1 | Page MEMORANDUM To: Members of the FNM Central Council CC: Sidney Collie—National Party Chairman CC: Dr. Hubert A. Minnis – Party Leader

From: Loretta Butler-Turner, M.P., Hubert Chipman, M.P., Neko Grant, M.P., Richard Lightbourn, M.P., Theo Neilly, M.P., Dr. Andre Rollins, M.P. Date: May 31, 2016

Re: A Call to Action Executive Summary

Over a period of months, the forum of Council meetings has been used to attack FNM MPs for what they describe as our failure to protect or defend the Leader and make him look good. Recently, the MP for St. Anne’s, Hubert Chipman, gave a brief but powerful defence of the MPs. That defence proved to be a damning indictment of the Party Leader.

The Leader was absent from the meeting, so Council was advised that a special Council meeting would be arranged so that YOU—the highest authority of our Party outside of Convention—would be able to hear the facts about why the Parliamentary team appeared to be underperforming. That meeting was never arranged. Nevertheless the unjustifiable attacks on the MPs have persisted and intensified. We can remain silent no longer. We have set out, in detail the reasons why we feel as we do and why our Party must hold an early Convention and become, again, the united, powerful voice of The Bahamian people.

After a disappointing defeat in 2012, the Parliamentary Group unanimously rallied behind Dr. Hubert Minnis to be the Leader of the Opposition. We supported him and many outside parliament supported him. From the Bye-Election in North Abaco, The Leader showed evidence that he was separating himself from the chords, tradition, legacy and history of The FNM.

We have witnessed, with unfailing regret, the erosion, dilution and squandered support in the public. The Bahamas, under the PLP has reverted to a tribal cabal. However, our Leader has not galvanized the public by promulgating substantive, open, articulate programs of change. Wherever we go, we are challenged by our supporters “is there any hope?” When will you all fix our party, so that poor people, small businesses that are struggling and being crushed and victimized can get relief?” They have no confidence that we are a better choice, because we have not shown them better. That is why we have written this to you, The Council.

2 | Page We have reproduced, below the conclusion to this memo.

Our Conclusion & the Way Forward

• This is one of the moments in its history when The Bahamas is in greatest need of bold, unifying, capable leadership. We are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis in crime, youth unemployment and education.

• Virtually all Bahamians agree that we are in the midst of a crisis of unprecedented severity. As a result, they are starving for change. But they do not see the potential for change in any political party today.

• As a result, they are massively undecided, increasingly likely to give up on our country and leave, and impatiently waiting for a new leadership/political alternative to emerge.

• Those of us who understand our history know that this is a moment in which we must demand of ourselves that we rise to the occasion. Unfortunately, we are not currently structured to do this. • Bahamians see us as no less corrupt, no more trustworthy, and no less self-interested as our PLP or DNA counterparts. This is a direct result of our Leader’s recent missteps. Whether you listen to the voices of reasonable and well-intentioned talk show hosts, read newspaper editorials, columnists and letters to the editor, or talk with your neighbours and co-workers, the message could not be clearer. People want the FNM to get its house in order. Those persons cannot be right only when they bash the PLP. If we respect the views of that wider cross section of Bahamians, then OUR clarion CALL TO ACTION by this Central Council could not be clearer; we absolutely need an early convention to speak to the legitimacy of Bahamian democracy. Equally importantly, we need to confirm whether our current leader still benefits from a mandate to lead. --------------------End of Executive Summary--------------------

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Dear Fellow Councillor:

Over a period of months, several persons (for the umpteenth time) have used the forum of Council meetings to attack FNM MPs for what they describe as our failure to protect or defend the Leader and make him look good. Recently, the MP for St. Anne’s, Hubert Chipman, gave a brief but powerful defence of the MPs. That defence proved to be a damning indictment of the Party Leader. The Leader was absent from the meeting, so Council was advised that a special Council meeting would be arranged so that YOU—the highest authority of our Party outside of Convention—would be able to hear the facts about why the Parliamentary team appeared.

We can remain silent no longer. Manhood, Womanhood and personal integrity demand that we speak up. But first, we must start at the “beginning.” to be underperforming. That meeting was never arranged. Nevertheless the unjustifiable attacks on the MPs have persisted and intensified.

A Shared and Rich Legacy of Leadership On August 19, 1992 the Free National Movement was elected to govern the affairs of our great country. That momentous August day is one that we continue to commemorate because it was so significant in the life of our country and our great Party. For the nation, it commenced fifteen non-consecutive years of good FNM government in the sunshine—all after a sordid period of drug kingpins and an international reputation as a “Nation for Sale.”

The FNM gave thousands of Bahamians reasons to hold their heads high once again. August 19th also reflected the culmination of almost twenty years of struggle to reach the mountain top. In that period we had the tremendous privilege of working with numerous great leaders. Every parliamentarian today stands on the shoulders of those great men and women. Our Party was founded on the principle of speaking truth to power.

In that regard, all MPs today are the “Children of Cecil.” Because of his legacy and what we learned from him— directly and indirectly—FNM leaders throughout our history have never lacked the courage to look reality in the face and make tough decisions. Indeed the poet had it right: "There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries."

Today, each of us declares here and now, that on such a full sea are we now afloat. Article 2 (a) of our Party's Constitution declares that—among other things—the aim and objective of the FNM shall be “To elect, establish and maintain in office a government which will truly reflect the political, social, cultural and economic aspirations of the people of the

4 | Page Commonwealth of The Bahamas.” Our Party enjoyed that wonderful privilege for fifteen non-consecutive years. A Proven Record of Loyalty to Our Present Leader After a disappointing defeat in 2012, the Parliamentary Group unanimously rallied behind Dr. Hubert Minnis to be the Leader of the Opposition.

At the 2014 leader election, the Members of Parliament were not unanimous in their support of the Leader, in part because another one of our parliamentary colleagues was also a contender for the position of Leader. Out of an abundance of respect for our Party, the Leader and our colleague, Loretta Butler-Turner, the Members of Parliament made a deliberate decision to refrain from ANY public—and in many cases, PRIVATE—endorsement of ANY candidate.

In a phrase, we simply stayed out of the fight.

Time for a Change

After much thought and prayerful consideration, we the under-signed Members of Parliament have concluded that the best course of action for the Free National Movement to achieve its objective of being elected to establish and maintain a government is to convene an early convention, bring all the factions of the FNM together, distil all the issues and facts and reunite our Party for the pivotal battle ahead, under invigorated, united leadership.

Why We Can’t Wait

When Dr Minnis was unanimously elected to lead the parliamentary team, he came to that position as a political neophyte. Not only did the leader have only a single term as a Member of Parliament and Cabinet Minister, he had come to front line politics without ever being connected to the FNM or its fight to become the government. On his team, however, were four other persons who had

Failure to LEAD

been soaked in politics for more than a generation. Outside of the Parliamentary team, the leader was supported by “legacy” leaders of the FNM and his former Cabinet colleagues, who made it their commitment to pour everything they could about politics and nation-building into the Leader. To be perfectly blunt and honest, Dr. Minnis had full access to, and utilization of a political Dream Team that wanted him to succeed, and they worked with him to succeed in every way possible. For well over three intensely frustrating and oftentimes painful years the Parliamentary team, and former colleagues, did EVERYTHING they could to help and support the Leader.

We gave the leader every opportunity he needed to take command of the Party and LEAD us to victory. In doing that, the Team REPEATEDLY gave the leader tremendous LATITUDE and DEFERENCE to set the pace and the tone. Regrettably, we and the Party met with failure at almost every turn.

Dr. Minnis just did not trust the team, nor did he trust the more than 70 years of experience in political leadership that it represented. The examples of failed leadership are far too numerous to mention, but we highlight a few core examples here:

♣ For almost the entirety of his tenure—and despite repeated attempts to guide and support him—Dr. Minnis proved himself incapable of leading his team. Consequently, the Parliamentary team lacked focus and direction often because the

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Leader failed to provide that focused leadership and direction. This was true of the Parliamentary team and

♣ Article 25 of the FNM Constitution declares that the Leader shall be responsible for implementing and coordinating the Party’s policies and political activities after consultation with the Executive Committee, the Parliamentary members, Party Officers and others…” On a consistent basis Dr. Minnis failed to lead in this regard. the Party as a whole. There is absolutely no denying the fact that the Party continues to lack a focused plan for national transformation.

♣ Dr. Minnis repeatedly refused to consult his colleagues on matters of significance. Since May 2012 the examples are NUMEROUS, but a few are worthy of note.

o Almost two years ago when Prime Minister Perry Christie announced to The Bahamas and the world that he would be proceeding with a number of constitutional amendments, he also declared that he was making that announcement after consultation and agreement with Dr. Minnis as leader of the Opposition. It was a gut-wrenching experience to know that Dr. Minnis’s colleagues were learning of his deal with the Prime Minister at the same

o In 2014 at the commencement of a Parliamentary Committee meeting, Dr. Minnis announced that he would be making a new year’s address to the nation. The address would relate to crime and would involve a proposal for at least one constitutional amendment. Dr. Minnis then proceeded to circulate a time the rest of The Bahamas was being apprised of it. single

With respect to resignations and recommendations for Senatorial appointments, Dr. Minnis consulted with his “Cabinet-in-Waiting” on a “need to know basis.” That meant that, in general, Dr. Minnis concluded that his parliamentary team did not “need to know.” Consequently, we were frequently the LAST to know.

CONSISTENTLY, MPs learned that OUTSIDERS were able to share more about what the Leader was doing before we were apprised of these actions by our Leader. copy of the text of his address.

This was the first time ANY of the Members of Parliament had seen the address. Dr. Minnis then announced that the address had already been RECORDED and that it would be aired on NB12 that very same evening at 8:00 p.m. Three hours later. To be very clear...there was NO discussion with his colleagues and, therefore, no inclusion of ANY ideas other than his own.

o REPEATEDLY, the Leader made policy speeches, utterances, and released policy position papers with ABSOLUTELY ZERO consultation with his colleagues. This, AFTER repeatedly assuring the public that he was going to be a different type of leader.

♣ A repeated criticism of FNM MPs has been the assertion that MPs did not “step up” to compensate for the Leader’s weaknesses. In answering this criticism, it gives us no pleasure in declaring that one of the lasting “legacies” of Dr. Minnis’s tenure as Leader will be the tremendously hypersensitive culture of insecurity that permeated the organization. To put it simply, any colleague who tried to demonstrate strength, initiative, political and policy creativity was viewed as “trying to overshadow the Leader.” Therefore, the MPs’ default position was to afford the Leader as much latitude to LEAD and manoeuvre as he deemed necessary. The TRUST Deficit

♣ No leader will ever be perfect; no one. Every weakness can be compensated for. However, over the course of four years one of the most significant deficits that the parliamentarians struggled with was the matter of TRUST. Frankly, year after year

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after year, MPs came to the sad and heart-breaking conclusion that we simply could not trust our leader. He repeatedly proved himself NOT to be a man of his word.

o In order for any leader to enjoy the confidence of his TEAM, they MUST be able to trust him or her and take that leader at his/her word. Unfortunately, time after time after time we have proven that the Leader would:

♣ Say one thing and do another

♣ Knowingly and intentionally distort the facts

♣ Misrepresent the words or views of his colleagues o In an environment of accountability and collective responsibility, this style of leadership is fundamentally unacceptable. TRUST used to be a word synonymous with FNM leadership.

♣ The Leader’s unusual tendency to horde and not share information repeatedly proved to be counterproductive. Those of us who served in Cabinet understood all too well that the “Coordinator of Ministries” function performed by the Prime Minister would never be successful unless he or she is prepared to empower colleagues with information. To our great and repeated regret, this was simply just not Dr. Minnis’s style. This failure to share information—coupled with the Leader’s general failure to lead in planning our parliamentary strategy—starkly dramatized the reality of an uncoordinated parliamentary team.

o Far too often, the parliamentary team simply did not know where the leader was going, what he was going to say, when or where. Consequently, too often when he faced the barrage of PLP counter attack, none of us knew what “run” the Leader was on in the first place, so we were ill-equipped and ill-prepared to defend him.

o The most recent example of this was the disaster of Toogie and BoBo. Even as he and the former National Chairman were talking/coordinating with, wheeling and dealing with these men, Dr. Minnis kept his colleagues completely in the dark. MPs were later blindsided in the House of Assembly, when the PLP leaders launched their blistering counterattack designed to redirect attention from themselves. Had the team been fully briefed o PLP politics aside, it is clear that by inviting this unscrupulous pair to his home, Dr. Minnis exercised poor judgement in the extreme.

Right-thinking Bahamians—including hard core FNMs—have admitted this. HAD the Leader consulted his colleagues, we would have advised him to act differently. , a chairmanship might have been saved, and the damage to the FNM BRAND would not have been as severe. Even to this day, we are confident—based on what we know from sources OUTSIDE the FNM—that the full story of BoBo and Toogie has not been told. Like a sly fox (or snake in the grass), the PLP is lying in wait for the right moment to pounce.

A New Low

We can say without fear of reasonable contradiction that one of the features of the FNM that attracted many young Bahamians to our Party—in the years prior to becoming the government and since—was the fact that, unlike the PLP, the FNM was a party that united Bahamians. The FNM brought Bahamians of all races and creeds together.

Today, the FNM has become a party where white Bahamians are made uncomfortable to attend a Central Council meeting. What is worst is that the MP for Montagu was attacked because of his race, merely for speaking up. This has never been what the FNM was about. This FNM had the

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courage to elect a white deputy leader, and we embraced him. The PLP would never do that. When Dr. Minnis perpetuated this “us against them (white and middle income people) attitude in our Central Council, that was a major blow to our confidence in him. The FNM is better and bigger than that. No Personal Ambition or Agendas Are at Play: A Reality Check Is For almost the entirety of Dr. Minnis’s tenure as leader,

FNM MPs have been attacked and vilified by the Leader’s supporters in Council and on social media. With each mean-spirited, vicious and personal attack by the Leader’s ardent supporters, we turned the other cheek and resisted the urge to say “It isn’t me.” But there comes a time when one must put up a fight and defend himself. Given what has transpired in Council over the past six months in particular, we have no choice but to defend ourselves. It is our hope that this narrative provides a more balanced representation of why your parliamentary team has functioned in the manner in which it has.

This parliamentary team is one of accomplished and emerging “professionals.” Everyone continues to make tremendous sacrifices in order to serve their country. The decision to take strong action at this time is not at all about US, or some personal agenda against the Leader. We act in recognition of the greater national good and the good of the Party.

♣ Since Day One when the Leader came to office, we have been doing our utmost to work with him and support him. We can say without fear of honest or reasonable contradiction that Dr. Minnis started his term as leader with an almost unprecedented level of support and goodwill. EVERY original member of this Parliamentary Team wanted him to succeed.

♣ The reality we must face and come to grips with is that almost from Day One there has been a consistent diminishment of Dr. Minnis’s level of confidence and support within the country. FNMs and FNM supporters who are honest with themselves will admit that the consistent depletion of PUBLIC support and goodwill had little to do with the MPs. It had almost everything o MPs could not defend the Leader while he was on his feet in Parliament and when lack of debating skills and adequate preparation transformed him into a punching bag for the PLP Ministers to do with the Leader himself and how he conducted himself:

o MPs could not defend the Leader when members of the press hijacked him on his way to or from Parliament and eased him into making a statement he had not fully thought through. Failure to Preserve and Defend the FNM Brand When the Leader infamously declared that “…the Ingraham era is over…” following the Bye-Election in North Abaco, many cringed and should have seen the writing on the wall.

The Leader was separating himself from the chords, tradition, legacy and history of The FNM. We have witnessed, with unfailing regret, the erosion, dilution and squandered support in the public. The Bahamas, under the PLP has reverted to a tribal cabal. Our Leader has not galvanized the public by promulgating substantive, open, articulate programs of change.

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