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## **3RD ANNUAL WOMEN OF PARLIAMENT LUNCHEON CELEBRATES LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT, SEEKS TO IMPROVE REPRESENTATION**

**GEORGE TOWN, 12th April 2024**

On March 20th, 2024, the 3rd Annual Women of Parliament Luncheon was held at the House of Parliament, bringing together esteemed former and current female Parliamentarians, along with current and former Clerks, to celebrate the achievements, leadership, and empowerment of women in politics.

Hosted by the Speaker, Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, KCMG, MBE, KC, JP, MP, the luncheon provided a platform for dialogue, networking, and recognition of the significant contributions made by women in shaping legislative agendas and driving positive change within their communities and beyond.

Among the distinguished guests were all current female Members of Parliament, including the Premier, Hon. Juliana O'Connor-Connolly, JP, MP, whose presence as the longest serving Member and as Premier underscored the ongoing dedication to championing women's rights and promoting inclusive decision-making processes within the political sphere. The Minister for Sustainability & Climate Resiliency, Hon. Katherine Ebanks-Wilks, MP, was joined by Hon. Sabrina Turner, MP, Minister for Health & Wellness and Home Affairs, and by Ms. Barbara Conolly, NP, JP, MP, of the Opposition. Current Deputy Speaker, Hon. Heather Bodden, OCl, Cert. Hon., JP, MP, was on official travel.

"Inspired by my lady colleagues and I being the leader of the Cayman Islands Government as a woman is an honour, not just for myself, but for the women who bravely fought for our democratic rights," said **Hon. O'Connor-Connolly**. "It is my hope that more Caymanian women will be inspired by myself, and my fellow female colleagues, to attain whatever goals they have set."

Much as it has done in its previous iteration with the former Speaker, Hon. Ebanks-Wilks, the event emphasised the importance of gender equality and the need for increased representation of women in the legislature. The event also served to invite attendees to reflect on the current environment for women in politics, to hear from each other about the challenges they have faced, and to honour the trailblazing women who have broken barriers in politics.

**Mrs. Zena Merren-Chin**, Clerk and Chief Officer of the Parliament, shared the intention of the annual luncheon: "By coming together to celebrate our achievements and confront the



challenges ahead, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a more equitable and inclusive society for future generations.”

Former Parliamentarians in attendance included the former Speaker, Hon. Mary J. Lawrence, and former Members, Ms. Tara Rivers, Ms. Lucille Seymour, Mrs. Berna Cummins, and Ms. Daphne Orrett. Mrs. Merren-Chin, who became the first Chief Officer of the Parliament in 2020, was joined by Mrs. Patricia Priestley, Assistant Clerk (who served as Acting Deputy Clerk from 2021 to 2023).

The continued success of the Women of Parliament Luncheon underscores the growing momentum behind efforts to empower women in politics, understand the challenges female politicians face today, and to pave the way for a more representative and inclusive democratic process.

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### ***END OF MEDIA RELEASE***

**Image:**

- **“2024-03-20 Women of Parliament Luncheon.JPG”**
  - **Back Row Left to Right:** Mrs. Berna **Cummins**, MBE (MLA 1992-1996); Ms. Barbara **Conolly**, NP, JP, MP; Hon. Sabrina **Turner**, MP; the Speaker, Hon. Sir Alden **McLaughlin**, KCMG, MBE, KC, JP, MP; Hon. Katherine **Ebanks-Wilks**, MP; Mrs. Zena **Merren-Chin** (Clerk & Chief Officer); Mrs. Patricia **Priestley** (Asst. Clerk).
  - **Front Row Left to Right:** The Premier, Hon. Juliana **O’Connor-Connolly**, JP, MP; Ms. Tara **Rivers** (MP 2013-2021); Hon. Mary J. **Lawrence**, MBE, (Hon) LL.D, JP (Speaker, 2009-2013); Mrs. Daphne **Orrett** (MLA 1984-1988); and Ms. Lucille **Seymour**, BEM, MBE, JP (MLA 2005-2009).

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