



# PRESS RELEASE

## There are Statutory Timelines for the Conduct of Elections

**July 20 2018, GEORGETOWN** – The conduct of elections in any part of the world is guided by statutory timelines. It is no different in Guyana and the PPP is fully aware of these key timelines. It is therefore misleading and mischievous for the PPP to accuse GECOM of rejecting its request for an extension of the Registration Exercise as reported in the media on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2018 respectively.

For the sake of clarity, let the facts be known. The Registration Exercise commenced on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2018 and concluded on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2018. As customary, prior to the commencement of these Registration Exercises, the Chief Elections Officer, Mr. Keith Lowenfield, held a meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2018 with the Chief Scrutineers of the Political Parties.

It was at that meeting, the Chief Scrutineers requested the possibility of a two-week extension to the Registration Exercises. The CEO advised that this matter would have to be deliberated at the level of the Commission.

The matter was deliberated at the Commission where the CEO indicated the apparent tightness of this request and it was decided that the operations sub-committee would discuss and explore the possibilities of an extension to the Registration Exercises.

Unfortunately, the operations sub-committee did not meet for weeks due to numerous unforeseen circumstances. When the committee did meet, chaired by Commissioner, Sase Gunraj, the subject was extensively discussed. It was concluded that it would not be feasible to have an extension considering the statutory timelines. Consequently, Commissioner Gunraj tabled the sub-committee's decision at the Commission's plenary meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2018.

In the last week of the Registration Exercises, PPP Chief Scrutineer, Zulfikar Mustapha wrote to the GECOM CEO requesting an extension and he was advised by the CEO that the Commission had deliberated on this matter and no extension would be granted.

GECOM takes umbrage that the PPP is expressing disappointment that the Commission's Chairman Ret'd Justice James Patterson was opposed to a short extension of Registration Exercises despite his recent public assurances of a free and fair election. This is according to an article on page 11 in the Kaieteur News edition of Thursday, July 19, 2018 under the caption, "GECOM rejects PPP's request for continuous registration extension"

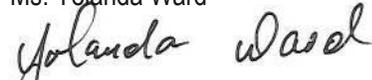
GECOM has never prevented anyone eligible for registration from doing so. Everyone was afforded the same opportunity to ensure that they were registered over a seven-week period.

The said Kaieteur News article also highlighted that the PPP stated “This latest action by the Chairman is fast becoming a trend of partisanship following his earlier casting vote for the appointment of the Deputy Chief Elections Officer (DCEO) which denied the highest ranking candidate the position.”

GECOM as a transparent Constitutional Commission has a workplan, statutory timelines to meet and the conduct of free and fair elections. In so doing, the Chairman will make decisions in the best interest of the Guyanese people and not be held hostage by any Political Party whose interest may very well be to embarrass the Commission.

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