of Government Business. There was no dissention, at least not that we saw. The country went on. Life went on.
2. When my good friend Kurt Tibbetts was removed as Leader of Government Business. The country went on. Life went on.
3. When the Premier was removed in 2012. The country went on. Life went on.

4. In 2013 following the general election, when a member of one political party joined the other to form the government, little was said or done. The country went on. Life went on.
5. In 2017, again following the general election when 2 established parties came together, along with independents, to form the Government. The country went on. Life went on.
6. In addition to those very public changes in leadership we can all remember in 2012 when the then Leader of the Opposition, Kurt Tibbetts, announced his resignation from that post. The people and the general public accepted that decision. The country went on. Life went on.
7. Indeed Mr. Speaker, when following the General Elections in 2017 it was anticipated that I would then take over the Leadership of the Opposition and my predecessor did, to this date no one knows why I did not become the Leader of the Opposition. But guess what Mr. Speaker, the country went on. Life went on.

Mr. Speaker, these leadership changes are in many instances done internally and everyone accepts their new role and we go on. If I may I will borrow the slogan from the PPM 2005 election to demonstrate why this is so: "For love of Country"

I now turn to the issue of Independents and their value. Suffice it to say we on the Opposition were disappointed in the manner in which the Premier embedded himself in the issue of the resignation of Mr. Miller from the role of Leader of the Opposition without first trying to ascertain the reasons for, in his words, "... political infighting and personal ambition riddling the current opposition group".

But Mr. Speaker, I wish to remind him that there are always two sides to every story and the full picture cannot be viewed without both sides. That statement could very well have been made on the occasion of his rise to this position in 2012 also.

Mr. Speaker, this is one time the Premier could have learned something from you. The maturity that you displayed in not getting into the inner workings of the PPM at that time should have been commended and history has now shown that it should be appreciated. As I said Mr. Speaker, you displayed a great deal of maturity.

Mr. Speaker, be that as it may, let me enlighten those who are unaware of the role independently minded representatives have played in this country.

Mr. Speaker it is disingenuous and intellectually dishonest to dismiss the role of the independent in this country as has been done over the last

month. Those who do not recognize that this country's development has been built in part by the independently elected and minded representative are living in wonderland.

Mr. Speaker, those of us who have followed our political development know quite well that up until the early to mid 2000's members were elected to this Parliament as independent representatives. That is with the exception of a few teams or groups, but certainly there were no modern political parties until then. Indeed Mr. Speaker, with the exception of maybe 3 members here today we all started our elected careers as independents.

Mr. Speaker, the cold truth is that even now this government is more diverse than the current opposition. This PPM led Unity Government is made up with people who have been members of different factions over the years.

PPM

Independents

UDP

CDP

C4C

PNA

As such Mr. Speaker there is no room for the Government to criticize the Opposition for not being able to govern because its independently elected membership does not have the commitment. Nor is it fair to say that the Opposition does not have the level of cohesion, industry and commitment necessary to serve in the best interests of all the people of these Islands because it is made up of independents. There is no evidence to suggest that governance by a coalition of diversity can only be done by those who make up the current government and no one else. Truth be told, by the Premier's own admission, there are challenges within that coalition.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that I was the first to publicly state that the horse trading we experienced post election 2000 could only be corrected by some type of formal structure. I am still of that view.

However, we have seen the resurgence of the independents over the

last 2 elections and the people's lack of confidence in outright parties, which is somewhat justified when considering that every single member on the Opposition bench and others in this house was once a part of a political party but for various reasons chose to walk away so that their voices, their independent voices, may be heard.

Mr. Speaker, I could have reminded the Premier that 3 members of his current government are Independent members. Do they also lack the cohesion, industry and commitment to work in his Government?

Mr. Speaker, is that why one of his independent members who got elected on criticizing the PPM, the UDP, the CDP, and the cruise berthing facility has made a U-turn? Is that member not committed to their ideals?

Or Mr. Speaker, is that why one of his Independent members who campaigned for a freeze on work permits and stated during a Chamber of Commerce forum, and I quote "On day one, the first thing is to put a freeze on permits and sort out the unemployed". Was this done Mr. Speaker? I am only asking in light of the record number of work permits that has now been granted under this Government of which he is a member. Or is it another case where commitment was lacking.

I chose those two examples Mr. Speaker to remind the Premier not to judge the independent members on this side based on the behaviour on that side. As the Premier, he has the responsibility to protect the members on his team. He must also recognize that I have a similar responsibility in my role as Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, you yourself, and I must thank you for your efforts, worked very hard in the last sitting of the Legislative Assembly to bring all members of this house together to deal with an important matter that was facing this country. It goes to show, that when it matters, regardless of where we sit, we can work together.

Mr. Speaker, each of us in this house has one nineteenth of the responsibility to ensure that we build a Cayman where everyone is valued and no one is left behind. None of us, and I do mean none of us; can delegate that responsibility to anyone or any party. The oath that we took to sit in this house was done by us as individuals but we must find a way to work together.

I and my members on this side are committed to working with everyone TODAY, both inside and outside of this house to ensure a better Cayman TOMORROW.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time afforded me and despite our differences on many policy issues I look forward to working with the Government.

May God continue to bless these beloved Cayman Islands

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