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PRESS RELEASE

AUDITOR GENERAL CORRECTS BASELESS ASSERTIONS FROM PSU AND APSSM

18th March 2021, BELIZE CITY - The Office of the Auditor General views with grave concern baseless assertions made by the leadership of the Public Service Union (PSU) and the Association of Public Service Senior Managers (APSSM) at its press conference of 17th March 2021.

It is evident that the Unions neither understand the mandate of the Office of the Auditor General nor the powers of the Auditor General and need to be schooled in the constitutional provisions that establishes such Office. However, it is of utmost importance that these spokespersons be reminded that the Office of the Auditor General “shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority”, per Section 120 of the Constitution. The Office has consistently advocated for its independence away from the Executive Branch of Government and has been frustrated with the Ministry of the Public Service’s inability to facilitate the filling of vacant positions over the last three years that is presently at 17. There have been numerous requests to provide the Office with increased budget, fill vacant positions and provide legal counsel or other specialized postings in order to bolster the Office of the Auditor General. PSU and APSSM have never been vocal about countless attacks on this Office and many subtle frustrations.

The Unions are reminded that the framers of the Constitution made provisions for the protection of the Office of the Auditor General against tyrants and other persons; same actions displayed during its press conference. The same Constitution provides a mechanism via which the work of the Auditor General can be reviewed and if the Unions were indeed legitimately aggrieved, they should use the proper process instead of launching baseless attacks to try and tarnish the Office.

The Office of the Auditor General has been consistent in producing credible work and has kept this Nation informed even in the face of adversities when the very Public Service Union and Association of Senior Public Managers have kept quiet and condoning improper conduct within

the public service. Not once has either Union come to the Office's defense even though the Auditor General is a member of APSSM, and the staff are members of PSU. They have endured ruthless and baseless attacks and in order to maintain the dignity of the Office the Auditor General has always opted not to respond, but the recent uninformed assertions seek to distract from the incompetence of both unions to ensure the public service is beyond reproach.

This is not the first time that the Public Service Union has attacked the Auditor General. As recent as September 2020, just before the general elections, the President, Gerald Henry, wrote the former Prime Minister demanding that he fired the Auditor General. When that call went unanswered, he then proceeded to write the Governor General demanding the same. When those attempts failed, he has now abused the Office of PSU president to pursue his personal agenda. However, what the President has failed to declare is that he has a personal vendetta against the Auditor General because he, as a staff member now seconded to the Union, has been disciplined on several occasions, by the Auditor General, for misconduct on the job. In 2017, he went as far as threatening the Auditor General in the presence of the Public Service Commission, by saying that "they will pay somebody to hurt her" during one such disciplinary hearing.

It is with much sadness that the Office of the Auditor General views the energy being exerted as personal, when the two unions have failed miserably to demand accountability from both the government and Public Officers and push that the five Reports suppressed at the National Assembly be released. Neither of these Unions seems to understand the fundamental difference between external and internal audit functions. Instead, the unions now chose to mask its frustration with a personal agenda. The Office has approximately five hundred entities subject to external auditing and stands on its nonpartisan nonpolitical principle and will never undertake demanded audits to fulfil political agendas. It is most unfortunate that these unions are seeking to work against the only Office that has demonstrated in every report the many faucets of leakages, fraud and corruption that has now resulted in the financial crisis at hand.

The Office of the Auditor General takes this opportunity to assure its stakeholders that it will continue to put Country first and will do so without fear or favour. In addition, will continue to advocate for the Office's independence away from the Executive Branch of Government.

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