



PRESS STATEMENT

AG RAMLOGAN'S RESPONSE TO INTEGRITY COMMISSION

AG Ramlogan rejects the view expressed by the Integrity Commission ("the IC") that it was under no obligation to apologise to him and that it "merely extended discretionary courtesy" when it did so. The IC quite properly, apologised for not informing him that he was under investigation pursuant to a complaint made by Opposition Senator Fitzgerald Hinds.

The established protocol, practice and procedure of the IC has always been that it notifies persons who are under investigation of this fact. Recently examples of this include the following:-

- Letters informing Ministers that they are under investigation because Opposition Leader Dr. Keith Rowley has submitted a complaint over a typewritten document he received in his mailbox. Dr. Rowley claims these are email exchanges between Senior Government Ministers.
- Within weeks of the conclusion of the St. Joseph by-election, the IC indicated that UNC candidate Mr. Ian Alleyne will be investigated over projects done in that constituency.

The conflicting information regarding the practice and procedures of the IC serves to erode public confidence in this critical institution. There must be one clear policy that is applied in all cases, for all persons regardless of their political affiliation. Indeed, Dr. Rowley was himself the beneficiary of this procedural step when the IC informed him that he was under investigation over the Landate mater.

There can be no issue of a "discretionary courtesy" on such an important issue as to whether the Commission should inform someone that they are under investigation. This must not be a matter of courtesy or discretion, but rather, a clear and simple rule

as part of an unwavering and consistent policy. If it is done for some but not for others, this is biased, discriminatory and unfair.

I therefore challenge Mr. Gordon to name those persons who have been advised that they are under investigation and those who were not. What was the criteria that was used to determine who should be notified and who should not? The IC cannot blow hot and cold at the same time – it must act on the basis of a clear principle that applies to all.

The AG calls upon Mr. Gordon to immediately extend a similar apology to those who were not informed (as they should have been), of the fact that they were under investigation. The AG wants no special courtesy or treatment and would rather that the Commission sticks to one rule that is applied across the board.

It is difficult to understand why Mr. Gordon did not afford me the “discretionary courtesy” of an invitation to his home where we could have resolved this matter over a drink. After all, similar courtesies have been afforded to others.

Why would Mr. Gordon wish to apply a different rule to the AG? There is overwhelming evidence to show that the Commission routinely notifies persons that they are under investigation if a complaint was made against them.

Serious questions now arise in light of this conflict regarding the consistency with which this procedure is followed. It will fuel perceptions of political discrimination and bias. The IC appears to move aggressively and swiftly when it comes to complaints against members against the present government as compared to other persons. The St Joseph bye-election has only just finished and already the IC has indicated that it is going to investigate the complaint made by the PNM.

Further comparison would reveal that complaints against the PM Kamla Persad-Bissessar regarding her sister accompanying her on official state visits and the Gopaul matter were investigated within months. The complaint by the Maha Saba against former PM Manning took 6 years. The complaint against former Finance Minister Karen Nunez-Teishra also took over 5 years.

Instead of wasting public funds by taking out full page ads to attack me, Mr. Gordon should take out a full page ad to give an account to the nation on the number of outstanding investigations from under the PNM administration. He should also explain why they are taking so long as it would appear that they are dragging their feet on complaints against certain persons opposed to the government while it pursues against members of the government faster than Usain Bolt.

The commission's rejection of what it interpreted as the "clear inference" that Mr. Gordon has been guilty of leaking information to the Express Newspaper failed to address the critical concerns raised. The commission did not condescend to explain how certain journalist at the Express are able to write so liberally about matters it is supposed to be investigating in secret. Perhaps the IC to take out a full page ad to explain how such a breach and violation could occur.

The AG has written several letters of complaint over the past 2 years to highlight the possibility of a leak from the IC to certain PNM journalists. To date, there has been no explanation of refutation. These letters were not written in respect of complaints made against the AG alone, but other Ministers as well.

The IC must not descend into the political arena. It should be careful that it is not politically manipulated by those opposed to the government so that members of the government are unfairly targeted and singled out for special treatment.

MINISTRY OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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