



**MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECTORAL DEBATE**

2014 – 2015

*Theme: Local Government: Driving Economic Growth
and Development*

Presented by:

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At:

Gordon House

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Speaker...

I give thanks to the Almighty for His continued guidance.

I must thank the Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller for the opportunity to serve the people of Jamaica.

I want to thank my family for their continued support and advice.

Mr. Speaker, I must thank my Councillors Bailey, Purcell and Knight, my Executive Members and my constituents for their faith in me, as their representative for South Western Clarendon. I continue to crave their support as we work together to develop the constituency and the parish.

I wish to thank the Minister of State, Hon. Colin Fagan, for his support, and the work that he is doing, especially with regard to the Jamaica Fire Brigade. I also wish to extend gratitude to the Acting Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Dione Jennings and the staff at the Ministry for their hard work and dedication.

I must also thank the Mayors, Councillors Local Authorities and Agencies, who continue to serve our people in so many ways.

Special thanks to my support staff, both at the Ministry and in the constituency, my security team and driver for your continued support and dedication.

Mr. Speaker the Local Government agenda requires the input and assistance of stakeholders both locally and internationally.

In this regard, I want to express my gratitude to our International Development Partners and donor agencies for the significant contribution to this country.

I want to also thank my colleagues for their support, and you Mr. Speaker, along with your staff for the guidance you so ably provide.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, a famous actor once said, “I’ve always found that anything worth achieving will always have obstacles in the way and you’ve got to have that drive and determination to overcome those obstacles on route to whatever it is that you want to accomplish”.

There are many obstacles in fulfilling the mandate of the Ministry Mr. Speaker, but we are determined to succeed. Last year we continued and expanded the Local Economic Development programme which is aimed at creating opportunities for growth and development in our communities.

We have also advanced the governance structure to provide for a transparent and accountable system of local government. This Mr. Speaker is the platform for local sustainable development. We have made significant strides in these areas and I will elaborate later on in my presentation.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by addressing the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) and the issues surrounding the recent fire at the Riverton Disposal Site.

I wish to express, once again, my deep regret to those persons whose health was affected, and to the students who were affected negatively from the postponement of the GSAT Examinations. At the same time, I must say thanks to our Agencies, other public and private sector partners who worked with us to extinguish the fire.

I wish to announce an increase in the reward of J\$50,000 by Crime Stop to J\$300,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons involved in starting the fires at Riverton Disposal Site.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform this honourable House that there is a Strategic Business Plan 2015-2018 and an Operational Plan 2015-2016 which guides the activities of the NSWMA. The Operational Plan is reviewed quarterly. Permit me to highlight aspects of the Operational Plan that we have been undertaking:

The short to medium term plan includes but not limited to:

1. Covering the Riverton Disposal Site
2. Re-establishing tipping cells and roads to access the cells
3. Installing fire suppression equipment
4. The construction of the Riverton access road using concrete
5. Removing the stock of tyres from the Disposal Site
6. Separation of waste (plastic, organic)

7. Insert pipes to extract methane gas
8. Increase the number of trucks for collection

Mr Speaker, we have completed the covering of the Site. We will re-establish tipping cells, utilizing one cell at a time, not exceeding five acres, and obtain cover material for the cells, in keeping with the Environmental Permit granted by the National Environment Planning Agency (NEPA). The cells will be covered once per month. The covering of the cells will greatly enhance the containment of any fire. This system will be replicated at all 8 disposal sites.

The fire was set, Mr. Speaker, just after we procured fire suppression equipment to be placed on site to combat this sort of incident. The first piece of equipment delivered was a pump, which was actually used to extract water from the Duhaney River. We started the process of constructing a 125,000 gallon water tank, and of importing galvanized pipes and supporting infrastructure before the fire occurred.

The fire suppression system will be fully operational by August this year. A similar system will be installed at the Retirement Disposal Site in St. James in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker last year we announced that the Ministry had initiated discussions with the Mexican Government to construct a concrete access road to the Riverton Waste Disposal site. I am happy to announce to this honourable House that approval has officially been given for US\$1.8 Million to execute the project. We anticipate that the procurement process will proceed smoothly to facilitate the commencement of during this fiscal year.

Jamaica imports a large volume of tyres each year and at the end of their useful life they end up on the disposal site.

This presents a clear and present danger and as such we are making every effort to reduce the stock of tyres at all the disposal sites across the country. I am currently in discussions with potential private sector partners, to secure appropriate arrangements for the management of disused tyres. We also recognize that security is a serious issue, and the current arrangements are being reviewed with the Security Forces.

Mr. Speaker, 55% of the waste collected by NSWMA is organic and therefore the careful management of this waste is critical to the effort to reduce the buildup of methane gas, and incidents of spontaneous combustion. In this regard I am urging citizens who can utilize more of your organic waste eg. lawn and garden cuttings and kitchen waste for composting, to do so.

Mr. Speaker, the medium term plan includes the divestment of the existing disposal sites to facilitate waste management solutions.

As it relates to the divestment of the sites, 2 Requests for Proposals for the utilization of waste were issued without success. We will however be approaching the investment community again, given the positive responses we have received from the invitations for Expressions of Interest. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise that Cabinet has approved the establishment and authorization of an Enterprise Team to select the preferred waste management service provider.

Mr. Speaker, the regulatory powers of the NSWMA will also be strengthened with the conclusion of the passage of the National Solid Waste Management (Public Cleansing) Regulations, 2015 and the National Solid Waste Management Authority (Disposal of Solid Waste) Regulations, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, while there is no doubt the state has a critical role to play in achieving a modern and effective waste management system for Jamaica, for too

long our citizens have been careless in the way they dispose of their waste. We have all seen Jamaicans from every walk of life throwing garbage from car windows, at the side of the road and into gullies and rivers. These practices make the job of garbage collection much more difficult, lengthy and expensive, as well as presenting a public health hazard.

The Ministry has taken note of the '*Nuh Dutty up Jamaica*' campaign spearheaded by the Jamaica Environment Trust with funding from the Tourism Enhancement Fund and we intend to support and expand this programme.

Discussions have already begun in this regard, Mr. Speaker. We must change the way Jamaicans regard garbage as we seek to change behaviour. We cannot continue to compromise the health of our citizens, put life and property at risk when drains are blocked because of irresponsible disposal of garbage, threatens our tourism product and discourage investors with our dirty streets and cities.

As a result Mr. Speaker, I will be taking to this House shortly, a resolution to amend the monetary penalties associated with littering in public places.

The current fleet of compactors is woefully inadequate, both in the public and private sector. In recognition of this deficiency, J\$250 Million will be provided to acquire 10 new units, and to repair existing fleet.

This will enable more communities to be included on the schedule for collection.

Mr. Speaker, owing to recent resignations the Board of the Agency has to be reconstituted and I will announce the members in short order.

LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Mr. Speaker, Local Economic Development is one of the priority programmes of this Ministry aligned to creating maximum value through economic activity at the community level for our people. The objective is to mobilize the communities to advance the country's growth agenda.

Cottage industries have always been a part of the fabric of the Jamaican society and are the blueprint for fulfilling the vision of economic liberation through community entrepreneurial activities.

One of our Local Economic Development initiatives is the Caribbean Local Economic Development Project (CARILED), which is a partnership between the Governments of Jamaica and Canada.

- This project is transforming the lives of individuals and communities through entrepreneurship. Nearly 340-thousand Canadian dollars, or J\$30 million has been spent to support various projects, which have generated opportunities for over 500 people, in a range of interests including banana cultivation, juice production, training of fisher folk, irrigation systems and crop storage.
- It is also building the capacity of Local Authorities in collaboration with local partners to promote and support Local Economic Development.

A key partner in this objective is the Social Development Commission (SDC) our portfolio agency, in implementing Local Economic Development projects.

These development projects include recycling, banana cultivation, juice production, irrigation systems and crop storage in 6 Local Authorities.

One of the outcomes of the CARILED Project is the identification of and support to the creation of Business Improvement Districts (BIDS). In this regard Mr. Speaker the Manager of the Toronto Business Improvement Areas recently visited several sites in six parishes and also conducted a workshop for local government officials.

Mr. Speaker, these improvement districts have the potential to transform the towns within which they operate to enhance the safety, look and feel of their neighbourhoods. This will in turn attract new businesses to the area, create employment opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship. We await the Consultant's report and recommendations for further action.

In this context, the Ministry through the *SDC* is currently facilitating another initiative under the Local Economic Development Support Programme. I would wish to mention a community initiative, Ambassebeth Eco-Cabins in the Rio Grande Valley about 15 miles south of Port Antonio which is owned and operated by the Bowden Pen Farmers Association.

Mr. Speaker, Ambassabeth eco-cabins and the Cunha Cunha Pass Heritage Trail are the primary income generating activities of the Association, supporting the work carried out by the organization and assisting in improving the livelihood of members and the residents as a whole. This model is workable, practical and very relevant at this period of our history.

The Ministry through the *Social Development Commission* is currently involved in over 74 projects across the island, under the Local Economic Development Support Programme (LEDSP) with a net worth of over J\$450 million.

Mr. Speaker, the adage of “not giving a man a fish but teaching him how to fish” must become this government’s mantra. We are cognizant of the need to empower and awaken the spirit of entrepreneurship within the people to take responsibility for crafting their destiny. This Government is committed to and will be the facilitators of community transformation and economic growth through community enterprises.

Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to highlight some of the successes to date.

In preparation for the program, 27 SDC officers were trained and certified in social entrepreneurship and business development by the Mona school of business at the University of the West Indies, additionally scores of community persons have received training in models for business development in island wide workshops organized by the SDC.

Community projects in agriculture, beekeeping/apiculture, craft, food processing, plastic bottle recycling and water harvesting among others have received assistance to guide the development of business plans to identify viable and sustainable economic enterprises.

I wish to mention the Fairy Hill Nature’s Handmade Paper Products in Portland which is a paper recycling project, the greenhouse, ginger, uniform manufacturing, pig rearing and brick making projects at Old Folly in St. Ann, the Mount Peto, Axe and Adze Citizens Association in Hanover involved in spices and confectionary, the St. Mary Parish Development Committee’s Plastic Recycling Project, and the Southaven Water Harvesting and Cash Crops project in St. Thomas. These projects currently have combined net worth of over \$33 million.

The next step will be assisting the viable community economic enterprises to directly source grants and loan funding locally and internationally.

Mr. Speaker I am pleased to announce that the Most Honourable Prime Minister will officially launch the Local Economic Development Support Programme next month.

The recently-launched *Enterprise Assistance Programme* by the Kingston & St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC) is another prime example Mr. Speaker. Through this programme, economic enterprises are exposed to a productivity-oriented culture, through the teaching and implementation of proven business principles and standards.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS AND THE AMANDA

Mr. Speaker, Jamaica's ranking has significantly improved from 94 to 58 of 189 countries in the World Bank's Doing Business 2015 report.

Jamaica's rating of 26 for the category "*Dealing with Construction Permits*", is a significant improvement over the rating of 52 in the 2014 Report.

In the last quarter of 2014, 1048 applications valued at \$12.3 billion, were received for building permits by Local Authorities. 93.4% or 979, valued at \$10.6 billion were approved, with 873 approved within 90 days. For the 2014 calendar year, 4,831 applications were received, 4824 approved, with 3795, or 78.6%, approved inside 90 days.

We have now completed successfully the installation of the Application Management and Data Automation (AMANDA) system in all Local Authorities, the Jamaica Fire Brigade and ODPEM. This Ministry is making its presence felt in positive ways Mr. Speaker.

The AMANDA system is requiring greater compliance by developers as well as professionals in the land development and construction fields. Mr. Speaker, this has significantly resulted in reduced development approval time and increased customer satisfaction.

Our work is facilitating everything, from a new idea for an agricultural project, to a new hotel in our highest foreign exchange earning sector – the tourism industry. Local Government is no longer at the fringes Mr. Speaker...we are on the frontline of economic development.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH ROAD REHABILITATION

Mr. Speaker as our former Prime Minister PJ Patterson once said, *'the road to development is the development of roads'*, Local government is facilitating just that. We are on the frontline in communities such as Kelly Pen and Springvale in St. Catherine, where recently I had the pleasure of opening newly rehabilitated roads under the Parochial Roads Programme.

These roads were among 68 done last year, at a cost of J\$416 million, and they have allowed students to return to school and saved the economies of these and surrounding areas. This year, Mr. Speaker, we will be implementing an island-wide, Parochial Road Spray-Patching Programme for which a MOU between the Ministry and the NWA has been signed.

MARKETS REHABILITATION PROGRAMME

Mr. Speaker, markets are generators of economic and social activity. With this in mind, the Ministry along with public and private sector partners embarked on a number of initiatives under the ‘Markets Rehabilitation Programme’.

The most extensive project in this regard was the Black River Market, which was completed and officially opened in December 2014.

It now boasts a state of the art facility with spacious, attractive and suitably designed infrastructure for both vendors and customers. Mr. Speaker, the project had no cost overruns and was completed within budget.

In addition, rehabilitation works were implemented at the following Markets, Coronation, May Pen, Rocky Point, Linstead and Charles Gordon. This year, Mr. Speaker, we will continue the rehabilitation programme with works at the Ocho Rios, Santa Cruz and Port Maria Markets. Through public/private partnership arrangements Mandeville market is being considered for reconstruction. Our overall aim is to rehabilitate our markets around the country.

OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Speaker, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), continues to undertake critical duties as the national disaster risk management co-ordination Agency.

The role of the ODPEM has been significantly strengthened with the passage of the **Disaster Risk Management Act, 2014**. The Act reflects modern strategic,

administrative and legal approaches consistent with current best practices in contemporary disaster management.

It addresses among other things, the circumstances in which a Specially Vulnerable Area may be declared, the means by which a National Alert System is activated, and the creation and funding of a National Disaster Fund.

Before the upcoming hurricane season there will be a special public education campaign to sensitize citizens on critical matters pertaining to their own preparedness and response.

Mr. Speaker, new Disaster Risk Management Groups have been established in 11 vulnerable communities across Jamaica, and requisite training conducted to strengthen their resilience profile.

Additionally Mr. Speaker,

- Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) were expanded and trained and community micro-mitigation projects implemented, along with the mapping of hazard prone areas and the development of community-based disaster management and mitigation plans.
- Early warning infrastructure, inclusive of surveillance cameras, was established in the Bog Walk Gorge, and systems were installed in Portmore for monitoring and early warning, especially in relation to the disabled community.
- A national emergency telecommunications and public safety network, along with a national search and rescue plan, are now being developed.

Mr. Speaker, We will also launch the National Safe Schools Initiative for schools and child care facilities, and the National Simulation Training Exercise Programme

(NSTEP) at the end of this calendar year. This is a critical benchmark of national acceptance of safety standards and therefore, of national preparedness. I am looking forward to this initiative, as ODPEM continues to preserve lives and property.

STREETLIGHTING PROGRAMME

There is no question, Mr. Speaker that the preservation and enhancement of public safety requires proper lighting in public spaces. Last year I reported to this honourable House that a Request for Proposal (RFP) would be issued for the retrofitting of the streetlights with efficient Light Emitting Diode (LED). These will reduce the power consumption and cost of service by over 60%.

The RFP was delayed to enable legal review and assessment options for structuring and financing the LED street lighting project. The IDB/DBJ will finalize the consultant's report by the end of April.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the lengthy delay, the programme was referred to the Energy Sector Enterprise Team (ESET) to assist in finding an amicable solution. Our objective is to have the existing streetlights replaced over a period of 12 months once the service provider is chosen.

I want to assure everyone that I will keep the House and the country advised, as we move to satisfy public demand for *better security through better lighting*, in their business and residential communities.

PROPERTY TAX COLLECTION

I wish to speak briefly about Property Taxes Mr. Speaker. It is the largest source of revenue dedicated to the Ministry in providing services to the people. We worked diligently to meet the collection target of J\$7.26 billion. I am pleased to announce that we exceeded the revenue target, and collected J\$7.447 billion, as at March 31.

I must commend our citizens, staff of the Ministry, the Property Tax Team, the Local Authorities and our partners, Tax Administration Jamaica, for the hard work done to make this possible. There is one caution I must emphasize Mr. Speaker.

The achievement of the revenue target is encouraging, but the reality is that *at least J\$10 billion was due last year*. I cannot overstate the importance of Property Tax and in particular, its contribution to public cleansing and the provision of streetlights.

With regard to the latter, **Mr. Speaker, we will this year, install 500 LED-powered Streetlights in various communities island-wide, with the special consideration given to the six parishes with the best rate of property tax compliance.** These parishes are Kingston/St. Andrew, Portmore (Portmore is treated as a stand-alone, separate from St. Catherine), Hanover, St. James, St. Mary and Westmoreland.

Special commendations to the KSAC for being the top performing Local Authority in terms of Property Tax collection. The KSAC will be awarded J\$5 Million to execute special projects.

The LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

One of our most important commitments to the people of Jamaica was that this Administration would accelerate Local Government Reform. Mr. Speaker, after many years of debate and consultation for the inclusion of a democratic system of Local Government in the constitution, we brought the Constitution (Amendment) (Local Government) Act, 2014 to this House for debate and passage.

Mr. Speaker, when we vote on this Bill next month, we will entrench the system of Local Government in the Constitution of Jamaica.

We have also gone far down the wicket in developing the three strategic laws, which will connect the dots of Local Government Reform in a practical way.

The Local Governance Bill; the Local Government (Unified Service and Employment) Bill; and the Local Government (Financing and Financial Management) Bill, are expected to be tabled for consideration and passage in this House.

I also wish to advise Mr. Speaker, that the National Building Bill has been approved by the Legislation Committee and following consideration by Cabinet will be tabled in this House in this parliamentary year. It will provide a modern framework for the effective regulation and management of buildings and building related activity, to ensure safety in the built environment and the promotion of sustainable development.

We will continue to liaise with the office of the Parliamentary Counsel in advancing the Legislative Agenda.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development is working to make our communities the heartbeat of national development. I accept the challenges of this portfolio, with the unwavering aim of transforming Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, more and greater duties await us, as we work to satisfy the demands of the Jamaican citizens. We will surmount the challenges and strive to provide common services efficiently and effectively.

We will build on the achievements in Local Government Reform, and ensure that we always observe the rule of law and standards of governance. With the help of every member of the Local Government system, the support of our communities, the support of this Parliament and the blessings of the Almighty, we will drive economic growth and development at the local level.

Noel Arscott MP

Minister of Local Government and Community Development

April 22, 2015