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PNP Reiterates Call for Social Media Policy for Government Officials Amidst Repeated Oversights

Kingston, Jamaica. May 26, 2024: The People's National Party (PNP) is once again calling on the government, specifically Dr. the Hon. Sen. Dana Morris Dixon, Minister with Responsibility for Information and Digital Transformation, to urgently address the need for a comprehensive social media policy for government officials. This repeated call, which has gone unanswered, is essential to ensure proper management and oversight of government social media pages and to maintain the integrity of official communications.

This call follows last night's incident involving a photograph posted on the Instagram page of Hon. Olivia Grange. The caption of the photograph identified the current Prime Minister, Hon. Andrew Holness, and Minister Grange but failed to recognise former Prime Minister Percival James Patterson, the longest-serving Prime Minister of Jamaica. Despite significant public outcry, the caption remains unchanged 14 hours later - at the time of this release.

This incident is not isolated. Recently, the nation was deeply troubled when Mr Alando Terrelonge's social media page posted a photograph defacing the images of former Prime Ministers PJ Patterson and Portia Simpson-Miller using emojis while leaving the images of Jamaica Labour Party Prime Ministers untouched. Mr Terrelonge attributed this action to a staffer, yet the photograph remained on the page for several hours, causing significant public distress.

In light of these events, the PNP is reiterating its call for a robust social media policy. This policy should:

1. **Streamline Official Government Sources:** Clearly differentiate between personal and official social media pages of government officials to avoid confusion. The public should be informed if a page is personal/partisan and not to be treated as an official government communication channel. Management of personal pages should not be funded by public resources.
2. **Primary Spaces for Public Information:** Ensure that official social media pages of ministries, departments, and agencies of the government serve as the primary sources of public information, minimising the risk of misinformation or misrepresentation from personal pages. These pages should be current, managed by accountable officers, and avoid communication gaps that force the public to seek information from personal or partisan pages of government officials.



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3. Oversight and Management: Implement strict guidelines for the management and oversight of social media pages maintained by government officials to uphold professionalism and respect in all communications.

Public actors in social media, including media practitioners, have been calling on the government to clearly indicate where social media pages reflect personal views versus the views of the government and its ministries. They also demand proper accountability for breaches of protocol, misinformation, or other missteps.

We are calling on the government to clarify whether the staffers often blamed for these misrepresentations, mishaps, and derelictions of duty are government-paid staffers. If they are, we demand to know what consequences have been or will be levied against them for these failures or for politicising government communication.

The PNP believes that a well-defined social media policy is crucial for maintaining the dignity of our public figures and the trust of the Jamaican people in their government. We urge the Hon. Sen. Morris Dixon to act swiftly in addressing this matter and to provide clear guidelines to prevent further instances of disrespect and miscommunication.

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For more information, contact:

Nekeisha Burchell

Spokesperson for Information and Public Communication

PNP Media Unit - Tel: (876) 408-3160