

**STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BY THE HON. DESMOND
McKENZIE, MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT**

August 11, 2020

Mr. Speaker...

- On July 15, I announced the easing of restrictions to allow the gradual return of entertainment events, effective July 21. It was made very clear that all the public health protocols among other rules, had to be followed so that this breathing space could be expanded.
- Let me be frank Mr. Speaker. I am very disappointed that after all the consultations that were had with the stakeholders in the entertainment sector, and the very public knowledge of the danger of COVID-19, breaches have been the norm since the relaxations took effect. In many instances events are being held without any permit even being sought from the local authorities. In other cases where permits were issued, the terms and conditions were blatantly disregarded by the promoters.
- Accordingly, after further discussions with players in the entertainment sector and other stakeholders, since that time and up to this week, I am announcing today, **revised protocols to govern the hosting of small outdoor events**. The intention is

to bring order to the window of opportunity that the Government has created for the sector, while more stringently enforcing the rules and ensuring that offenders are penalized for their misdeeds.

- In other words Mr. Speaker, this window of opportunity, this breathing space for the entertainment sector, will only remain open to those promoters, hosts and patrons who obey the rules.
- **Let me also say Mr. Speaker the public has a responsibility to ensure that the events they attend have been granted official permission. People who attend events that are in breach can be prosecuted under the Disaster Risk Management Act.**
- These revised protocols of course contain all the health protocols that apply to the use of public spaces, including social distancing, the wearing of masks and sanitizing. There are other requirements however, that I ask this House to pay keen attention to.

Revised Protocols for Small Outdoor Events

- ❖ Small outdoor events (such as small outdoor concerts, parties, tailgate parties, round robins, launches and festivals) **with the necessary permits** will be allowed **every Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday between the hours of 6.00am to 10.00pm.**

- ❖ **Applications for permits must be made to the Municipal Corporations at least fifteen (15) days before the date of the event.**
- ❖ A committee will be established at each Municipal Corporation to receive and review all applications. This committee will consist of officials from the Municipal Corporations, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, Jamaica Fire Brigade and the Ministry of Health.
- ❖ A copy of any permit that is granted must be prominently displayed at the entrance of the venue, at least eight (8) hours before the event is scheduled to begin. This is where members of the public can protect themselves by looking out for the permit.
- ❖ **All promotions for events must include COVID-19 protocols referring specifically to wearing of masks, sanitization and physical distancing.** The promoters and patrons must observe government orders regarding closure before curfew times, sanitization protocols, physical distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals, mandatory wearing of masks and temperature checks especially on entry.
- ❖ The number of persons at the event at any time shall not exceed whichever is lower of:
 - a. 230 persons, with 200 being patrons and 30 being performers or event staff; or

b. such number as would, based on the square footage of the venue, ensure compliance with the physical distancing requirement.

- ❖ **There shall be audible public announcements every 15 minutes during the event, reminding patrons to wear masks when not drinking or eating, and to observe physical distancing protocols.**
- ❖ There will be more stringent monitoring of the management of these events Mr. Speaker. In this regard, the promoters or hosts of all events are required to give full access to designated officials from the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Municipal Corporations and the Jamaica Constabulary Force. These officials will display proper identification.
- ❖ **Any person, venue and/or sound system found to be in breach of the permit granted will be barred for six months from obtaining a permit for entertainment events.**
- ❖ **Any promoter, venue, sound system owner or operator who fails to comply with these protocols, is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$1million and/or 12 months' imprisonment under the Disaster Risk Management Act.**

- Mr. Speaker, the Government has been working tirelessly since March to contain COVID-19. As part of the containment strategy, we have encouraged all our citizens to follow the health rules and to be personally responsible.
- It is clear however that even as we gradually reopen the economy and society, there are those who seem determined to make this process as difficult as possible. However, we are working to improve compliance, so that our people can enjoy themselves in a safe way.

BEACHES AND RIVERS

- Mr. Speaker, I must say that the Government remains concerned about the use of our beaches and rivers. Activities at 17 beaches and 19 rivers are of particular concern. These include the Alligator Pond Beach, the Spanish River and the Noisy River.
- We will be inviting the operators of these and other facilities to meet with us, as we work to make these spaces safer for our people.
- Thank You Mr. Speaker.