



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Opposition Contribute Nothing to Education Debate**

The public statement issued jointly by the GSD and the Hon Marlene Hassan-Nahon has no substance and contributes nothing at all to the current discussion on Education. As such it is consistent with past GSD educational policy and, indeed it is merely asking the Government to do what it is already doing.

The education of children and successive generations is the main driving force of the GSLP Government, as it was of the previous GSLP Government, unlike the GSD administration's policies, which contributed very little to developing education. Unfortunately they left so much undone that the Government has decades of catching up to do, for the sake of our youth.

The matter of site identification, as a wider land management issue has to be a Government-led decision. Here teachers' views, including those of the GTA are being taken into account in dealing with and resolving any concerns expressed. In all the issues in relation to other changes, there has been and will continue to be extensive consultation with teachers. The reported 'increase' in consultation which the joint Opposition release alludes to, is consultation that has always been planned as part of a well programmed process, as has been stated repeatedly by the Government, that necessarily cascades down into all levels as the plans progress and as details of the designs are discussed and decided by the users. Government can understand the nervousness of some teachers and indeed of the GTA, who had sadly got used to a total lack of consultation by the former government, fearing from that experience that this Government would do the same. Nothing could be further from the truth, as we will continue to prove.

Not only is consultation continuing to expand in the detail of school designs, but working groups have been and are being constituted to look at the detail of all the other improvements, in order to discuss and confirm realistic targets and timeframes. This will be an ambitious programme, yes, but it will not be allowed to become unrealistic. The Government will do absolutely everything that can be done responsibly, and not at the expense of education. Nothing will be rushed. It is not a question of rushing. But after years of neglect and poor conditions for teachers and pupils - confirmed by the GTA's recent survey - we have little time to lose.

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Head teachers are senior staff and are key to the process. They are leaders, an integral part of the Education Department, and are particularly entrusted with the care and future of our children, and the welfare of their staff. They professionally lead teams of senior teachers whose experience and expertise are similarly valued, and they remain the legitimate line of communication to the profession. They must feel supported in taking difficult decisions and require, and have the trust of the Government and the respect of the profession. But ALL teaches contribute and, both through the senior teams and directly, are being and will be given every opportunity to engage and contribute to the process.

Minister for Education John Cortes said, “Teachers are very well aware of my genuine, and deep rooted interest in Education and in the children they look after and teach. And of my willingness, and indeed keenness, to make sure everyone has a voice. I am available to all of them, both in my regular visits to the schools, and in my office. We have set ourselves serious challenges, and we will only effect the changes once we are certain of a successful transition. But we are not afraid of hard work. Teachers never are. They understand that putting off things for a year or two may sound sensible in normal day to day matters, but a year in the life of a schoolchild is a year that will never return’ a year of opportunities lost, a year of potential unfulfilled, with possible lasting consequences on the young person’s life. Therefore we must achieve as much as we can in as short a time as possible, but at a timescale informed by the process of consultation in which we are embarking. This is not political convenience, this is educational sense. What the Opposition is saying is simply repeating what we have said many times and what is happening already. Indeed it is somewhat cheeky of them to call for consultation. They never consulted teachers in their day, nor anyone else, for that matter, on the building of new schools. The fact that they didn’t actually build any may, of course, have had something to do with it.”