



Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

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NEWSLETTER

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Digicel Gifts Ministry Public Hand Wash Stations

KINGSTON, Jamaica: As the Government continues to implement strategies to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development will install handwashing stations in selected public spaces across Jamaica.

Honourable Desmond McKenzie made the announcement during an official ceremony to mark the handover by Digicel Jamaica of 100 handwashing stations to promote effective sanitization habits. The first installed station is now located at the entrance to the Golden Age Home in Vineyard Town, Kingston.

He stated that the placement of that handwashing station is significant, as while visits to Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes are still prohibited, essential care workers and other service providers are subject to strict disease prevention protocols.

"A handwashing station will be installed at Cross Roads. In addition, there will be a handwashing station at every Municipal Corporation building, and at every Infirmary. This is a tremendous expression of what is possible when there is partnership between government at all levels and the private sector," the Local Government and Rural Development Minister said.



“Digicel continues to be a reliable and innovative partner, and a great corporate citizen. This Government has shown that it is active and acting against the COVID-19 pandemic, but it can't do it alone. In doing this, Digicel has shown its cognizance that the pandemic is no respecter of persons, and that we are all in this fight together.”

The Minister also specially recognized the Department and Agency of the Ministry, the Board of Supervision (BOS) and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) respectively, for their frontline efforts in working with all levels of Government to control COVID-19. He also appealed for care to be taken to preserve the foot-operated devices, as members of the public get accustomed to their presence around the country.



Ban On Entertainment Events

-All Cays, Except Morant and Pedro, Ordered Closed

Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, says that no permits have been granted by the municipal corporations for parties and events anywhere in Jamaica, and the staging of these

illegal activities will be stopped by the police. A ban has been placed on the staging of parties and events as part of measures to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Minister McKenzie said that despite the ban, more than 300 events are being held every week, right across the country, in total breach of the health and safety protocols.

“There have been bike shows, wakes and grave-digging ceremonies, church services with numbers that have exceeded the requirement, round robins and street dances,” he noted.

Mr. McKenzie said that the Ministry is also seeing a worrying decline in the levels of compliance by operators of community bars and taverns, and there are nightclubs, especially in the Corporate Area, operating in defiance of the protocols.

“These are venues registered as restaurants that are, in fact, operating as nightclubs, in addition to nightclubs being run under the disguise of restaurants.” The Minister also highlighted that he is aware of a trend by promoters to use private pages on Facebook and other social media platforms to promote these illegal parties.

“I also want to thank all the persons who have been reporting breaches to me, to the Ministry, and also sharing what they know on social media. We continue to work to ensure public health and safety as we navigate and manage this pandemic.”

The Disaster Risk Management Order number 17 will remain in force until February 1, 2021. The Order imposes a ban on nightclubs and on parties of all kinds. The 17 beaches and 19 rivers that were ordered closed last August will remain closed.

Additionally, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) has announced the immediate closure of all Cays, except for Morant and Pedro Cays. The decision was announced following joint discussions between the Ministers of Local Government and Rural Development as well as National Security, and the relevant Municipal Corporation.

The closure order is effective from January 19, 2021 to February 1, 2021. There have been a range of incidents involving persons using offshore locations for hosting parties in breach of the Disaster Risk Management Order. The ODPEM is reminding the public that no activities should take place at these locations as the Government seek to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19. Morant and Pedro Cays are exempted as they fall within a specific legislation that zone those areas for fishing and give stipulations for

operation. This designation is contained in the Morant and Pedro Cays Act of 1971 which reads that the Cays “shall, for all purposes other than taxation, be deemed to be within and form part of the parish of Kingston”.

The Jamaica Defence Force Coast Guard and the Jamaica Constabulary Force’s Marine Police will continue to rigorously monitor the Cays and all other locations to enforce the laws and ensure that the public is conforming to the established COVID-19 protocols.

Persons are urged to adhere to the regulations under the Disaster Risk Management Act 2015 and do the following:

- 1. Obey all orders under the Disaster Risk Management Enforcement Orders**
- 2. Wear a Mask in all Public Spaces**
- 3. Sanitize and or wash your hands as often as possible**
- 4. Maintain physical distance of at least 6 feet**

Board of Supervision and Its Staff Enhances Care of the Vulnerable



The Ministry’s Board of Supervision (BOS), through its Poor Relief Departments, continue to enhance the care of the vulnerable - inclusive of the residents of the infirmaries and golden age homes as well as the homeless population – through its welfare and nutritional programmes.

The BOS will expend approximately J\$22 million at the end of the 2020/2021 fiscal year on its initiatives. In December, a soup kitchen was opened in Kingston to cater to people who reside on the streets. A makeshift facility was opened in March 2020 but the number of those homeless has been increasing.

“ The numbers have grown over the past couple of months. We have been feeding close to 700 or more persons on a daily basis, two meals a day, plus a care package. The Government has provided the funds to ensure that we are able to continue the programme going into the end of this financial year. We are committed to continue the programme,” said Minister Desmond McKenzie.

“This facility, the shelter, renovation and building the kitchen, putting the equipment in, we provided over \$14 million to the Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation, and I want to make the point that they have used the funds that were provided by the ministry and they have not asked for a cent over the budget they had submitted to the Ministry for the construction and operation of the facility. Mayor, I want to thank you for the management.”

There are more than 2000 Jamaicans living on the streets, most of whom are in the Corporate Area.

Since COVID-19 protocols were imposed in March, a significant number of persons have been living in the streets. The Marie Atkins shelter on Hanover Street has been accommodating the homeless, however, many of them prefer the streets. The Church Street-based shelter where the soup kitchen is located, provides refuge for more than 100 persons, many of them with mental challenges.

Some 700 homeless persons are served two meals per day, six days per week in the Downtown Kingston area and feeding is extended to persons in Half-Way Tree, New Kingston and Cross Roads.

The BOS has also employed four physiotherapists to work in the infirmaries with the residents. Physiotherapy is a critical service for the elderly and is now on the establishment of the Ministry.

There is now full operation at the newly constructed J\$19 million St. Thomas Drop-In Centre in Morant Bay, which caters to at least 30 homeless through the provision of two meals per day, hygiene needs, mental health assessment and medical treatment.

The BOS has direct responsibility for poor relief services inclusive of the infirmaries and golden-age homes. The infirmaries and golden-age homes are operated and managed by the municipal corporations.

Parliamentary Motion Tabled to Make Portmore 15th Parish



it a parish. Two months after the elections, we have begun the process of delivering on this commitment.”

“ Minister McKenzie said he has no doubt that the people of Portmore are eagerly anticipating this development. ”

“ There have been discussions about doing something special for Portmore for many years, even before it was made a Municipality in 2003. I lived in Portmore for many years, and I can attest to the fact that the residents see themselves in a special way, have a special sense of belonging to the area, and are looking forward to this form of civic, cultural and economic development. ”

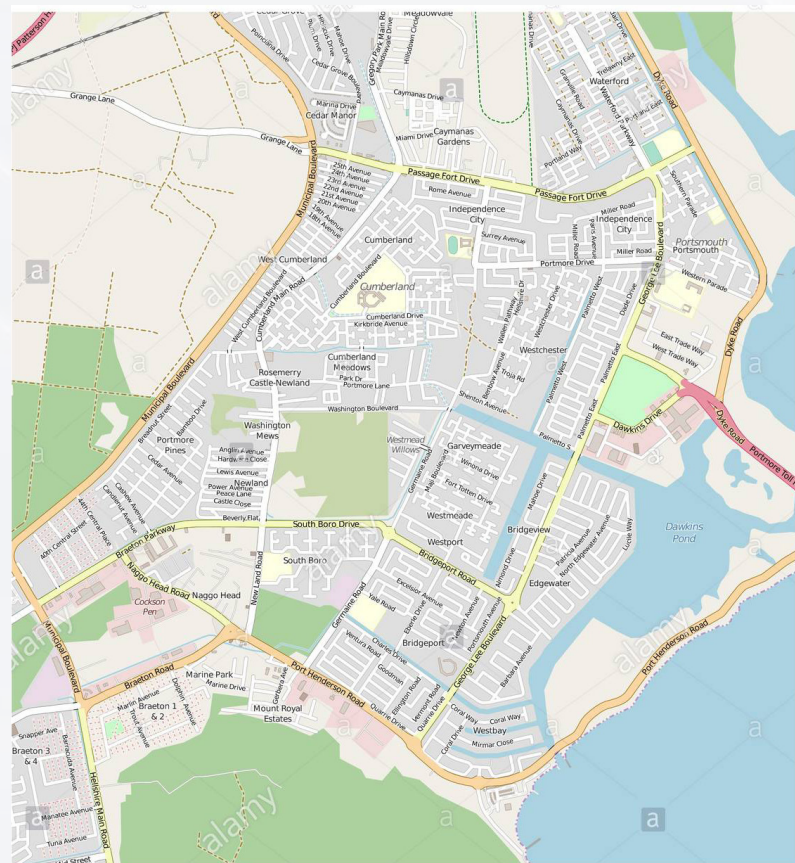
Having promised to take steps to make the Portmore Municipality Jamaica’s fifteenth parish, the Government has started the official process to make it happen. Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, tabled a Motion in the House of Representatives on November 3 to empower Parliament to consider and report on this important proposal.

The Motion calls for a Joint Select Committee to be formed to deliberate on the benefits of making Portmore a parish, and for that Joint Select Committee to have the authority to invite submissions from any stakeholders considered relevant to the process.

A Joint Select Committee is comprised of Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Local Government and Rural Development Minister said the size and special features of Portmore make it suitable to be a parish.

“ This is the largest dormitory community in the Caribbean, with hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. Apart from the sheer numbers of people who live there, the space contains attractions, emerging social amenities and a wide variety of businesses, educational and religious institutions that give it a special sense of identity. That is why you hear terms like ‘Sunshine City’ when Portmore is mentioned, ” he explained.

“ In campaigning for a renewed mandate...this Administration formally promised the people through our party’s Manifesto that given all the unique features of Portmore, and our desire to structure its development in a sustainable way that will benefit all its residents, that we will make



Highlights of the *National Day of Prayer*

at the Power of Faith Ministries Inc in Portmore, St. Catherine
St. Catherine on January 6, 2021



Rural Water Supply *Visit*

State Minister in the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Honourable Homer Davis and Member of St. Catherine South Central, Dr. Andrew Wheatley recently toured the Rural Water Supplies Limited's aquifer recharge system in Innswood, St. Catherine.



Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

This holiday season keep in touch with your loved ones by being *Virtually Connected* while *staying Physically Distant*

Stay home and voice or video chat with family members at any Infirmary or Golden Age Home. Find the contact number of the facility where your loved ones reside, dial and share the warmth of family.

Infirmary/Golden Age Home	Numbers to voice/video call
VINEYARD TOWN GOLDEN AGE HOME	876-393-9992, 876-393-9988, 876-571-4794, 876-551-2383
ST. THOMAS INFIRMARY	876-393-9860, 876-393-9867
PORTLAND INFIRMARY	876-393-9859, 876-393-9858
ST. MARY INFIRMARY	876-393-9820, 876-393-9826
ST. ANN INFIRMARY	876-393-9853, 876-393-9842
TRELAWNY INFIRMARY	876-393-9838, 876-394-0002
ST. JAMES INFIRMARY	876-393-9922, 876-393-9920
HANOVER INFIRMARY	876-393-9904, 876-393-9915
WESTMORELAND INFIRMARY	876-393-9870, 876-393-9902
ST. ELIZABETH INFIRMARY	876-393-9939, 876-393-9931
MANCHESTER INFIRMARY	876-393-9940, 876-393-9946
CLARENDON INFIRMARY	876-393-9947, 876-393-9948
ST. CATHERINE INFIRMARY	876-393-9986, 876-393-9987
DENHAM TOWN GOLDEN AGE HOME	876-393-9952, 876-393-9984

Beaches & Rivers Ordered Closed
UNDER THE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT ORDER

Parish	Name of Beaches	Name of Rivers
Kingston and St. Andrew (6)	Bob Marley Beach	Cane River Falls Penfield River Grove River Cane River (Dallas) Hope River
St. Catherine (2)	Hellshire Beach	Caymanas River/Natures Paradise River
Clarendon (3)	Farquhar Beach	Salt River Cockpit River
Manchester (4)	Alligator Pond Beach	Alligator Pond River Noisy River (Oxford River) Gutts River
St. Elizabeth (1)	Great Bay Beach	
Westmoreland (3)	Bluefields Beach	Sweet River Roaring River
Trelawny (4)	Burwood Beach Jacobs Taylor Half Moon Bay Victoria/Charlott Beach	
St. Ann (4)	Ocho Rios Bay Beach Turtle Beach Fantasy Beach Cardiff Hall Beach Flavours Beach	Little Duns River
Portland (2)	Winnifred Beach Boston	
St. Mary (2)	Spanish Bridge River Blue Hole River-Cascade	
St. Thomas (3)	Yallahs River Reggae Falls Roaring River	
Total 35	16 Beaches	19 Rivers

Local Government Minister Tables Temporary Amendment to ROPA Bill

The Minister of Local Government and Rural Development piloted a Bill to amend the Representation of the People Act (ROPA) to effectively postpone the Local Government polls no later than February 2022.

The Bill entitled An Act to Temporarily Modify the Representation of the People Act was tabled in the House of Representatives.

The postponement is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its adverse economic conditions which worsened with the recent rains that resulted in widespread damage.

"It is clear that a greater period of time is needed for this recovery process. Accordingly, the Representation of the People Act is being temporarily amended, to facilitate the holding of the next Local Government Elections on a date no later than February 27, 2022," said Portfolio Minister,

Honourable Desmond McKenzie in his address to Parliament on Tuesday.

“As the Minister responsible for Local Government, and a member of the Government led by the Most Honourable Prime Minister, I wish to assure the House and the country of our commitment to having the next Local Government Elections, the 13th since Independence, within this amended timeframe.”

Local Government Elections were last held on November 28, 2016 when Councillors for 228 parochial divisions and the Mayor of Portmore were elected to serve at the local level. The 8th Schedule to the Local Governance Act provides a period of extension of 90 days commencing on the day after the fourth anniversary of the date on which the most recent election was held. This means that without the amendment, the next Local Government Elections were to be held no later than February 27, 2021.

the next Local Government Elections were to be held no later than February 27, 2021.

Minister McKenzie emphasized that the Government is fully engaged in managing the COVID-19 pandemic that heavily disrupted the economy and society.

“The primary focus is still that of observing the health and safety protocols and keeping infection rates as low as possible. In addition to this, the Government continues to respond to the effects of the adverse weather systems of the past few weeks, which has seen extensive damage to our road network. The damage to parochial roads alone is estimated at J\$1.5 billion,” he added.

“The Meteorological Service has advised that the forecast is for more rains past the end of the Atlantic Hurricane Season at the end of November, right into early 2021. The cost of staging elections at this time is also a major factor Madame Speaker, as the Government is responding to these realities in the context of financial constraints especially caused by COVID-19.”

JFB Encourages Persons to Report Leaking Fire Hydrants



JIS, Kingston: Acting Assistant Commissioner and Officer in Charge of the Fire Prevention Division of the Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB), Emelio Ebanks, is encouraging Jamaicans to report any leaking fire hydrants in their communities.

“Once you see water coming from a hydrant, go into the nearest fire station or call the nearest fire station and report it. You can also call us at the JFB headquarters and report it, especially if you are located in Kingston. The easy number to remember is (876) 922-0007,” Mr. Ebanks said during the JIS Television programme ‘Get the Facts’.

He noted that the information received will be sent to the Fire Prevention Division, adding that the situation will be logged, and a team will be dispatched to assess and carry out the repairs. Mr. Ebanks, who is also the Public Relations Manager at the JFB, emphasised that it is important to report fire hydrants that are not functioning properly.

“If it’s not functioning well, it is not going to serve its purpose, and in the event there is a fire in the particular area and that hydrant is not working properly, it will not be able to assist us and we will not be able to assist you as efficiently as we ought. So, it’s very important that you report all situations with fire hydrants,” he urged. Mr. Ebanks is also calling on Jamaicans not to damage or throw anything into any of the fire hydrants.

“We have gone on scenes and are about to couple up the hose on to the hydrant and when you look, there are juice boxes, food boxes and persons would have stuffed things down into the hydrant’s valve pit, which is the area you would turn to operate the hydrant from. All of these things will slow down the operation,” he added.

Meanwhile, the Jamaica Fire Brigade has been on a drive to repair fire hydrants across the island. Mr. Ebanks noted that when the JFB started this initiative, just over 30 per cent of the more than 15,000 fire hydrants islandwide were working. “At this time, about 70 to 80 per cent of those hydrants are working and I want to applaud the fire hydrant teams... they work relentlessly and around the clock to ensure that these numbers are up,” he said.

“As the premier emergency response agency, we have to ensure that a part of our corporate plan and operational plan is to ensure the efficiency of these fire hydrants,” Mr. Ebanks said.



Virtually Connected Initiative

Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes stay 'Virtually Connected'

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has launched the 'Virtually Connected While Staying Physically Distant' initiative aimed at linking residents at the infirmaries and golden age homes with their loved ones.

The initiative will utilize some 40 smartphones which were donated by telecommunications company, Digicel. Portfolio Minister, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, said the programme is well-needed as residents who normally received visitors have been unable to do so since March when a ban was placed on visits to stem the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will allow the homes to keep the phones and they will be able to use them on a regular basis when the residents desire, because it is not our intention right now to remove the restriction on visits," he disclosed during the launch of the programme in mid-December.

The Minister noted that once the phones have been set up, they will be sent to the various facilities. He also lauded Digicel for being a good corporate citizen.

"This is not the first major work with local government that Digicel has undertaken. Digicel spent over \$200 million in refurbishing the Coronation Market. In Half-Way Tree, the stalls around Nelson Mandela Park came out of a request by me, at the time as Mayor, to the then CEO of Digicel."

Public Relations and Communications Manager at Digicel, Elon Parkinson, said that the donation valued over J\$500,000.

"This is a pretty significant donation, not only in terms of the monetary value but when you consider how important connectivity is, especially during this time when so many of the persons who are housed in infirmaries still need to reach out to their family members," Parkinson noted.

The 'Virtually Connected While Staying Physically Distant' initiative is aimed at keeping the 1377 residents living in state-operated infirmaries and golden age homes socially connected with family and friends through technology.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Jamaica, a restriction on visits to these facilities was announced on March 13 as part of the Government's protocol to control the spread of the virus. The residents fall in the population of the most vulnerable due to age and other comorbidities.

By providing the 12 infirmaries and two golden age homes with the devices; residents will be able to interact with their loved ones during scheduled times using voice calls and video calls.

