

Office of the Leader of the Opposition

For Immediate Release

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Opposition Group parts with Kenneth Bryan

The refusal by MLA, Kenneth Bryan to support the Opposition members' call for a special meeting of the Legislative Assembly to discuss the implications of the Speaker of The House's statement issued on Feb 24th, 2020 and his subsequent public statements which are not in accord with the majority of Opposition, has led to Members of the Official Opposition, parting ways with the Member for George Town Central.

Standing Orders allow seven members to call a meeting of the Legislative Assembly, to ensure that the minority has a voice. The decision by the Member for George Town Central to not support the call for a special session of the Legislature, is viewed by the Opposition as an obstruction to the Opposition's ability to do one aspect of its job, to ensure that the integrity of the People's House remains intact. By blocking the Opposition's ability to request a special meeting, the country is deprived of the opportunity to hear from the very people they elected to represent them.

The matters to be discussed are serious ones: Firstly, there is the matter of the conduct of the Speaker of the House, an admission of his own impairment, and where he passed out in a public place. Secondly, there is the subsequent unilateral grant of leave to the Speaker by the Premier which may or may not be constitutionally permissible. And lastly, perhaps most importantly, we have an opportunity to set the record straight as to what we the Members of the Legislative Assembly believe to be right and what the public should expect from their elected representatives.

This most recent incident involving the Speaker of the House, yet another in a long list of public incidents which embarrass the country, was a tipping point in the local community. The community is incensed with the double standard where too often people in positions of power and privilege in this community operate to a different set of rules and appear to get away with things the average citizen could never get away with.

If the Government is comfortable leaving the public with this view, we as Opposition certainly are not.

MLA, Chris Saunders, Boddan Town West said: "My mother started her career as a waitress at the then Royal Palm Hotel and for many years had to shrug off abuse from drunken patrons because she had five children to feed and educate. For me to stay silent and not to speak up for women in particular but all hospitality workers in general, knowing the sacrifices my mother made on behalf of my sisters and I, would be a betrayal to my mother, my conscience and my constituents who value the role of women in our society."

MLA, Alva Suckoo said: "The decision by Kenneth Bryan demonstrates that he does not hold everyone to the same exacting standards. When the Speaker deemed that I had broken the rules by raising an issue relating to China Harbour, I was duly suspended from the House where I was elected to serve the people of Newlands, on a motion moved by the Premier himself and voted on by members of his Government. I was suspended for doing my job, yet, we have a Speaker of the House, who has twice in recent memory engaged in conduct that was unbecoming of any member of a civil society, much less a political leader of our country and believes that a short temporary leave of absence is deemed acceptable. When have we become so morally corrupt that we are prepared to disregard our primary responsibilities and the core values of protecting the rights of those who are already disadvantaged?"

MLA, Bernie Bush added: "When I resigned as Deputy Speaker, I made it clear that as a father and a grandfather, I could not in good conscience stay in a role tainted by the actions of the Speaker and the inaction of his Unity government colleagues. Kenneth's decision not to support a debate on the issue, underscores the very issue the community is upset about and flies in the face of widespread public condemnation on the issue and trivializes the right of women, and men to expect to work in a safe environment."

The Hon. Leader of the Opposition, V. Arden McLean, noted that part of his role is to seek consensus within the Opposition Group. He added: "Being a representative and an advocate of the people requires very strong personalities and as such there will be differences and compromises will have to be made. The majority of members on the Opposition bench have made it clear that there will be a zero tolerance towards certain behaviors and anyone who condones such behaviors. Unfortunately, this is one difference that many members would not compromise on and indicated to me that they will no longer caucus with the member from George Town Central."

The Opposition Group wishes the member from George Town Central well and will continue their efforts to ensure that everyone in the Cayman Islands can work in a peaceful environment and not be exposed to certain behaviors or conduct.

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