



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Referendum Petition Signatures

**George Town, Grand Cayman:** The Government has welcomed the completion of the process to verify signatures on the Cruise Port Referendum petition.

Premier Alden McLaughlin said, “I would like to repeat my thanks to Supervisor of Elections, Wesley Howell, and his excellent team for their hard work and efficiency in concluding the signature verification process so quickly and smoothly.”

The Premier added, “The drive to build a new cargo and cruise berthing facility for the Cayman Islands has been going on for at least the last six years while my Government has been in office. This referendum process has been going on for a year. With a preferred bidder now ready to deliver the cargo and cruise port enhancements this country needs, we need to get on and bring things to a conclusion.”

“We understand that many Caymanians have signed the petition because they had questions and concerns about the port. We are answering those questions as we release more information now the preferred bidder has been appointed.”

“Sadly, there is also a small group of people who are simply opposed to the government’s plans at any price and who appear willing to throw out any kind of misstatement or half-truth to further their objectives.”

“At each stage in this process, those opponents have been quick to allege impropriety on the part of Government Ministers. At each stage they have been wrong.”

“First, scurrilous allegations were made that Cayman’s cruise and cargo port improvements were being made solely to benefit the business interests of one or more Ministers. We have repeatedly shown not only that there are no such business interests but the port is in the vital best interest of our nation not any individuals.”

“Secondly, they alleged that the Government was failing to follow proper procurement and bidding processes. In fact we have followed a best in class procurement route.”

“Then we heard that civil servants were being intimidated from signing the referendum petition. That was shown to be false.”

“Next the country was told that the whole thing was a stitch up and that a deal had already been agreed with China Harbour. The preferred bidder announcement demonstrated the untruth of that assertion.”

“Political interference in the verification process was the next hue and cry of our opponents. Yet again, they have been shown to be wrong as the verification process has been followed through efficiently and diligently by our elections staff.”

“Now we are hearing allegations that the Government will try to duck the referendum by determining that Cayman’s cruise and cargo port is not an issue of national importance or that the Government will somehow pervert the purpose of the referendum by manipulating the question.”

“As throughout this process, those allegations are completely without foundation. Let me lay them to rest now.”

“It is central to the Government’s support for Cayman’s new port and cargo facilities that they are necessary in the national interest. There is no question of us seeking to avoid a referendum.”

“As to the referendum question, we intend that the question should be drawn up in accordance with best practice principles including that it should, as far as possible, be neutral in its phrasing. Throughout this process, the Government has maintained the highest standards of probity and good practice. That will not change now.”

“The business of government needs to go on and there is much we need to do in the next few weeks, not least bring forward a two year budget. However, the country needs certainty and the Government therefore intends to get this referendum process completed as quickly as possible.”

“To that end, Cabinet will turn its attention immediately to considering a draft Bill, including a proposed formulation of the referendum question and the date on which the referendum will be held.”

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