

Serious Concerns Regarding the Candidacy of George Sirk

It is difficult for those of us who have experienced sexual harassment or abuse, or know those who have, to come forward. However, we believe that sharing our stories helps others who have had similar experiences to feel seen and acknowledged, and that normalizing these conversations helps our culture to change for the better.

Last year, a young woman filed a workplace sexual harassment claim against George Sirk. She said she felt threatened and unsafe in her workplace because of sexual comments that he made to her in and out of their workplace. As Cortes is a small community, she said this also affected her feelings of safety and confidence in other spaces on the island. Although this was not a circumstance of physical assault or violence, any form of sexual harassment is inappropriate and harmful. This type of behaviour is not acceptable in any workplace, and is especially unacceptable in someone being considered for public office. Reputations should be built on honest assessments of behaviour, and our community is not served by having incidents like this hidden from view, where we cannot acknowledge, learn or heal from them. During an election process, bringing forward an experience like this can feel particularly volatile. Yet, it is important to know the truth, so that we can make informed decisions at the ballot.

Electing this individual as Regional Director would mean that his interactions with community members would carry professional connotations. We would personally feel very uncomfortable bringing any of our ideas or concerns to someone with allegations of engaging inappropriately towards women. We are concerned that many other women would share this discomfort, making it difficult for a significant portion of our island population to safely access representation.

We feel that it is important to consider how barriers to democratic participation negatively affect our long-term health as a community. Our Regional Director is our voice and our representation in local government. If a significant portion of the population are positioned to feel unsafe bringing ideas and concerns to this individual, our democratic process will be jeopardized.

Signed,
Brittany Baxter
Sheena
Mercedes Grant

Out of respect for those of us who have experienced sexual violence, we ask that readers take some time to sit with this information before responding. It might be helpful to read through the following resources, especially if this message is triggering feelings of defensiveness, dismissiveness, or anger.

[Educational Resources on Understanding Consent, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault](#)

[How We Can End Sexual Harassment In The Workplace \(TED Talk - Gretchen Carlson\)](#)

[Violence Against Women: It's A Men's Issue \(TED Talk - Jackson Katz\)](#)

[7 Things You Might Think Are Consent That Aren't \(BUSTLE\)](#)

[When You Experience Sexual Harassment At Work \(New York Times\)](#)

[The Reckoning: Teaching About the #MeToo Moment and Sexual Harassment With Resources From The New York Times](#)

[Teach Consent \(Online Resource Guide for Parents and Children\)](#)

[Renowned Therapist Explains The Crushing Effects of Patriarchy on Women and Men Today \(Psychology Today\)](#)