



October 28th 2020.

PRESS RELEASE

Leadership Debate Committee

The Leadership Debate Committee (LDC), a collaborative body comprised of representatives from Galen University, RSV Limited, and the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), takes this opportunity to clarify a few misconceptions that have emerged since our October 26th 2020 communiqué.

Firstly, contrary to what has been reported in some quarters regarding the supposed cancellation of the Wednesday, October 28th, Prime Ministerial Debate (“the Debate”), the LDC wishes to make it unequivocally clear that the Debate shall proceed tonight as scheduled. This is governed by the fact that from the very beginning of this process the LDC had committed to host the event as long as at least two candidates had confirmed participation. To date, the LDC has received formal commitments from the Belize Progressive Party (BPP) and the Belize Peoples Front (BPF), thereby satisfying the aforementioned requirement.

As has been previously communicated, the LDC operates under the guidance and rules employed by the Jamaica Debates Commission (JDC), a body that is comprised of the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce and the Media Association of Jamaica. JDC’s debates manual specifically states:

“Of paramount importance in this process is the fact that the participants must view the Organizers as a neutral person, whose activities are characterized by transparency and even-handedness. Accordingly, **no meetings with political representatives are held without representatives from all the political parties being present.**”

As a result, in keeping with that guideline, the LDC has indeed endeavored to avoid any meeting(s) with the candidates or their representatives, even though such had been requested. Instead, the *modus operandi* has been to host joint consultations with all four political parties.

One such joint meeting was announced for Monday, October 26th. The purpose of said meeting was to allow for all four parties, under a democratic process, to provide input and potentially effect modifications to the debate rules, as well as to address any concerns that that the Party Leaders may have. However, while all four political parties were invited, only the BPF was in attendance, with apologies (as it pertains to not attending the meeting) later being received from the BPP’s Party Leader. It is regrettable that the other two

Party Leaders did not attend the meeting to have their concerns clarified, and instead insist on one-on-one communication.

Further, and based on potentially misleading remarks made in one newscast yesterday evening, it should be clearly understood that Mrs Kim Aikman is merely acting as an employee of one of the three bodies jointly organizing the debate. Communications through her are solely attributable to the LDC and every word jointly agreed by all three organizations.

The LDC looks forward to an informative and healthy debate tonight. It is our hope that this serves to further contribute towards a robust democratic process in Belize.

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