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General Media,

PRESS RELEASE

**Ruling of the Integrity Commission regarding the use of a Helicopter
by the Hon. Premier during the immediate aftermath of the 2017 Hurricanes**

In late 2017, and in 2018, certain correspondence, information and/or reports were either directed to, acquired by, or otherwise brought to the attention of the Integrity Commission, regarding the Hon. Premier's use of a chartered helicopter during the immediate aftermath of the 2017 Hurricanes.

The purpose of the charter was to enable the Hon. Premier to reach out to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands, to assess the damage that had been caused by the storms, and to provide strategic assistance.

The information in the possession of the Commission indicated that the Premier, in the charter of the aircraft from a private company, had not strictly acknowledged bureaucratic protocols, or complied with relevant procurement procedures. The charter subsequently resulted in a substantial bill being invoiced to the Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

An assessment and examination of the referenced correspondence, information and reports, regarding the procurement of the helicopter, was carried out by the investigative arm of the Commission. The findings were subsequently reported to the Commission's Commissioners who, after deliberating on the matter, ruled in the following terms:

"The Commission reviewed a large bundle of documents pertaining to the use of a helicopter on or about the 10th September 2017, including a statement attributed to the Hon. Premier purporting to be a public broadcast by her, and published in the TCI Weekly Newspaper, dated 3rd September 2018. The Commission noted that the Premier has acknowledged that, in retaining the services of the Helicopter, she had

not acted in strict compliance with the usual financial and procurement procedures.

The Commission's examination revealed that the proprietor of the helicopter was contracted for use, at a time of extreme emergency, immediately following the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in September 2017. The Commission also noted that it became necessary for the Governor to declare a State of Emergency.

The Commission also noted that the Premier was accompanied by the Governor and had hired the helicopter for the specific and humanitarian purpose of seeking to make contact with the residents of South Caicos, Grand Turk and Salt Cay, with whom there had been no communication following the hurricane.

In the circumstances, the Commission is of the opinion that even though the Premier may have acted irregularly in procuring the helicopter services, the reason for her action was entirely intelligible and reasonable, and the Commission has no doubt that the Premier acted in good faith, in a situation of great emergency."

In keeping with the directives of the Commissioners, formal notices of the Ruling have been conveyed to the following authorities:

- His Excellency, the Governor, Dr. John Freeman
- The Premier, the Hon. Sharlene Cartwright-Robinson
- The Deputy Governor, the Hon. Anya Swann-Williams
- The Attorney General, the Hon. Rhondalee Braithwaite-Knowles

For further information, or assistance, please contact the Integrity Commission by telephone at 649-946-1941(Grand Turk Office) or 649-941-7847 (Providenciales Office), or via e-mail at: secretary@integritycommission.tc or info@integritycommission.tc

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