



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA

# SECTORAL PRESENTATION

# 2021

GORDON HOUSE

TUESDAY MAY 18, 2021



PRESENTED BY:

*The Honourable  
Desmond Mc Kenzie, CD, MP, JP*



## MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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**“Implementing the national goal of recovering  
stronger through the institutions of local government”**





**“IMPLEMENTING  
THE NATIONAL GOAL OF RECOVERING  
STRONGER THROUGH  
THE INSTITUTIONS OF  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT”**

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THE HONOURABLE  
DESMOND MCKENZIE, CD, MP, JP





### Madam Speaker...

- ◆ I am privileged today, to make my fifth contribution to the Sectoral Debate as the Minister responsible for Local Government. I am also pleased to address you in this forum, since your ascension to the Speaker's Chair last year.
- ◆ That special occasion came after the decision of the electorate, to return the Most Honourable Andrew Holness to serve Jamaica as Prime Minister. In the same way in which the people strongly expressed confidence in him and the Jamaica Labour Party to continue in office, I am thankful for his continued confidence in me, to serve with my colleagues in Cabinet.
- ◆ This Ministry has been expanded to include Rural Development and Rural Electrification, and I want to acknowledge my State Minister, Hon. Homer Davis, who has responsibility for this aspect of the Portfolio.
- ◆ I thank God for giving me the strength to serve, and for the many people who continue to assist me along the way. My family, here and overseas, continue to bear me up and give me good courage.
- ◆ My loyalty to my political family in Western Kingston is unending **Madam Speaker.** I want to give a big virtual wave to my Councillors, my Constituency Executive and all the members of the team, who are watching me today from a distance. I am grateful for their confidence as we work together to bring development, in all its forms, to every community in the Constituency.
- ◆ I thank the Permanent Secretary, the leadership team and staff of my Ministry, the staff in the Agencies, the Mayors, Councillors, and all the staff in the Local Authorities, who have given exceptional service especially since COVID-19 hit Jamaica.
- ◆ I also want to say a special thanks to my personal staff and my protective personnel, who are with me at close quarters during the joys and frustrations of public life.
- ◆ We all continue to live through and wrestle with the reality of COVID-19 **Madam Speaker.**
- ◆ For the last fourteen months, the national and international story has been about the pandemic and its devastating impact. **My presentation today is about a**



different story, an optimistic story. It is a story about the people and the systems of local government, who continue to effectively manage the public health protocols and lay the foundation for economic and social recovery at the community level. It is a story about how local government is helping central government to ensure that Jamaica is turning the corner and recovering stronger from the pandemic.

## SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME IS A VITAL PART OF THE NATIONAL RECOVERY PROCESS

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, over the last five years, this Ministry has invested heavily in our vulnerable population through the ***Social Protection Programme***. That is why I was shocked recently, when I tuned in to a radio programme, and heard the host refer to a message from a listener, that the Government had decided to abolish poor relief. Let me state clearly in this Honourable House: **It is not true**. This Government has not, and will never abandon our vulnerable population. What disturbs me more, **Madam Speaker**, is that there there seems to be very little understanding of the fact that poor relief is deeply entrenched in our systems of governance. It is specifically protected by the Jamaican Constitution, and I want to spend a moment to show how important it is to our society.
- ◆ Poor Relief Administration has existed in Jamaica since 1886, under the Poor Relief Act. In the 135 years between then and now, the steadfast features of the system have been the provision of care and protection to the most vulnerable. Poor Relief serves every category of vulnerable person from the cradle to the grave, including children in need of assistance to attend school, the elderly, persons experiencing homelessness, needy persons suffering from mental and physical impairment, persons temporarily displaced by natural or man-made disasters, and persons in need of institutional care who have been abandoned by their relatives.
- ◆ Poor Relief provides burial assistance to needy families to ensure their dead are treated with dignity.
- ◆ The Great-Great Grandfather of our Poor Relief system is the almshouses concept, which was exported from the United Kingdom in the late 1800s and designed for the most vulnerable to be hidden away from polite society. The





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conditions of the almshouses were generally substandard, and landowners were asked to vest their properties in the Parish Councils in return for their care.

- ◆ The Eventide Home, which opened in 1870 with a capacity for 160 people, appears to be the first institution operated by the Government for elderly, destitute and disabled persons. It took over 100 years for public attitudes to the vulnerable to slowly begin to change, and for the conditions of the almshouses to marginally improve. By the 1970s, the name 'almshouse' was unofficially changed to 'infirmary' in an attempt to remove the stigma associated with the institution.
- ◆ However, it was the Eventide Home fire of 1980, that quickly consumed the old structure and killed 150 elderly and disabled women, that proved to be the catalyst for better institutional investment in public care facilities.
- ◆ Following this horrendous incident, The Vineyard Town Golden Age Home, which was conceptualized and designed to prevent another tragedy, was constructed on a new site in 1985 under the direction of the then Prime Minister the Most. Hon. Edward Seaga. Today, The Golden Age Home is the largest of its kind in the Caribbean, with a capacity for 500 residents who operate in a communal, interactive environment.



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- ◆ Similarly, The Denham Town Golden Age Home, a home for the elderly and the infirm in West Kingston, was started in 1989 by following the displacement of vulnerable persons in the area by Hurricane Gilbert.
- ◆ The generally poor infrastructure of the infirmaries, was a major hindrance to proper care for residents. A significant number of the buildings were over 100 years old, including the St. Mary administrative building and the Westmoreland Wards which were built from the 1890's, and still stand today. **Madam Speaker**, prior to the efforts of this Administration, the only other period that reflected some effort at maintenance and rehabilitation work, was the decade between 2003 and 2013. Even then, there was no structured programme to finance or guide what was done. **It is since the advent of this Administration in 2016, that an intense, unprecedented and continuing programme of infrastructure development has been applied to the poor relief and Infirmary care systems. The level of construction that has taken place in our institutional care system alone in the last five years, has vastly exceeded anything done over the preceding 130 years of Poor Relief in Jamaica.**
- ◆ Drop-In Centres have been built in **Hanover, St. Ann, St. Thomas, Trelawny, St. Mary, St. Elizabeth** and in **Linstead, St. Catherine.**







- ◆ New male and female wards were built at the St. James Infirmary. New male and female wards were built at the Portland Infirmary. A new female ward was built at the Manchester Infirmary, along with a new doctor's and nurses station. A new administration building was constructed at the St. Elizabeth Infirmary, while a new administrative office was built at the Santa Cruz Infirmary. New matron's quarters were built at the Westmoreland Infirmary.

### NEW WARD AT THE ST. JAMES INFIRMARY







## NEW ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING AT ST. ELIZABETH INFIRMARY



These unprecedented levels of infrastructural development were implemented at a cost of over \$1.4 billion, and they reflect the work of a Government that is totally committed to our vulnerable population.

## IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE INFIRMARIES

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the staff and systems of the Infirmary Care system were put to the test by COVID-19, and I want to specially commend our workers all across the country for the professionalism they continue to show.

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- ◆ Systems were rapidly put in place in our infirmaries to protect the elderly, who are the most vulnerable globally. New health requirements such as new screening and entry protocols, restrictions on admission and visitors, new cleaning and sanitizing schedules were implemented. As Jamaica entered the community spread of the disease, the first case emerged in September last year, following the positive result of a member of staff and subsequently a male resident. The largest outbreak occurred at the Vineyard Town Golden Age Home, which saw 66 residents infected at once. Unfortunately, the first recorded death in the facilities occurred on October 27, 2020.

### SANITIZATION EXERCISE AT OUR INFIRMARIES





## Implementing the national goal of recovering stronger through the institutions of local government

- ◆ To date, 220 persons have been infected with 11 deaths recorded. The Denham Town Golden Age Home is the only facility that has not recorded a positive case of COVID-19. **Madam Speaker**, we grieve at the fact that any loss of life occurred. At the same time, I am really heartened that the mortality rate in the care facilities in Jamaica, is one of the absolute lowest in the Caribbean, Latin and North America, and Europe. The health protocols have been effective, and while we fully understand the desire of relatives of our residents to make contact with them, they will remain in place. I want to say **Madam Speaker**, that the families have really complied with the stay-away Orders, and I thank them for their understanding and patience. I also want to urge them to keep on using the Stay Connected Virtually initiative, through which they can communicate with their loved ones with the tablets available to the residents at the infirmaries. In the meantime, the Ministry, along with the Ministry of Health and Wellness, is reviewing the current restriction on new admissions. The intention is to develop specific protocols to govern new admissions to care facilities that have the capacity.



Digicel donated phones to the Ministry for its 'Virtually Connected While Staying Physically Distant' Initiative, which is aimed at keeping the 1377 residents living in state-operated infirmaries and golden age homes socially connected with family and friends through technology.



**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/videocall
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

- ◆ On this point, **Madam Speaker**, there is no praise too great for the Ministry of Health and Wellness, led by my neighbour in this House, the Hon. Christopher Tufton. We have been in close collaboration to fight Dengue, and our work to fight COVID-19, including the recent drive to get our people vaccinated across the country, has really been a tremendous partnership experience.
- ◆ The role of the Councillors in this effort cannot be overstated. They have played a vital role in the COVID-19 public vaccination drive, and have also been highly effective in the distribution our care packages initiative, for which \$280 million was allocated. They face the heat at the ground level, **Madam Speaker**, but



I must commend them as their Councillor-In-Chief, for their performance over this past fiscal year. I am putting it on record, that we have not received any complaints about partisanship in their handling of their responsibilities.

## HOMELESSNESS

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, this Administration's initiatives in caring for our homeless population have no precedent. The scope of our activities and the level of investment in programmes and physical accommodation for the homeless has no comparison. We started a special feeding programme in March 2020 in all parishes, which cost over \$100 million. This programme will continue, and it is a structured approach towards the provision of meals to the homeless every day.



Meals prepared for distribution to the Homeless.

- ◆ In Kingston, the Church Street Shelter Soup Kitchen was renovated and equipped at a cost of \$6.3 million, and it is the hub for the preparation and distribution of meals across the Corporate Area.



Meals being prepared for distribution to the homeless.

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- ◆ A bathroom facility was built at the Spanish Town Care Centre, to accommodate the hygiene needs of the homeless at a cost of \$2.9 million.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, it pains me deeply that while we are making life better for our homeless citizens, there are persons who have been assaulting and killing them on the streets as they sleep. In January, six homeless men were attacked in the Corporate Area, and four of them died from chop wounds. Last month, an 83-year-old homeless man was killed in Port Antonio. Someone used a block to hit him in the head. I deplore these attacks, and I ask the public to help us as we strive to protect our vulnerable brothers and sisters. I call on those people who have abandoned their relatives, to rediscover their conscience, reach out and take them back into the family.

### EDUCATION OF POOR CHILDREN

- ◆ The Poor Relief Department continues to nurture and support some of the nation's brightest students who are full of potential, but lack the resources to unleash it. These students receive assistance for lunch and transportation, examination fees, books, uniforms and medication, among other services. Since 2016, The Ministry started providing grants to the children served by Poor Relief who have excelled academically. The Poor Relief Department has nourished the dreams of many children from poor families, who have gone on to be shining examples of excellence. I just want to mention a few, **Madam Speaker**:
- ◆ Mr. Demar McKenzie, a medical doctor at the Kingston Public Hospital, who was assisted by the St. Ann Poor Relief Department after his mother suffered from a chronic heart condition, which left her unable to work.
- ◆ Mr. Thorn Francis, a Mathematics Teacher at the Marcus Garvey Technical High School.
- ◆ Ms. Sherry-Kay Purrier, a graduate of G.C. Foster College, who now teaches at Spot Valley High School. She was supported by the St. James Poor Relief Department.
- ◆ Mrs. Diana Sutherland, who was assisted by the St. Elizabeth Poor Relief Department, is now the Principal Financial Officer for the St. Elizabeth Municipal Corporation.



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- ◆ Ms. Shonique Summerville, who is a student at Norman Manley Law School, and is still being assisted by the Westmoreland Poor Relief Department.
- ◆ Finally from my Constituency, Renaldo Facey, a brilliant young man from Denham Town who is pursuing medicine at Drexel University in Philadelphia was assisted by the KSAMC Poor Relief Department. I am proud to be involved in his development as he achieves his dreams.
- ◆ The role of the Councillors and the Poor Relief Departments in advancing our children and young people in this way, is vital. Their development extends beyond themselves and their families, and benefits their communities and the country.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, I cannot end this discussion about the role of local government in education, without mentioning the Social and Economic Recovery and Vaccine (SERVE) Jamaica digital device component, for which \$140 million is being provided for purchasing tablets for students identified by the Councillors.  
**Madam Speaker**, I must hail the Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Hon. Dr. Nigel Clarke. I am going to assign him a nickname that I hope he will accept because as far as I am concerned, Minister Clarke has been a Godfather to Local Government. He has enabled this Ministry to widen and deepen its service in ways never done before, and I must express my deep gratitude for what he has done, and what he is going to do.
- ◆ The tablets initiative will be supplemented by our Education Grant to Councillors, which is also valued at \$140 million. It will be administered by the Poor Relief Departments, which will assist needy students. Never in the history of Local Government has so much been done for our elected representatives, to achieve their representational targets in their Divisions. Things that have not happened in decades, are happening in these five short years since this Administration took office.

## UPCOMING PROJECTS

- ◆ We will continue the work of infrastructure development and institutional strengthening this year, **Madam Speaker**. A new kitchen will be built at the Hanover Infirmary at a cost of \$12 million.
- ◆ Renovations will take place at the George Abrahams Home in August Town

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in Eastern St. Andrew, at a cost of \$6 million, and \$18 million will be spent to renovate the Denham Town Golden Age Home.

- ◆ Over \$25 million will be spent to build new night shelters at Falmouth in Trelawny and at Ocho Rios in St. Ann.
- ◆ Additional CCTV security systems will be installed in selected infirmaries.
- ◆ New Therapeutic Parks will be constructed in St. Catherine and in St. Mary, at a cost of \$4.4 million.
- ◆ Construction has started at the special facility for the homeless at King Street. The works will cost \$30 million, and are projected to be completed in August this year, on time and within budget.



Construction works ongoing at the facility on King Street.

- ◆ Therefore, **Madam Speaker**, when anyone claims that the Government intends to abolish Poor Relief, or to undermine the duty of care to our destitute, I say: “Mash down that lie!” This is a Government that cares, and will always be seeking to do more for our vulnerable citizens.



## OUR AGENCIES HAVE PERFORMED WELL UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES

### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION** is an inspiring example of competence and commitment to national development through community transformation. It was not always so. For many years, the Agency was left to languish, starved of the resources to return to the glory of its early years. That is why, at an event in Manchester, I publicly appealed to the then Minister of Finance, Hon. Audley Shaw, to give us the financial support to breathe new life into the Agency. He opened the pocketbook, **Madam Speaker**, and the SDC has not looked back since.
- ◆ The Agency is performing well under good leadership, and since the advent of COVID-19, its performance has simply been tremendous. I must commend the Executive Director Dr. Dwayne Vernon and his team, for the indispensable work that was done and is still being done in conducting field research islandwide, monitoring compliance and developing many of the protocols that have been approved by Cabinet, for managing the pandemic. These activities did not prevent the SDC from executing its local economic development functions.
- ◆ The Agency, through the Local Economic Development Support Programme, provided training and Business support for 394 Local Economic Initiatives, **which generated employment for 1,650 people**. Support was also given to the Local Economic initiatives through a \$1 million COVID Grant.
- ◆ In response to the pandemic and the loss of sales for some Local Economic Initiatives, the SDC revamped its business fairs model and re-branded it as **Community Markets and Business Fairs**. They held 45 of these fairs, which attracted a much wider cross-section of local business-people including farmers and distributors. **This initiative resulted in total earnings for the participants, of \$67 million.**

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SDC Community Market and Business Fair.





- ◆ **This is what you get, Madam Speaker, when you give real support to the organs of Government. This is the result of sound leadership, fresh thinking, and dedicated people who have been given the tools to perform by an Action Administration.**

### **NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY**

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the National Solid Waste Management Authority continues to perform impressively, and I want to specially recognize the Agency's workers for carrying their service to a higher level since COVID-19.
- ◆ This Agency continues to be an outstanding example of what can be achieved, with major investment from central Government, bold and innovative leadership and a dedicated workforce. From being the Agency that was most frequently in the news for poor governance, poor practices and unacceptable levels of garbage collection, the NSWMA is now formally recognized and awarded as being a leader in sound public sector Corporate Governance. This Agency has literally cleaned up its act, and its credibility continues to grow among all its stakeholders.



- ◆ The NSWMA collected one million and fourteen thousand tonnes of waste in the last fiscal year, at a cost of nearly \$1.9 billion. To further promote clean public spaces, a mobile app was developed to report littering in public spaces and illegal dumping. As a result, the NSWMA was able to conclude 71% of its investigations into illegal dumpsites identified across the island. The public

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has been responding positively to the app, with 110 notifications and images submitted regarding illegal dumpsites. The mobile app has also allowed the NSWMA to establish an aggressive 24 – 48-hour response time, to notifications received about delayed garbage collection and littering. As a result of ongoing sensitization about proper containment of waste, commercial compliance is at 86% and residential compliance is at a high of 94%.



- ◆ Important work was also done to remove plastic waste from the environment. Through the **Rae Town Plastic Minimization Project**, funded by the Japanese Government under the United Nations Environment Programme, nearly 17,000 pounds of plastic was collected. Sixteen Environmental Wardens were also trained in plastic separation, plastic recycling and community sensitization about solid waste disposal.
- ◆ Another plastic waste collection project, the **St. Andrew Northern & Eastern Belt Initiative**, yielded over 82,000 pounds of plastic.



- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, at a time when national revenues have been punched in the gut by the pandemic, the NSWMA continues to demonstrate sound management, by earning Own Source Revenues amounting to nearly \$439 million over the last fiscal year.
- ◆ I congratulate the NSWMA, and I urge the public to do its part to make our communities and public spaces consistently clean.
- ◆ I now turn to the **JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE. Madam Speaker**, the importance of the role of the JFB, in protecting lives and property, has been exceeded only by the dedication of the people who make up this outstanding Agency. I salute the leadership, the administrative staff and the front-line firefighters who respond at a moment's call. **Madam Speaker**, it was the Fire Brigade that was the first responder after, in the first week of May, criminals abducted a taxi-man in Spanish Town, stole his taxi, threw him into a pit 55 feet deep and left him for dead. One firefighter, in particular, Dennis Taylor, allowed himself to be lowered into that deep pit, to take hold of the victim and bring him to the surface, and I intend to recommend him for national recognition for this act of service. You may not see them every day, but fire fighters are always nearby, ready to respond, and that is why this Administration has invested over \$5 billion in equipment and infrastructure since 2016.



JFB Personnel carry Mr. Smart on a stretcher after rescuing him from a pit.

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- ◆ This year, the acquisition of new equipment will enter a new technological dimension **Madam Speaker**. The Fire Brigade will launch the **Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Programme, and under this Programme will purchase two drones**. The drones will assist with surveillance for search-and-rescue exercises, as well as fires and other emergency situations. This programme, which is the first of its kind for the JFB, will help our firefighters to far better manage emergency situations.
- ◆ We are continuing to make significant and historic levels of investment in equipment and fire stations. COVID-19 slowed down construction work over the year, but the three fire stations being built to replace existing ones under the World Bank Project are nearing completion.
  - The Barnett Street Fire Station being built at a cost of \$535 million will be completed in July this year.
  - The Yallahs Fire Station being built at a cost of \$113 million, will be finished next month (June 2021).
  - The Port Maria Fire Station being built at a cost of \$217 million is set for completion in July.



The Barnett Street Fire Station nearing completion.



- ◆ Over in St. Catherine, the Old Harbour Fire Station is being constructed at a cost of \$59.7 million.
- ◆ I am also pleased to announce that our plans to build the **Papine Fire Station** have taken a major step forward. The University of the West Indies has formally agreed to allow a section of its property to be used as the base for the fire station. Land has also been identified in **Ulster Spring** in Southern Trelawny to build a fire station.
- ◆ Since the start of sittings of the Joint Select Committee to examine parish status for Portmore, there has been talk from some quarters, speculating and demanding to know when additional fire stations will be built there. I won't be drawn into comment at this time, except to say that these are the loud shrieking sounds of those seeking political traction, through a headline or sound-bite.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the cost of house fires, industrial fires and other types of fires to the Jamaican economy and society remains very high. **Last year, the Fire Brigade responded to 13,784 fire calls across the island. 31 people died as a result of fires, 89 were injured and 1,676 lost their homes or were otherwise displaced.** To put this in greater context, **Madam Speaker**, over the last five years, there were 62,887 fire calls. 168 people were killed because of fires and 411 people, including 94 firefighters, injured. 10,826 people were displaced due to fires since 2016. The Agency has been making steady progress in addressing public attitudes to fire safety, through the Fire and Life Safety Programme, but I call on every Jamaican to make fire prevention a way of life. Every Member of Parliament has had to deal with the dislocation, and in some cases death caused by fires in his or her Constituency.
- ◆ While we have not had many cases of bush fire over the past three to four years, **Madam Speaker**, this is also a traditional threat to the lives and livelihoods of many farmers. The Fire Brigade will be collaborating with the Meteorological Service of Jamaica to implement the **Bush Fire Warning Index Project** this financial year. This project is designed to forecast the likely outbreaks of bush fires across the country. I want to say a special thanks to the Minister of Housing and the Environment Hon. Parnell Charles Jr., who has been a steadfast partner of Local Government in service to our citizens.

## RURAL WATER SUPPLY LIMITED

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, Rural Water Supply Limited is a new addition to the Ministry, and I want to recognize the very professional and energetic team who continue to deliver on the mandate to improve access to potable water in rural communities. Major projects completed include Platfield water supply system in St. Mary which included house connections to Platfield, Mount Vernon and Clarke Castle, as well as a loading bay to serve Border and surrounding communities. Over 4,000 people are benefiting from this project.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, Rural Water Supply Limited also installed water supply systems in over 22 communities in eight parishes, and now, over 33,000 people are enjoying vastly improved water supply as a result. The Agency also installed Catchment Tanks and Black Tanks in a range of communities, and installed rainwater harvesting, pumping facilities and wash stations at over 25 public schools around the island. This year, \$215 million will be spent to complete other projects that will benefit an additional 20,000 people, in communities in St. Catherine, St. Ann, Clarendon, St. Elizabeth, Portland and St. James. The Ministry will also set aside \$110 million to construct new Water Shops, and the parishes to benefit will fall under the Rural Development Programme. In total, \$325 million will be spent to provide water to rural communities across the country.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker, Rural Electrification** is a new portfolio subject, but one that we are implementing with energy as we seek to move Jamaica up the development index.
- ◆ **The Ministry is financing an islandwide rural electrification programme valued at \$189 million, which is being implemented by the Jamaica Social Investment Fund.**
- ◆ The Programme is designed to facilitate families who want to be legally connected to the electricity grid, but are not able to find the money to wire and certify their houses. When the houses are wired and certified, this will enable these families to enter into a formal agreement with the Jamaica Public Service Company. The Members of Parliament are best placed to identify the households that fit the profile of the programme, and they will recommend the beneficiaries.



- ◆ The JSIF has already completed community assessments for 500 houses in various communities, and this programme will transform family and community life as it is rolled out over the next three years. It is about changing the character of communities through legitimate access to resources. It is also about reducing vulnerability to fires, by putting an end to the need for candles and lamps to provide lighting.

## OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management continues to demonstrate its immense value as Jamaica's Disaster Management Agency. Since the National Disaster Risk Management Council was activated on March 5 last year, the ODPEM has been at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19. I want to remind this Honourable House and the country, that the ODPEM is the lead Agency that activates the provisions of the Disaster Risk Management Act, which is the primary legislative tool being used to manage the pandemic. The Agency's work is indispensable to the situational assessment and protocol management processes across the country, and is a vital part of the inter-governmental team that assesses applications for sporting and related events. I am very proud, **Madam Speaker**, of this Agency for the steadfast and stellar work it is doing. This work includes the coordination of the efforts being made by the Government to assist our brothers and sisters in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who are still recovering from the effects of the eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano. The Agency, which has been instrumental in coordinating the relief effort, opened a bank account to receive donations from the public. \$3.2 million has been collected so far, and over \$35 million worth of supplies has been shipped to St. Vincent. We are also grateful to the Jamaica Defence Force and to the Government of The Bahamas, which provided the vessel to transport the supplies.

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Hon. Desmond McKenzie (second right), speaks with Jamaica Defence Force Commanding Officer, Alvin Gayle (right) Commanding Officer of the Lawrence Major, Royal Bahamas Defence Force, Lt. Commander Omarv Saunders (left); Senior Director of Preparedness and Emergency Operations at the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), Horace Glaze; and Kingston Wharves Limited Group Chief Financial Officer, Clover Moody.



Relief items for persons affected by the eruption of the La Soufriere volcano in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, being loaded on to the HMBS Lawrence Major ship.



- ◆ Recently, **Madam Speaker**, there were reports published in some media that suggested that the ODPEM was suffering from Ministry overreach, and that its budgetary processes were being hijacked for unusual and unjustifiable expenses, such as Town Hall Meetings. It was further suggested that the Government was milking the ODPEM, which was described by one newspaper as a “cash cow.”
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, I have chosen to refute these baseless claims in this House, as a representative of the people, in the presence of all my other colleagues who together, represent the people of Jamaica. I want the people of this country to know that their Government is doing nothing immoral, illegal or in breach of policy at ODPEM. A cash cow is an entity that earns substantial income from its activities, and the ODPEM has never been one. The Agency’s budget is provided by central Government, and it only earns a miniscule \$18 million annually from rental of tents and related items. Since this Administration came to office, over \$1.5 billion has been provided to ODPEM to ensure its effective response to all the natural threats and disasters we have experienced, from drought, to the heavy rains associated with Hurricane Matthew in 2016. The ODPEM has never before experienced this level of investment from the public purse, and it reflects the positive change that this Government promised on assuming office.
- ◆ On the subject of change, **Madam Speaker**, there are those who believe and argue that practices that have gone on for many years should simply continue, and that any change should be treated as suspicious, corrupt or as political interference. In my experience as Minister, this argument has been around since Hurricane Matthew, when I stayed at ODPEM during the rains and gave regular press briefings with the then Director-General and other senior staff. There were those who said then that the tradition of the Director-General being the only person to address the country should continue, and that my presence constituted political interference. As the person ultimately responsible for the ODPEM, I sat with the Agency’s top leadership, to assure our people that our preparedness and response mechanisms were ready to handle what Mother Nature could throw at us. I was humbled, **Madam Speaker**, by the extensive public support that we received for this direct approach. No one had to ask, “where was the Minister?” **We faced the nation together, and this approach will continue, Madam Speaker.**

- ◆ Similarly, arguments have been put that somehow, it is wrong for the ODPEM to be paying for Town Hall Meetings. These meetings are used to sensitize our people about the need for disaster preparedness and their role in this regard, and we have been having them all over the country since 2017. Since the advent of COVID-19, we have been having them virtually. As an addition to the communications strategy for disaster preparedness, the Town Hall Meeting approach is non-traditional, different and effective and it will continue. This Administration promised change, and through the Ministry and its Agencies including ODPEM, it is delivering that change. I am not assigned this Ministry to be traditional, I am mandated to be effective, and this includes implementing fresh and new ideas.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the Atlantic Hurricane Season is almost here, and the OPDEM has prepared itself for its eventualities, even as it implements its COVID-19 management responsibilities. The forecast is that this season will be more active than usual, with 14 named storms and 7 hurricanes, 3 of which are expected to be major - that is, classified as being Category Three to Five in strength. The ODPEM will shortly roll out the **National Hurricane Preparedness Campaign**, and our Disaster Coordinators have been doing all the things necessary to secure shelters, including spaces for use as isolation areas for persons suspected of having COVID-19 and who need shelter during any storm. This is part of the integration of COVID-19 protocols into our disaster management apparatus.
- ◆ We pray that we are spared any catastrophe. However, I want the House and the country to know that we are prepared for the worst, even as we hope for the best.

### Youth Summer Employment Programme

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, the Youth Summer Employment Programme (YSEP) continues to be a critical employer of our young people islandwide, and a skills training incubator that has transformed many of them into permanently employable professionals. **Since the inception of this programme, five years ago, just over 21,000 young people have been employed, making it the largest local government youth employment programme of its kind in the Caribbean, and one of the largest in this Hemisphere.**



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The positive feedback from the participants in the programme reflect the impact and reach of YSEP, and we managed to engage 5,000 young people last year. Their work included COVID-19 response support to communities across the country.

- ◆ This aspect of the programme was undertaken through the Social Development Commission, including protocol sensitization and monitoring, support for Strengthening the Participatory Governance Framework, and the Local Economic Development Support Programme.
- ◆ As was the case last year, the programme will be implemented this year in the month of August. **This year, Madam Speaker, we will accept 6,000 young people, our highest cohort to date, and they will each be paid \$40,000 for the work they will be doing.** The Municipal Corporations, along with the Social Development Commission, will continue to play key roles in the selection of the young people and the implementation of the programme.

### IMPORTANT ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- ◆ I cannot address this House without mentioning the tremendous work being done by the **Municipal Corporations**, especially since the start of the pandemic. Financially, they are wearing pants without pockets, **Madam Speaker**, as the income that would normally be earned from amusement licences and other Own Source Revenue have dried up. Despite these real challenges, with help from the Ministry and from the Ministry of Finance, they have still been able to deliver services, including repairs to more than thirty (30) minor roads at a cost of \$150 million.



Parochial Road repaired in Treasure Beach, St. Elizabeth.



Parochial Road repaired in Bounty Hall, Trelawny.

- ◆ **This year, \$350 million will be dedicated to further improvements to minor roads.** While this is not a large sum, **Madam Speaker**, it will advance the work of setting down the foundations of a better minor road network.
- ◆ While we lost some of the momentum we had in constructing **community parks**, we completed the facility at Ulster Spring in Trelawny, and just recently, broke ground for the Andrews Mews community park with the Most Honourable Prime Minister in West Central St. Andrew. We will continue to develop these parks, as part of the recovery strategy from COVID-19.



Groundbreaking for the construction of the Andrews Mews Health and Recreational Centre, Olympic Gardens.



- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, I want to recognize the work of the elected representatives at the local level. While there are some Councillors who have fallen short of the standards we have set, the vast majority, from both political parties, have been delivering service in their Divisions. I think, therefore, that the series of orientations that the Ministry had with the Councillors throughout 2017 into early 2018 have begun to bear good fruit, and I encourage them to keep striving to keep the trust of the people they were elected to serve.
- ◆ The last fiscal year has been one of the most difficult, but it has been made manageable through **partnerships**. Permit me, **Madam Speaker**, to identify a few, such as the Most Hon. Prime Minister and my colleague Ministers, who have given real meaning to joined-up Government. The Private Sector Organization of Jamaica has been a close partner with us in local government, and I also say a heartfelt thanks to so many private sector companies who continue to support our initiatives. I crave even greater collaboration as we move from recovery to prosperity.

### THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM WILL STIMULATE NATIONAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RECOVERY

- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, this Ministry is making Local Government and Rural Development happen in real terms and in real time. That is why I now announce that under the **Rural Development Programme, \$650 million will be spent to develop communities in various parts of the island. The Programme will first be piloted in Chambers Pen in Western Hanover, beginning in the first half of this Financial Year. Thereafter, this model will be implemented in Cheesefield in St. Catherine, Cheswick in western St. Thomas, Lawrence Tavern in West Rural St. Andrew and one community in Clarendon.** The works will involve the installation of water, electricity, internet access, roads, sidewalks, community parks and indigent housing. We will use this programme to give new life to our rural communities over the next two years. **Let me emphasize that it will also create temporary and permanent employment opportunities.**
- ◆ The Hon. Minister of Finance and the Public Service announced the **“Paint the City”** project during the Budget Debate, and this Ministry will take stewardship of this \$300-million initiative. It will generate employment through beautification,

## Implementing the national goal of recovering stronger through the institutions of local government

mural painting, street sign installation and the improvements to selected markets. In Phase 1, the project will begin in Kingston and May Pen, and there after, it will be expanded to other parishes. Let me issue a clear caution, **Madam Speaker**. This will not be some loosely-run programme where people get their names on lists, and expect to merely turn up to get paid.



KSAMC's newest set of commissioned murals along Mark Lane, Downtown Kingston.



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- ◆ This Project represents the effort of the Government to put our people to actual, productive work. It is about generating hope through increased employment as we pull free from the grip of the pandemic, and restore activity, life, and vigour to our towns and parish capitals.
- ◆ **Madam Speaker**, we will carry on our groundbreaking programme of providing block-and-steel indigent houses for selected members of our vulnerable population. This year, we will be building houses in West Central St. Andrew, South-West St. Andrew, Eastern Westmoreland, Western Westmoreland, North-West St. James, Southern St. James, Central St. Mary and South-East St. Mary.



A two-bedroom Indigent House build in Watson Grove Portmore.



Indigent House  
in Golden Spring,  
St. Andrew.

## CONCLUSION: LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS THE KEY TO INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL RECOVERY AND PROSPERITY

- ◆ The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is part of an Administration that has delivered sound leadership, and tangible public goods and services to the Jamaican people since 2016. The journey has not been easy, but a smooth ocean has never made a skilled sailor, **Madam Speaker**. We have made significant improvements to the lives of our citizens, and we are committed to doing much more. This Government will not fall into complacency, and set aside the trust and confidence of our people.
- ◆ In everything we have done, we have also worked hard to preserve and enhance sound principles of governance. We will not allow transparency and accountability to play second fiddle to performance.
- ◆ The people and institutions of local government have been severely tested, but the challenges have brought out our resilience and our resolve, to increase our reach and our quality of service.
- ◆ With the commitment of the elected representatives, the administrative staff of local government, and the continued goodwill of the people of Jamaica, the local government system will continue to contribute strongly to our country's recovery, and to its prosperity. Every achievement gives us the energy to cross boundaries and break barriers, and to implement new ideas for national development.
- ◆ We are motivated by the words of Sir Winston Churchill: "We shall not fail or falter; we shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle, nor the long-drawn trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools, and we will finish the job."
- ◆ Thank you, **Madam Speaker**.

**Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP**  
*Minister of Local Government and Rural Development*  
May 18, 2021





## NOTES

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## NOTES

## Implementing the national goal of recovering stronger through the institutions of local government

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## NOTES

## Implementing the national goal of recovering stronger through the institutions of local government

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# THE DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT ACT, 2015

**The Disaster Risk Management Act** was promulgated in 2015 and repealed the Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management Act.

The Act establishes a legal and institutional framework for disaster risk management in Jamaica. At its core is risk identification, risk reduction, disaster preparedness and recovery. In this regard, the Act provides for the following:

- Legal recognition of existing organizational structures such as the Parish Disaster Committees and Zonal Disaster Committees.
- Establishment of a National Disaster Fund.
- The right to legally evacuate persons identified to be at risk as a prevention measure.
- The identification and description of high-risk areas as “specially vulnerable” areas and the necessary action to be taken in respect of such areas.

The Act also designates authorised officers with primary responsibility for responding to disasters to specifically include members of the police force, defence force, fire brigade and public health officers.

Additionally, the Minister is empowered to require all government ministries, departments and other public bodies to establish liaison officers to work with the Director-General in the disaster management and emergency response planning.

Under the Act, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) is required to advance disaster preparedness and emergency management measures in Jamaica, by facilitating and coordinating the development and implementation of integrated disaster management systems, and institute measures where necessary or mitigating disasters.

**The Disaster Risk Management Act** is available for download from the following websites:

[www.localgovjamaica.gov.jm](http://www.localgovjamaica.gov.jm)  
[www.japarliament.gov.jm](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm)  
[www.moj.gov.jm](http://www.moj.gov.jm)  
<https://www.odpem.org.jm>

## Mission Statement

To provide a sound policy, legal, technical and administrative framework that supports excellent service delivery and operational management by the Local Authorities and portfolio agencies, in a manner that advances the ideals of effective local governance and the goals of sustainable community development, through a purpose-driven and competent work force.

## Vision Statement

The premier government organisation in the Caribbean that facilitates the development of settlements and communities that can deliver sustainable first world services through modern, participatory, autonomous and adaptive systems, for the benefit of all citizens.

## AGENCIES OF THE MINISTRY



### NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY (NSWMA)

61 Half Way Tree Road, Kingston 10  
Tel: 876-920-7939/960-4511; 968-6160/926-3988; 926-8559  
**Fax:** 876-754-5955  
**Email:** [nswma@nswma.gov.jm](mailto:nswma@nswma.gov.jm)  
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### JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE (JFB)

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**Website:** <https://jfb.gov.jm>



### RURAL WATER SUPPLY LIMITED

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### OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT (ODPEM)

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**Website:** <https://www.odpem.org.jm>



### SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (SDC)

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### BOARD OF SUPERVISION (BOS)

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