

TO DR. ROBERT METZGER

USA 301-952-3744

FOR THE URGENT

**UPDATE ON CHANGE OF STATUS**

ATTENTION OF MR. GEORGE NICOL

1. The Status Review Committee, now called the Status Implementation Committee, has been in existence since 1993 working towards the change of status of the school from a Government-Assisted to an Independent school. Within the last year, the Committee has worked relentlessly hard to achieve its goal with minimum disruption. Its sub-committees were working on their various programmes to effect the change on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2007. Parents had been sensitized, staff had been identified and infrastructural projects were about to start when the Board of Governors was summoned to a meeting with the Minister of Education, Science and Technology on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2006.
2. It should be pointed out that from the inception of the change proposal, we had made it clear that the change of status was a matter for the Proprietor and not the Board of Governors. All previous meetings relating to the change had been with the Proprietor and the Committee working under his mandate. The Board of Governors is a creation of the Minister of Education who has powers to appoint and dismiss. Even if a member is the Proprietor's nominee, his appointment is from the Minister. The 2004 Education Act has further strengthened the Minister's say in the deliberations of the Board.
3. At the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> August, the Board was informed about some Cabinet discussions and conclusions. These stated that a national policy on change of status was to be formulated before any school could embark on such a change. As a result, the school should continue as a Government-Assisted school.
4. The Bishop who apart from being Proprietor is also the Chairman of the Board, expressed concern that the issue of policy had never been mentioned before and was now brought up to forestall our plans.
5. We later had discussions with the Vice President who restated what the Minister had said. A legal team was formed and a letter was written to the Minister requesting him to give reasons why permission had been denied. About two weeks later, a letter was received from the Attorney-General stating that the change of status was inappropriate and should be held in abeyance. We were of the view that the issues which our lawyers had raised in their letter to the Minister had not been addressed.
6. On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2006, the Bishop issued a mandate to me to continue as Principal and administer the school under his direction and that of the SIC.
7. We published a programme of activities and re-scheduled the re-opening of school for 2<sup>nd</sup> October. The Board was invited to the Ministry but we did not attend. In our view, change of status was a matter for the proprietor and not the Board. Also, our effective change of status on 1<sup>st</sup> September made the Board redundant.
8. We started collecting the new fees and held the NPSE intake meeting for pupils from primary schools on 12<sup>th</sup> September. It was well attended and new pupils also began to pay the new fees.
9. The Ministry issued statements and held a meeting with about 20 parents at the Government Roke! Secondary School. Other meetings were held to which the Proprietor was not invited. A statement from the Bishop was read in some churches on 17<sup>th</sup> September.

REFURBISHMENT WORK IS GOING ON IN MY OFFICE BUT YOU  
 WAS THE ONLY FAX NUMBER I COULD ACCESS.

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10. On the same day the usual discussion and phone-in programme was broadcast by Radio Democracy. Our change of status was the topic but we had decided not to engage in press exchanges and did not take part in the programme.
11. On the President's invitation, the Bishop and some members of the Status Implementation Committee attended a meeting at State Lodge on 19<sup>th</sup> September. Our position was strongly put forward by the Bishop who mentioned some of the derisory remarks made by officials of the Ministry during the radio programme. The President apologised for discourtesies shown. He seemed keen on reaching a compromise. The Bishop mentioned that some approaches had been made by the Minister who had reneged leaving him doubtful of the Ministry's sincerity.
12. The discussions continued and at the end it was decided to prepare a press release. We moved into one of the rooms where further discussions and the drafting took place. The release highlighted agreement on three points- (1) intensification of negotiation on privatization of SLGS (2) all modalities to be completed before 1<sup>st</sup> September 2007 (3) school to continue as Government-Assisted in the interim. A copy of the release is also sent with this update.
13. SIC held an emergency meeting later in the day for us to take a closer look at the issues and chart the way forward. We decided to engage the Ministry and State Lodge strongly on the matter for it to be completed by May 2007. We also decided to meet the staff and parents who had been very supportive of our stand.
14. School re-opened on 27<sup>th</sup> September and pupils are paying last year's fees, Refunds will be made to those who had paid the new fees.
15. There is a feeling of disappointment that the change could not take place in 2006 and has been deferred to 2007 with all its political uncertainties. We have to be strongly proactive in our communications and discussions with the Ministry and State Lodge for our goal to be achieved.
16. The SIC is still in existence but we recognize that the recent disappointment will dampen the enthusiasm of some of our partners. We need to revive our spirits and maintain a united stand. The points which you raised about dependence on fees are important and have been brought to the Committee's attention.
17. The funds that were sent through Mr Archie Ayo Davies have been received and are still intact. We await your instructions on how they should now be treated.
18. Also, we use this opportunity to again request your written authority for the sale of the School Bus which the Association donated in 1991 and which has been in a garage for the last three to four years.
19. Please convey our thanks and greetings to all Regentonians in North America. Let us continue to work closely for the development of our Alma Mater.

FLOREAT REGENTONIA – GOD BLESS OUR GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

SIERRA LEONE  
GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
A. J. Lesite  
-Principal-

29<sup>th</sup> September, 2006

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