



INTEGRITY COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2024

Integrity Commission (IC) Responds to Letter Dated April 11, 2025 from Government Leaders in the Houses of Parliament

The Integrity Commission (IC) wishes to inform the public that it has formally responded to a letter, dated April 11, 2025, and signed by the Hon. Mr. Edmund Bartlett, Leader of Government Business in the House of Representatives, and by Senator the Hon. Mrs. Kamina Johnson Smith, Leader of Government Business in the Senate.

The letter from the government's parliamentary leaders was quoted in the media.

The Commission acknowledges the importance of accountability and public trust, and takes all matters relating to integrity and ethical conduct with the utmost seriousness.

The Commission's Chairman, the Hon. Ms. Justice (Ret'd.) Carol Lawrence Beswick, has responded to the government's parliamentary leaders. Her letter was formally received and signed for at the Parliament at 1: 21 p.m. today. In the interest of public transparency, a copy of the Chairman's letter is attached to this release.

The Integrity Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to upholding the Rule of Law and continues to operate in full compliance with the Integrity Commission Act.

END

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OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

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April 14, 2025

Hon. Mr. Edmund Bartlett, MP, OJ, CD, J.P.
Leader of Government Business in the House of Representatives
Houses of Parliament
Gordon House
81 Duke Street
Kingston

Senator the Hon. Mrs. Kamina Johnson Smith, J.P.
Leader of Government Business in the Senate
Houses of Parliament
Gordon House
81 Duke Street
Kingston

Dear House and Senate Government Leaders:

Re: Response to Letter Dated April 11, 2025 from Government Leaders in the Houses of Parliament

I acknowledge receipt of your email and letter to me dated April 11, 2025, in which you indicate “*particular and serious concerns held by [your] government colleagues*” and in which you request my urgent intervention for a “*prompt and thorough interrogation*” of the concerns which you detail.

I am certainly amenable to addressing the concerns which you have sent for the Integrity Commission’s attention insofar as the Integrity Commission Act allows. In short, they concern the perceived, alleged and/or actual bias of the Commission’s acting Director of Corruption Prosecution, Roneiph Lawrence, and the alleged unacceptable pressure being allegedly exerted on certain Commission staff members to cause certain decisions to be made.

I am heartened by the fact that we share a belief in certain principles which you have embraced in your communication, and which I regard as being fundamental to any “interrogation” by the Commission. These important principles were well expressed by you and I adopt them, namely:

- (1) “*We do not for a moment question Mr. Lawrence’s professional qualifications.*”
- (2) “*[W]e do not question any individual’s constitutional right of association*”
- (3) “*...[N]or do we seek to interfere in the operations of the Commission.*”
- (4) “*[J]ustice should not only be done but should be seen to be manifestly and demonstrably done.*”
- (5) “*[T]he Integrity Commission’s success depends greatly on public confidence and trust, which cannot be sustained if there is a perception of bias or other improper conduct of its affairs.*”
- (6) “*[F]airness, professionalism, and justice are [to be] allowed to prevail at the Integrity Commission and to be seen to so prevail*”
- (7) “*We trust that truth and justice will prevail.*”

We are, therefore, agreed that any such “interrogation” would have to be conducted as fairly, impartially and transparently as is possible. Justice would no doubt have to be done, not only in the eyes of the Parliamentarians, but also in the eyes of the persons against whom complaint or allegation is being made. A primary component of a carefully conducted “interrogation” is relevant, cogent evidence.

The first concern to which you refer in the communication is “*regarding Mr. (Roneiph) Lawrence’s appointment as Acting Director of Corruption Prosecution at the Integrity Commission and his possible permanent appointment to the post.*” You provide that one basis for that concern is “*a social media post on January 26 this year by Dr. Dayton Campbell, which is being widely circulated*” and describing Mr. Lawrence as his friend of over twenty (20) years. You conclude, based on your belief in the accuracy of that social media post, that “*any decision taken by Mr. Lawrence in respect of members of the political fraternity will certainly be open to question*”. In view of the fact that we agree that we “*do not question any individual’s constitutional right of association*”, any question about his decision-making, and/or suitability for filling that appointment, must, therefore, be considered with that right in mind.

Indeed, any decision taken by the Commission should be open to be questioned by the public, including political parties, as to the manner in, and the basis on, which the decision was taken. A complete answer should be provided as far as the Integrity Commission Act allows. No doubt, your Parliamentary colleagues will recall that it was your goodselves who placed certain restrictions on what can lawfully be revealed by the Commission, stating at section 56 of the Integrity Commission Act that a person concerned in the administration of this Act ...

“shall regard and deal with as secret and confidential, all information, statutory declarations, government contracts, prescribed licences and all other matters relating to any matter before the Commission....”

The Commission is mindful of the fact that its decisions are open to scrutiny and thus operates under the policy that any conflicts of interest are declared and, where they exist, the employee recuses him/herself and thereafter has nothing to do with that particular matter.

Another basis for your concern about Mr. Lawrence’s appointment to the post in question rests on what you describe as “*public record*” that “*in late 2024, Dr. Campbell used a political platform to make particular comments about a case which, it subsequently came to public attention, was being considered for pursuit by the Integrity Commission.*” No doubt you will readily understand that your description above lacks sufficient details to allow me to determine of what you speak.

I note your next concern is about “*media reports which suggest that the contract of former Director of Corruption Prosecution was not renewed in the circumstance where she ‘came under pressure’ to not seek renewal of her contract due to a lawful decision she made.*” Again, there is no reference to the particular decision that has caused your concern.

The questions you wish to be interrogated are specified as being “*whether the former Corruption Prosecution Director in fact came under pressure due to her lawful decision; from whence did that pressure emanate; and the extent to which that alleged pressure may have contributed to her not seeking renewal in the post despite her being widely known to be of excellent repute in the conduct of her profession to date.*” It is clear that the answers to these require the input of the former Corruption Prosecution Director herself whose 5-year statutory term of office with the Commission has already ended. My attention has not been brought to any complaint, or even comment, made by her, either to the Commission, or to any other entity, concerning the questions you ask to be interrogated.

In order for there to be a fair, impartial and transparent interrogation there not only needs to be the specific questions which you have in fact posed but, equally importantly, there must be specific cogent information from which the interrogation can be commenced.

I also note your “*deep concern about widely circulated reports in both traditional and social media which suggest that, a senior investigator resigned from the Commission after a statement she had submitted to the Commission was excluded from a report submitted by the Commission to the Parliament of Jamaica, due to the intervention of an influential official at the Commission.*”

You say, further, that the reports “*suggest that the formal statement submitted by the investigator had raised serious concerns about unethical practices during the conduct of a certain probe of high public interest.*”

Here, again, you suggest that “*this matter be the subject of enquiry by the Commissioners or, should greater independence be required in the interest of justice in the particular circumstances, any other relevant agency.*” More particularly, you state, enquiry should be made “*as to whether these media reports are accurate, (and) if so whether the official who allegedly ensured the exclusion of the statement in question from the report to Parliament, is still employed to the Commission and indeed whether the individual mis-conducted himself in public office.*”

Unfortunately, this concern, as outlined in your communication, is bereft of sufficient details to adequately inform an enquiry.

The urgent intervention which you seek for a “*prompt and thorough interrogation*” of the mentioned matters can only be fairly done with cogent, specific information.

At the same time, I know that I need not remind you of section 6 of the Integrity Commission Act which provides, in part, as follows:

*“(3) In the exercise of its powers and performance of its functions under this Act, the Commission-
(a) shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority other than the Court by way of judicial review...”*

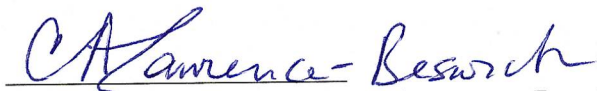
Nonetheless, I hasten to add that I remain committed to open communication where the Integrity Commission is concerned, insofar as the Integrity Commission Act allows.

Actions of the Integrity Commission which cause you, or indeed the general public, concern, will receive the urgent attention of the Commission provided that the Commission is given cogent and unequivocal information on which it can rely.

I look forward to the Commission working together with the members of the Houses of Parliament, in accordance with the laws of natural justice and, above all, in strict compliance with the Integrity Commission Act as promulgated by your goodselves.

Our goal is the same - a corruption free Jamaica.

Respectfully,



The Hon. Ms. Justice (Ret'd) Carol Lawrence-Beswick, CD.
Chairman
Integrity Commission

Copy: His Excellency, the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, ON, GCMG, CD, KStJ, Governor General of Jamaica
Commissioners, Integrity Commission