

STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BY Hon. DESMOND MCKENZIE CD, MP, JP
Minister of Local Government and Rural Development

DECEMBER 14, 2021

- Madame Speaker, the House is aware of the measures announced under the Disaster Risk Management Order number 12, which is now in effect. In this regard, I wish to advise the country about a number of measures that will be implemented to ensure public order, especially as we enter the Christmas season.

- In anticipation of an increased volume of solid waste being generated during the holidays, the **Ministry will be allocating an additional J\$20 million to the National Solid Waste Management Authority. The NSWMA, will assigning an additional 500 sweepers to clean town centres across the island. Moreover, 300 private dumper trucks will be deployed throughout the country to assist in this public cleansing drive, which will include the removal of bulky waste.** This special initiative is receiving the personal attention of the Executive Director of the NSWMA, who is spearheading the cleansing of mini-dumps in a number of areas, including Montego Bay and Downtown Kingston.

These dumps will be opened until midnight, and in a number of selected areas, garbage will be collected up to 11 pm.

- It is expected Madame Speaker, that these measures will also help to further reduce the backlog of solid waste that our citizens are experiencing in some parts of the country. Significant work has already been done to decrease the volume of accumulated waste, and this initiative will accelerate that process, as well as ensure that whatever is generated during the holidays is properly managed.
- I want to acknowledge the patience of many of our citizens in various communities, who have been inconvenienced by the pile-up of garbage. I also want to appeal to everyone to be considerate, and to be responsible in the disposal of their litter. On a related matter Madame Speaker, I wish to advise that work has commenced to obtain new garbage trucks, subject to the availability of funds. It is expected that these new units will be on the streets in the latter part of next year.

BAN ON PARTIES STILL IN EFFECT

- Madame Speaker, I am aware that many Jamaicans have been asking whether parties will be allowed during the festive season. **I wish to reiterate that the ban on parties and related gatherings, such as round-robins, gate parties and so on, are still in effect.**

- **No permits will be issued for any such events by the Municipal Corporations or the police. Any breaches will be dealt with in keeping with the Disaster Risk Management Act.** While the positivity rate and the number of people in hospital with COVID-19 continues to decline, we are still battling this public health emergency, and we cannot afford to be reckless. I therefore appeal to everyone to be responsible, and to remember that after Christmas, comes the new year. We want the new year to continue on the trajectory of improvement, so Jamaica can continue the process of returning to normal.

REPRIEVE FOR INFIRMARY VISITS

- Madame Speaker, one of the first acts taken when the pandemic hit our shores, was the banning of visits to Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes. Service providers who had to interact with the residents had to go through a rigorous series of health and sanitation protocols. These quick, decisive and thorough actions have worked, but the human connection, which is also critical to the health of our seniors, was interrupted.
- We have introduced the **Tablet Connect** initiative, to provide a virtual connection, but nothing is better than being in the presence of those who love you.

- I have messages and letters from so many relatives, who want to know when will be the first opportunity they will have to see their loved ones, whom they haven't seen in nearly two years.
- I am happy to announce that **protocols have now been established for face-to-face visits at our Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes for a limited period, December 19, 2021 to January 2, 2022.** The rules for visitation are as follows:
 - Visitors to the Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes are required to make an appointment in advance.
 - Visits will last for no more than 30 minutes, and each resident can have no more than three persons per visit.
 - All visitors must present a negative Covid-19 test that is no more than three days old, and must be fully vaccinated. Visitors are also required to show proof of vaccination.
 - The existing health protocols - such as screening on entry and sanitization at the Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes - will continue to be implemented.

- **I want to make it clear that visitors will not physically enter the residential spaces in the Infirmaries. They will meet their loved ones in the therapeutic parks that have been established at most of these institutions. In other Infirmaries that currently have no therapeutic parks, special areas will be established to facilitate visitors.**
- One of the other matters that we continue to work on, is the list of **applications for new residents for our care institutions.** We have a substantial waiting list in this regard, and I will make an announcement in the new year, concerning the admission of new residents to the Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has received recommendations from the Ministry of Health and Wellness to guide this process.
- On another matter, I also want to advise that the Ministry had put arrangements in place to make this Christmas a pleasant experience for our homeless citizens. As we did last year, provisions have been made for meals and access to facilities for the homeless during the Yuletide season.
- Madame Speaker, the Government of Jamaica continues to manage Jamaica's way out of the crisis caused by the pandemic, and toward the full resumption of normal life.

- The measures outlined under the Disaster Risk Management Order will advance that process, and we ask for our citizens' continued understanding and co-operation as we navigate these times together.
- Thank you Madame Speaker.