

G. Wayne Panton, JP

MP for Newlands

Statement from G. Wayne Panton, MP for Newlands

21 November 2023

I would like to thank the UPM government for offering me the position of Speaker Of Parliament. After serious consideration, I have decided to decline the offer.

This conclusion is based on what I believe is in the best interest of the people of my community of Newlands, my country and my family.

The Speaker Of Parliament is an important and prestigious position. It is also a position that requires the holder to remain neutral. At this time, it is clear that where I can best be of service to the people of Newlands and to our three islands is from my MP position.

Being a member of Cabinet and heading a ministry certainly has its place and comes with a great degree of responsibility and privileges. I am humbled to have been able to serve as a Minister in Cabinet. However, we must always remember the people that elected us and the importance of ensuring they have full representation in Parliament.

I am now in a position to direct more of my attention to my Newlands community, and am looking forward to continuing and jumpstarting several projects including:

- Expanding the community programming for seniors that has been ably led by MP Heather Bodden.
- Enhancing existing and creating new youth enrichment programmes including leadership, public speaking, community service and life skills.
- Continuing my mission to create spaces for children and families. I am in the midst of improving three existing parks with new playground equipment and basketball facilities, as well as creating a new park at Newlands Dock.
- Delivering a community transport service to help seniors and children get around more easily.

I am proud of what was accomplished during my tenure as Premier. As a government we created more accountability and transparency. We instituted a Ministerial Code of Conduct, the Cabinet Manual, and the Parliamentary Code of Conduct. We were the first government to publish a weekly summary of Cabinet decisions for the public to know what the executive branch was doing.

Under my leadership the PACT government worked to address the housing challenges and to offset the sharp increases in the cost of living in several ways, including significantly expanding the stamp duty waiver initiative for first time Caymanian land or home buyers and introducing a partial waiver for second property Caymanian buyers, improving funding for A-Levels, increasing the funding for vocational training, raising the amount of monthly financial assistance from CI\$950 to \$1,250 for seniors and people on long-term assistance, providing free meals to all public school students and increasing salaries for civil servants. We also ensured that the reputation of our country was maintained, and our financial services industry strengthened with the recent announcements.

We introduced the anti-sexual harassment bill which has completed two rounds of extensive public consultation and I hope will be published as a bill soon.

There are also many things that are important to all three of our Cayman Islands and which, as an MP I plan to advocate for. These include:

- Promoting the faster adoption of renewable energy and making it accessible to everyone in our country. This is crucial to lowering and stabilising our energy costs.
- Continuing to find ways to help our people who are struggling with the high cost of living;
- Championing the need for urgent attention to the severe risks to our economy and quality of life identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment; and
- Supporting a more sustainable Cayman Islands with managed growth and balanced development where our quality of life is protected and not eroded in the name of progress.

My willingness to resign my position as Premier was a clear demonstration of the love I have for my country and my willingness to always put it first. The decision to decline the position of Speaker is made in the same spirit.

I am blessed to have the support of my wife and son, my dear mother and the rest of my family who have all been by my side through everything. It has been challenging for them; this decision is best for them as well.

I love my country and I love my community. There is a saying: “Do all the good you can, for all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as long as you can.” This is exactly what I intend to do for the rest of my days.

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