**Opposition Calls for Premier to apologize to the Caymanian People**

The statement by the Premier on the resignation of the Leader of the Opposition suggests that the Caymanian electorate was wrong for choosing Independent members to represent them. While it is clear from the statement issued by the Premier shows that he is unhappy and displeased with the democratic choices that many Caymanians have made by choosing Independent members to represent them – one of the primary principles of Democracy is that the will and the wishes of the people be respected. It is not the Premier’s place to question the choices of the voters that we were all elected to serve. This is an insult to the Caymanian people and the Premier owes them an apology.

The statement by the Premier further attempts to portray that politics within the Opposition revolves around personal egos, rather than on certain principles.

As the author, Jack McDevitt said: “Sometimes the cost of integrity, is the loss of a friend.".

However, when one has clearly compromised on their own principles to remain in power, it is easy to assume everyone else will do the same.

Today, the Premier continues to lead a government whose overall approach is predominately dictated by narrow vested interest and no regard for democratic value. History has shown us that membership of a political party is not the most effective way to bring about positive change. The people of the Cayman Islands have joined many other democracies around the world in rejecting a 2-party system that is only concerned with holding on to power.

Virtually every area of our domestic agenda under this PPM led government is failing current and future generations. From basic and essential services such as garbage collection and traffic management to fundamental services such as health, education and immigration - this Government, his PPM led government continues to fail. Caymanians continue to live pay check to pay check while being marginalized and unable to realize their full potential. This government, his government believes that temporary projects such as roadside clean-ups and the culling of iguanas are permanent solutions to improving the quality of lives for some Caymanians. The Caymanian people are far more capable and deserving of better.

Almost 10 years ago, back in 2009, the Caymanian people approved a new Constitution. Contained in our Constitution under the section "Institutions Supporting Democracy" was the introduction of Standards in Public Life. The Standards in Public Life adopted the seven Nolan's Principles on public life: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

Yet the Premier has been steadfast in his refusal to adopt these principles.  Principles which would challenge his actions and the actions of his government on:

* The cruise berthing facility;
* The unfinished school project started 12 years ago, the legacy of which is included in a US$312 million bond due for repayment this year; while virtually all government primary and secondary schools remain below acceptable standards;
* The CarePay fiasco which resulted in one of the largest cases of fraud on the government purse, with only one person being held to account;
* The proposed changes to the Constitution being made behind closed doors;
* Known conflicts of interest on many Government Boards;
* Senior civil servants being put on required leave and then receiving massive pay-outs from the public purse.

The Premier correctly stated that it takes "a committed team to govern."  But that must, and should never mean, blind consensus. Democracy itself was built on accepting that there will be disagreements and differences that may be overcome from discussions and debates to arrive at consensus. The Premier is contented to lead a government of "yes people" where his rule can never be challenged. The failure of this approach has resulted in many policies and projects being announced with no follow through and many laws being amended over and over and over without any enforcement or implementation.

The role of this Opposition or any Opposition is to hold the government to account and to provide a credible alternative.  This duty and responsibility requires strong personalities, the willingness to speak with honesty, think with sincerity and act with integrity. Simply put, "yes people" need not apply.

The Premier and 10 members of his PPM led government all started out as Independent Members, no doubt full of ideals and principles.  Ideals and principles, which he now finds offensive even though 3 independent members sit in his PPM-led administration.

The election of Independents shows that there is clearly an appetite for an alternative to our broken two-party system.  A system driven by leaders committed to holding onto power even if it means being a hypocrite. How many times did the Premier criticize then Premier McKeeva Bush for the appointment of Councillors, excessive travels, negotiating with China Harbor Engineering Company, just to name a few – only to make an about face and do exactly the same thing? In a sad twist of fate, the Premier had to turn to his political nemesis of 16 years and enter into an “agreement” just to hold on to power after failing in two successive elections to receive a full and decisive mandate. Ironically, two years on, despite promising to do so, the Premier has yet to reveal the agreement made to ensure he remained in power. It is hypocritical actions such as these that undermine our democracy and the confidence in elected representatives.

In almost 20 years, the current two-party system produced 2 leadership groups either led by the Premier and his political mentor and the current Speaker. The problems and challenges in this country, since 2001, rest squarely at the feet of the 2 political parties and not the independent members. The Premier needs to understand and remember that the rise of Independent members is a result of the failings of the political parties to improve the quality of lives.

For almost 20 years, the political parties’ actions or inactions have;

1. Failed our children and our education system;
2. Failed our healthcare system;
3. Failed our immigration system;
4. Failed Caymanians in the workplace
5. Failed to help many Caymanians from losing their homes
6. Failed to improve the quality of life of many Caymanians

Additionally, the Caymanian people have yet to receive an explanation as to why textbooks were taken out of public school or why their children no longer receive free healthcare that now costs many parents thousands of dollars per year in insurance premiums.

Those failures over almost two decades were caused by the Premier and other members of his PPM led Government.

The growth in the fiscal surplus that the Premier likes to brag about also coincides with the growth in Independent members who have slowed the mismanagement, exposed corruption and incompetence, and held the government to account while proposing alternative ideas.

In his zeal to capitalize on the resignation of the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier shows his lack of respect for democratic principles and clearly has not learned why his political party continues to lose seats at the polls.

As Martin Luther King famously said, "Every man must decide whether to walk in the light of creative altruism or in the darkness of destructive selfishness.".