



INTEGRITY COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 15, 2025

Integrity Commission Responds to Misguided Statement Made on Social Media by Government Parliamentarian Regarding Statutory Declaration Requirements; Appeals to Parliamentarians to take up its Offer to attend Statutory Declaration Sensitization Session

The Integrity Commission wishes to address a misguided comment that was recently made by a Government Parliamentarian and Cabinet Minister, on social media, regarding statutory declaration requirements for the spouses of parliamentarians and public officials. The Parliamentarian was ignorant of pertinent provisions of the Integrity Commission Act.

Sections 39 and 40 of the Integrity Commission Act impose specific obligations that are related to the filing of statutory declarations by parliamentarians and public officials. Section 39(1) states:

“Subject to the provisions of this Act, every person who, on or after the appointed day, is a parliamentarian or public official, shall submit to the Director of Information and Complaints, a statutory declaration of his assets and liabilities and his income in the form set out in the Third Schedule.”

In turn, the Third Schedule of the Act specifically requires information regarding the particulars of income from all sources of the declarant, spouse, and children (including perquisites such as housing, entertainment allowances, rentals, etc.).

Section 40(1) of the Integrity Commission Act 2017 further provides as follows:

“A statutory declaration shall include such particulars as are known to the declarant of the income, assets, and liabilities of the spouse and children, where applicable, of the declarant.”

Consequently, all parliamentarians and public officials, who are required to file statutory declarations, are obligated under the Act to disclose pertinent information, including spousal income details.

It is important to emphasize that these legal obligations are universally recognized anti-corruption and good governance standards that have been written into Jamaican Law by Jamaica Lawmakers themselves, who passed the Integrity Commission Act in 2017. Contrary to what some commentators, including some lawmakers, have publicly suggested, they are not requirements that have been imposed by the Integrity Commission.

In a letter, dated December 10, 2024, the Integrity Commission formally wrote to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate, offering parliamentarians an opportunity to participate in a virtual sensitization session at their convenience. The Commission's letter was also copied to the Chairman of the Integrity Commission Parliament Oversight Committee, the Hon. Edmund Bartlett, and to the Clerk to the Houses of Parliament.

The session would include a presentation on completing the Statutory Declaration Form and provide an opportunity for parliamentarians to ask questions about the examination process. This initiative was designed, in part, to support the preparation for the 2024 statutory declaration intake period, which commenced on January 2, 2025, and will end on March 31, 2025. Unfortunately, however, the Commission, to date, has not received a response to its offer from either the House Speaker or the Senate President.

In the public interest, a copy of the Commission's letter, dated December 10, 2024, to the House Speaker and the Senate President, is attached to this Media Release.

To avoid misinformation, the Commission encourages all parliamentarians and public officials to engage with the resources and educational guidance that are provided by the Commission, as these measures are designed to uphold the principles of anti-corruption, accountability, transparency and good governance.

The Commission remains committed to collaboration and education. We are, therefore, open to providing training or clarification to any individual or institution seeking to fulfil their statutory declaration obligations.

Ultimately, the goal of the Commission is to ensure that all declarations are completed accurately, and in full compliance with the provisions of the Integrity Commission Act.

Parliamentarians who may be interested in participating in the Commission's statutory declaration sensitization session are encouraged to directly contact either Mr. Craig Beresford, the Commission's Director of Information and Complaints, or Mr. Ryan Evans, the Commission's Director of Corruption Prevention, Stakeholder Engagement and Anti-Corruption Strategy.

For further information, please contact the Integrity Commission via the contact whose particulars are listed below.

END

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BY BEARER & EMAIL

10th December 2024

The Most Honourable Mrs. Juliet Holness, MP.
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Houses of Parliament
Gordon House
81 Duke Street
Kingston

Senator the Honourable Thomas Tavares-Finson, OJ, CD, KC, JP.
President of the Senate
Houses of Parliament
Gordon House
81 Duke Street
Kingston

Dear Most Honourable Speaker and Honourable President:

Re: Proposed Statutory Declaration Sensitization Session for Parliamentarians

Season greetings on behalf of the Integrity Commission.

The Commission has participated in vibrant and rich discussions with the Members of the Integrity Commission Oversight Committee at several meetings, and has taken note of the feedback and recommendations made with respect to the filing and examination of Statutory Declarations.

In keeping with those discussions, the Commission has, over the past eighteen (18) months, undertaken the examination of all Statutory Declarations submitted by Parliamentarians for the period 2018 to 2023. During the Examination process, the Commission observed that if full and complete disclosures were made in the Statutory Declarations and the required supporting documents were appended, the interaction between the Commission and Parliamentarians would have been minimal, and they would feel less anxious and burdened by the process.

The in-take period for the 2024 Statutory Declarations commences on January 2, 2025 and ends on March 31, 2025. The Commission, therefore, takes this opportunity to invite Parliamentarians to participate in a virtual sensitization session, at their convenience, to receive a presentation on completing the Statutory Declaration Form and to afford them the opportunity to ask any question about the Examination process.

*The Most Honourable Mrs. Juliet Holness, MP.
Speaker of the House of Representatives*

*Senator the Honourable Thomas Tavares-Finson, OJ, CD, KC, JP.
President of the Senate*

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The Presentation will be delivered by the undersigned and Ms. Joeth Jones, Manager of Declarations. Should there be an interest in the proposed virtual sensitization session, the Commission will be more than happy to facilitate the presentation.

Your kind feedback would be appreciated, to enable the Commission's timely scheduling of the session.

Yours respectfully,



Craig Beresford
Director of Information and Complaints
For and on behalf of the Integrity Commission

Copy to: The Honourable Edmund Bartlett, OJ, CD, MP.
Chair of the Integrity Commission Oversight Committee

Miss Colleen Lowe
Clerk to the Houses of Parliament