



No: 326/2019

Date: 2nd May 2019

PICARDO RECEIVES TEACHERS' LETTER

The Chief Minister of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, today received a group, made up in large measure of individuals who were not members of the teaching profession, who had processed up Main Street to deliver an NASUWT letter to Mr Picardo. The letter had previously been widely circulated.

The Chief Minister had returned to the office from a personal, family, engagement in order to receive the already public communication from the teachers. He was joined by Minister for Education, Hon Professor John Cortes MP.

Professor Cortes said: "I am working very closely with the Chief Minister in matters relating to these claims being made by teachers and the huge investment we are making in education. It is untrue and unfair for the Union to suggest otherwise. They are wrong to do so and they are misleading their members by seeking to pretend that there is any difference between my approach and that of Mr Picardo. No other Chief Minister has ever been as supportive of investment in the infrastructure of Education in Gibraltar and of teachers as a whole.

The Chief Minister said: "I have already seen the content of the letter but I wanted to be here to receive those demonstrating. We have always treated unions and teachers with respect and will continue to do so. I wrote a lengthy Bulletin to all teachers last week and will respond to this latest communication as soon as possible, especially given that it contains a number of important material inaccuracies and untrue and unfair characterisations which need to be corrected for the benefit of the general public and, in particular, the whole of the teaching profession, as I cannot allow them to be misled in respect of these important matters.

We continue to work on the pay claims the teachers' Union has made, as well as the Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) review, although the Union has withdrawn its previously agreed cooperation in respect of that work.

If the Union instead cooperated with that work, as it had agreed to do, it would potentially be possible to resolve matters more quickly.

Additionally, I am not surprised to see the GSD jump on the wagon of any demonstration or industrial unrest but I note the hypocritical position taken by Mr Azopardi and Mr Clinton in supporting any party that has a claim against the Government. It shows that Mr Azopardi, Mr



Clinton and the GSD talk about prudence with the public finances and cutting expenditure in the public sector only when they think they can get away with it. The minute they see someone with a claim and a whistle, they get spooked, and ignore the potential costs to tax payers and the consequences on the public finances and they tell us to agree the union's claim without any full consideration of the consequences. That's the cheap politics we are getting used to from this 'new GSD,'

My job as Chief Minister is to ensure that I enter into agreements that work for those making claims, the teaching profession in this case, and for the tax payer in a way that is objectively justifiable. But what the GSD has done today has effectively served only to politicise the teachers' claim and make it politically more complex.

Given that the GSD made almost zero investment in new schools in the time that they were in office, their politicising of this discussion between the teachers' Union and the government is a transparent attempt to jump on the band-wagon which seeks to bring a partisan division to the equation. No one in the teaching profession will thank them for that!"