



## Media Release

HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT, GEORGE TOWN, 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

### **SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT, HON. KATHERINE EBANKS-WILKS,** **RESIGNS FROM POST**

Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, MP, resigned from her position as the Speaker of Parliament today, in an effort to maintain stability and support the Government in meeting its constitutional requirements.

“I found myself in the position where my casting vote would need to be relied on as the Speaker in a hung Parliament,” said Hon. Ebanks-Wilks. “Our Parliament deserves better than this, and I took an Oath to serve the people of the Cayman Islands so I had to make the very hard decision to do what is best for our country when neither side was able to find a solution between themselves.”

At the close of the Special Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> November, the Speaker gave an impassioned statement to the Members and to the public, noting that she locked the doors to the Speaker’s Chamber in order to maintain neutrality and to not be persuaded by other Members who may have wished to make political maneuvers.

“At the end of the day, decisions that are being made should be made based on what is in the best interest of the country and the people of the Cayman Islands,” said Hon. Ebanks-Wilks. “I want to make sure that we stop this instability and that we meet our financial obligations of 31<sup>st</sup> December so our hard-working civil servants are paid on time.”

Swiftly upon her becoming the Speaker in November 2022, Hon. Ebanks-Wilks set a number of key priorities for the Parliament, including a Communications plan with new social media accounts and a rehailed website, increasing the public’s

awareness of the Parliament, developing programs for women to become more active in politics, obtaining a disability audit in conjunction with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, and commissioning a review of the Parliament Standing Orders.

A key objective for Hon. Ebanks-Wilks was to establish a regular schedule of House Meetings in accordance with Standing Orders, something that the Auditor General has frequently called for in her reports. Standing Orders indicate that the Presiding Officer may summon a Meeting of the House, though practice typically waits for the instruction of the Premier to do so.

“I am proud of the modernisation of the Parliament’s website and social media presence through the dedicated work of our incredible Parliamentary staff, and hope that the next Speaker will continue to build on the foundations that I’ve created in the last year” she said. “The public are already much more connected to what goes on here – our public gallery was a busy place for last night’s meeting, and I know that this access people have to their Parliament will spark a desire in our future generations to serve in public office.”

The former Speaker also led the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association’s Benchmark Assessment exercise last month review the legislative and operational aspects of the Parliament against 132 indicators of good governance. “The sad part is that the members who condemned this exercise did so out of the fear of change,” she said. “This exercise was only going to do one thing, and that is to show us our strengths as well as our weaknesses.”

Hon. Ebanks-Wilks was sworn-in as the Speaker during a Special Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2022. She was the 9<sup>th</sup> Speaker since the position was formally established in 1991. She was the youngest Speaker in Cayman’s history and was one of the youngest Speakers across the Commonwealth. Hon. Ebanks-Wilks is the elected Member for West Bay Central.

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