

Statement from Peter Bunting MP

Since our Party's East Portland by-election loss, there has been increasing speculation about both the desirability and the likelihood of a change in leadership of the PNP. Uncertainty can be debilitating for a political movement, and an undeclared campaign is already starting to develop in social media and amongst party members. For good order and transparency, it is best that this speculation be put to rest as soon as possible.

Therefore, I confirm that I am offering myself for President of the People's National Party at the Annual Conference in September. This is a carefully considered decision which I believe to be in the best interest of the Party and the country.

After the 2016 general election defeat, an Appraisal Committee was established to determine the reasons for the loss. The four findings of the Appraisal Report were that:

1. the Party was *arrogant and took the electorate for granted*.
2. There was a breakdown of trust among elements of the leadership leading into the campaign.
3. The Party's message did not communicate hope and was incoherent.
4. The Party's organization was not election ready.

Our performance in East Portland confirmed that there has been no demonstrable improvement to the areas recognized as deficient and contributing to our electoral defeat in the 2016 Appraisal Report. (*See table attached*)

Any objective analysis using either quantitative or qualitative approaches will show that there has been further decline in the PNP's electoral competitiveness since 2016.

Dr. Phillips has made an outstanding contribution to the Party and the country in the various positions in which he has served over the past three decades. However, since becoming President, he has not implemented a single transformational initiative within the Party, and is just not seen as the right person for this time.

There is also a growing acceptance/resignation in the general public and amongst various stakeholder groups including Party membership and supporters, civil society and private sector leadership, that the PNP under Dr. Peter Phillips' leadership cannot defeat the JLP in a general election. This will have negative consequences for voter support, organizational energy, and party/campaign funding.

The above sentiment is confirmed by Party, media, and private polling which all show weakness or deterioration in Dr. Phillips' standing. Polls further suggest that the Party would gain a huge boost with new leadership. (*See Attachment*)

I share the belief that new leadership is the best course for the Party. In the circumstances therefore, I could not in sincerity accept any position recently offered.

In the coming weeks I will be engaging various stakeholders within the Party and in the wider society to discuss the strategic direction in which I would lead the political movement that is the PNP, to hear their concerns and suggestions, and to finalize a contemporary, relevant political platform grounded in the foundational principles of our Movement.

A core support team will establish the Campaign Committee and supporting structures. We have adopted the campaign slogan **Rise United** as a signal of our determination to tackle the factionalism that has afflicted the Party for a long time.

There is a rising tide within the Party which is rejecting the status quo and insisting on real change. An insightful excerpt from Michael Manley's final interviews documented in the book **Truth Be Told** speaks to our contemporary situation:

"The PNP's historical role has always been the architect of change.... Somebody has to be the agent of change. To think about change and betterment; how to do it, inspire towards it, jook and prod and upset people as you achieve it. Somebody has to do that. Right now the PNP is very much a sedate manager for a set of givens. If the whole political system becomes incapable of renewal through challenge, and I put it that way deliberately, then you're going to find that the system will begin to lose credibility, lose momentum; young people will have less and less faith in it, and the terrible cynicism which is such a problem in Jamaica today can become entrenched."

Table 1

Comparison of PNP's performance in 2016 General Election vs 2019 By-election

Findings from Appraisal of 2016 election loss	Comparison w/ 2019 E. Portland by-election
<p>The decision not to participate in the national debate was a fatal error. It contributed to the impression that the Party was <i>arrogant and took the electorate for granted</i>.</p>	<p>Many statements by campaign leadership from the E.P. political platforms were perceived as belittling Ann-Marie Vaz, and came across as <i>arrogant</i>. The statement by the Leader about E. Portland being a PNP constituency was successfully spun as <i>taking the electorate for granted</i>.</p>
<p>There was a breakdown of trust, among elements of the leadership, leading into the campaign. This was never resolved and led to the campaign being dysfunctional and divided.</p>	<p>There has been no exercise undertaken since 2016 to rebuild the trust. Recent polls suggest the Party Leader is widely perceived as a 'lame duck' by the public. Internal aspirants for leadership (and their supporters) seem more concerned with positioning themselves for succession rather than positioning the Party for electoral success. The Party collectively expends more resources (and competes with more intensity) for internal elections than for external ones.</p>
<p>The Party's message did not communicate hope and was incoherent. It was exacerbated by the decision to raise the issue of Holness' house during the campaign. There are some who felt the Party had deviated from its core philosophy. There was also no effective counter to the JLP's tax proposal.</p>	<p>The candidate articulated many ideas for E. Portland, but the sheer number made it difficult to follow. To the extent messages could be distilled, they were 'Damion is about education', and 'bashing the opponent'. Inexplicably, poll data did not seem to inform the PNP's messaging since only 4% of E. Portland voters identified education as a concern, while the vast majority identified roads, water, and jobs/economic opportunities as their primary concerns. By contrast, the JLP's messaging focused like a laser on these top concerns.</p>
<p>The Party's organization was not election ready due to low worker morale; unresolved candidate selection issues; problematic relationships between some MPs and Councillors, among others.</p>	<p>Upon the sudden death of MP Bloomfield, the E. Portland Party organization was not election ready due to low worker morale; unresolved candidate selection issues; problematic relationships between the late MP and Councillors, among others.</p>

Attachment 1

