

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

The observance of Local Government and Community Month 2022, is unprecedented in some important ways. It is the first time in two years, since the advent of COVID-19 in Jamaica, that we are returning to a schedule of interpersonal events to reflect on and honour the people of local government, and the local government system. With the change in the Ministry's name and expansion of its focus in September 2020, to include **rural development**, our celebration of all things local government this year, has a different flavour.

The challenges caused by the worst of the pandemic over the last two years have given us much to reflect on, and also, though it may seem strange, much to be grateful for. **The policy decisions that were implemented through the Ministry, the Agencies and the Local Authorities were life changing and life saving.** There was an increased focus on caring for our homeless population. Special sanitary protocols were implemented to protect our wards in the Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes. Special community outreach programmes were devised and implemented. Pandemic protocols were developed, and our business and residential communities were constantly surveyed to measure COVID-19 protocol compliance. In this way, local government assisted central Government to respond continuously to real-time developments on the ground. The people and systems of local government contributed mightily to the resilience that Jamaica demonstrated to the world in enduring the worst of this unprecedented public health emergency.

Since the related restrictions were removed in March this year, the total Ministry has been on the march to improve the delivery of services, as well as to obey the mandate to bring about rural development through infrastructure development. This reflects the hard work of the people of the local government system, who have continued to make vital contributions as we, the Jamaican people, recover stronger together.

I want you to know that your sweat and sacrifice are part of the process of Reigniting A Nation - the Jamaican Nation - For Greatness. I pay a special tribute to you in this 60th year of our Independence, and eagerly anticipate the further contribution that we will make to the achievement of our country's economic and social development objectives.

Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP
Minister of Local Government and Rural Development