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For Immediate Release

Town Hall Meeting – Municipal Reform

Hamilton – March 6th, 2019

The City of Hamilton is encouraging the Bermuda community, especially those that are rate-payers and residents in the City, to attend the Town Hall meeting hosted by Government about municipal reform on Thursday, March 7th at 5:30pm at the Heritage Worship Centre on the corner of Court and Dundonald Streets.

The Municipalities Reform Act 2019 was tabled in the House of Assembly by Minister Walter Roban last Friday, just one week after public consultation in the form of an online forum, ended. The results of that consultation were overwhelmingly against any kind of Government interference in the municipalities, a result that mirrors the results of the St. George's poll. Government is overriding those results and has yet to acknowledge the results of any other public consultation or private consultation meetings.

The Reform Act will abolish the electoral process in the municipalities. It states that 'the Minister shall, in accordance with the Fourth Schedule, appoint Members (the Mayor and the eight Councillors) of each Corporation, and the initial appointment of Members shall take effect on 14 May 2019.' The Fourth Schedule goes on to explain that the Minister will appoint the Mayor and four Councillors with the remaining four Councillors to be recommended to the Minister by a Selection Committee, made up of three members. It must be noted that it is at the Minister's discretion as to who sits on the Selection Committee and that they will also be paid in accordance with the Government Authorities (Fees) Act 1971.

Of the Reform Act 2019, Mayor Gosling stated, 'this Act essentially strips the rate-payer in the City of their voting right, including the residents. This Act will disenfranchise the rate-payers, giving them little to no say, no voice when it comes to City matters. It is entirely undemocratic. It is taxation without representation.

'With the appointment of five of the Members by the Minister as well as his authority to appoint the Selection Committee that appoints the remaining four Members, he essentially has complete control over who now governs the City.

'The Government also needs to stop using the word 'quango'. It is entirely misleading. By definition a quango is funded by the Government. I didn't see anything in the budget that allocates funds to the City of Hamilton.

'I strongly encourage everyone, especially the rate-payers and residents of the City to attend the Town Hall on Thursday so that they can ask questions of the Minister about their voting rights and impending lack thereof.'

ENDS

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