

Office of the Leader of the Opposition

For Immediate Release

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Opposition Members questions the verification process

The Official Opposition is concerned about the process being used to verify the signatures to the Cruise Berthing Facility petition. This concern comes from the revelation by Elections Supervisor, Mr. Wesley Howell, that it was Cabinet who requested that each person who signed the petition now needs to complete a form indicating that they signed the petition. Opposition Leader, Arden McLean stated that he now has no doubt that the Government is attempting to railroad the entire petition and that Government is actively seeking to disqualify signatures rather than verify them.

Expressing his concerns Mr. Mclean, stated, "The people of this country should be very concerned. The verification process has now become contaminated by political interference, and it is clear that the Government has invented a verification process that has no basis in statute and only serves one purpose; to disqualify legitimate signatories to the petition. While there is no Referendum Law or Regulations to outline this process, the Constitution is clear that Cabinet's only role is to set the question and the date of the referendum. To do otherwise would be ultra virus the Constitution. Mr. McLean has also requested an urgent meeting with His Excellency Governor Roper to discuss the matter along with the other members of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Mclean further added that "Mr. Howell assured the country at a recent public meeting, that the elected Government would have no involvement in the process until it was time to frame the referendum question. Why is it that we are now learning that he has been given directions from Cabinet to implement a verification process which requires every single signatory on the petition to have to now fill out and sign a form? While verification maybe necessary, there are easier ways to do so. For instance, the majority of electors have been issued with Voter Identification Cards which contain signatures. Therefore, the need to verify everyone by house to house visits is unnecessary.

Deputy Opposition Leader Mr. Suckoo is also troubled by what has transpired and questions the motives of the PPM led Government. Mr. Suckoo stated, "I am shocked that the now Premier, who not so long-ago fought side by side with me and others for single-member constituencies and One Person One Vote, would condone this move. It was Mr. McLaughlin who accused former Premier McKeeva Bush of railroading the OMOV referendum and manipulating the process, and now it is quite sad to see Mr. McLaughlin desperately using the same tactics he so vehemently protested a few short years ago."

Mr. Kenneth Bryan, elected Member for George Town Central also registered his disappointment in the actions taken by Cabinet. Mr. Bryan stated, "It is clear that this move by the Government, forcing persons who signed the referendum to now complete and sign an official Government form, is designed to intimidate persons and instil a fear of victimization. This is a psychological tactic being used by the Government and the Governor needs to now shut this process down. We will not stand for it."

Chris Saunders, elected member for Bodden Town West stated that he is not surprised by this revelation at all. Mr. Saunders stated "Considering that the Premier refused to say that this project, which has the potential of being our largest capital expenditure, is a matter of national importance as required by the Constitution so as to trigger a People Initiated Referendum, should have prepared the Caymanian people for what to expect. I wish this PPM led government would invest more time in trying to reduce the cost of living and improving the quality of life for the Caymanian people as opposed to continuing to pander to the special interest groups."

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