

PRESIDENT RAMOTAR MUST REMEMBER HIS PROMISES AND RESPECT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

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President Donald Ramotar must remember his promises and respect the National Assembly. Mr. Ramotar, at that time Presidential Candidate of the People's Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) made a solemn promise in his party's election Manifesto –

Working Together for a Better Tomorrow

. He wrote:

*"In the area of local government and governance, the next PPPC government will ensure, **within one year of the 2011 general elections**, that local government elections are held bringing much needed reinvigoration into local government entities."*

Nearly three years have passed since elections were held and Mr. Donald Ramotar became president. He has failed to keep his promise on local government election. Will he keep his promises on anything at all?

President Ramotar's record on local government is an open book for all to read. President Ramotar, as PPP General Secretary in 2010, was reported to have expressed his willingness “

...

to have Local Government elections under the old system.”

He

added,

“reforms could be worked on and introduced when completed”.

His clear intention is to maintain the 'old' system.

President Ramotar has displayed gross disrespect for the National Assembly by refusing to assent to a Bill which was approved after careful scrutiny and arduous work. He is aware also that the PPP/C, while he was a member of the National Assembly when his party enjoyed a majority, repeatedly passed amendments for twelve consecutive years since 1997 to defer the

holding of Local Government Elections for the expressed purpose of “*completing the reform of the Local Government System in Guyana as required by the Guyana Constitution*” There is abundant evidence of Ramotar’s continuing resistance to local democracy:

- **Local Government legislation:** Donald Ramotar, as President, refused to assent to the *Local Government (Amendment) Bill* which had been passed by the National Assembly along with the *Municipal and District Councils (Amendment) Bill*, the *Local Government Commission Bill* and the *Fiscal Transfers Bill*. These had all been scrutinised by the Parliamentary Select Committee on Local Government before passage.

- **Local government elections:** Donald Ramotar ignored the *Local Authorities (Elections) (Amendment) Bill 2013* which states that elections must be held on or before August 1, 2014. The bill was amended by A Partnership for National Unity in the National Assembly to enable the conduct of Local Government Elections on or before that date.

- **Local government pressure:** Donald Ramotar ignored explicit calls last year from the Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the USA, UK, Canada and the European Union for the holding of local government elections. They stated, jointly: “*Given the important and pressing need for effective local governance, we believe that 2013 should be a watershed moment for the people of Guyana – the year they can once again democratically elect their local government...the institutions and practice of local governance have withered on the vine.*”

- **Local government abuse:** Donald Ramotar allowed his ministers of Local Government and Regional Development to destroy numerous local democratic councils, although not without resistance. Residents staged protests at the Corriverton municipality and the Ireng-Sawariwau, Port Kaituma-Arakaka Mathew’s Ridge and Kwakwani and other neighbours against government-installed interim management committees.

The People’s Progressive Party/Civic (PPP/C) for over two decades has demonstrated its unwillingness to introduce Local Government reform which was considered necessary to give effect to Article 12 of the Guyana Constitution. This states: “*Local Government by freely elected representatives of the people is an integral part of the democratic organisation of the State*”

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The PPP/C has deliberately underfunded municipalities and neighbourhoods and deliberately undermined democratically-elected local councils thereby inhibiting their development. A Partnership for National Unity (APNU) remains committed to local democracy and to providing a good life for all Guyanese.

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