



2023

SECTORAL

PRESENTATION

Presented by:

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Minister of Local Government & Community Development

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Gordon House

**“ PREPARING JAMAICA
FOR FIRST-WORLD STATUS
THROUGH THE INSTITUTION
OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ”**

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Madam Speaker...

- When this Administration was voted into office in 2016, we promised, as we did on the campaign trail, to change Jamaica's direction so that our people can have better outcomes in their lives. Under the leadership of the Most Honourable Prime Minister, we have worked to do this in a systematic way, to include the creating and strengthening of **institutions** to ensure economic and social growth and development.
- I remember clearly a TV interview he gave during the 2016 general election campaign, in which he declared that part of his vision is to build **institutions**, to ensure Jamaica's development objectives.
- At that time **Madam Speaker**, he was called "Teacher". Today, they call him "Builder" because of his outstanding leadership of the Government and the country over the last seven years. I continue to be proud to be a part of this team, and I am particularly proud of the fact that at my time at the wicket, Local Government has increased its value as an institution of national development.
- Naturally **Madam Speaker**, I could not have achieved this on my own. The personnel in my Ministry, the Agencies and in the Local Authorities have been critical to our successes. My Constituency Executive continues to be exemplary, in helping me as Member of Parliament to score more and more achievements in the service of the people of West Kingston. My family still supports me unconditionally. Finally, I pay my highest tribute to my batting partner, my wife Marcia McKenzie. The record shows that from the time we opened the innings **Madam Speaker**, we have been at the crease for 402,960 hours. **That is 46 years not out Madam Speaker.** We have faced every kind of delivery, and we are still putting on the runs. I am humbled, grateful and happy for our time together.
- This Administration is showing that Local Government has a critical role in the process of making Jamaica a developed country. Our work is being facilitated by the economic policies and performance of the **Government, which has allowed us to better manage the national debt, and generated more revenue to deliver the infrastructure and services our people need. This is the only model that can ensure consistent development for the Jamaican people.**
- This model is ensuring that the system of Local Government is making a indispensable and growing contribution to national transformation. **Local Government, as a matter of policy, has significantly changed our peoples' lives by improving and developing institutions of national resilience, as well as national advancement. Our efforts have set the stage for doing more. I am committed, and this Ministry is committed to giving a higher level of service to the people of Jamaica.**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS BRINGING UNPRECEDENTED VALUE TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Madam Speaker**, the term "Local Government" is oftentimes misinterpreted as being small or inconsequential. However, this form of Government is not only a huge responsibility, it is also a massive contributor to the new Jamaica that this Administration is building.

- The central role of the local authorities and the Jamaica Fire Brigade in the **DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS** process, is one of the most powerful examples of local government in action, adding value every day to the economic and social life of the country. Construction is one of the most skills-driven and labour-intensive sectors in the world. In 2022, the global construction market was valued at US\$12.7 trillion. It employs engineers, skilled and casual workers, artisans, and a wide range of goods and service providers. This is also the case in Jamaica.
- **Madam Speaker, since 2016, 37,577 applications were received for processing. The value of the applications approved, is \$1 trillion, 499 million!** It goes to show **Madam Speaker**, that in the scheme of things, Local Government is in the big league. **Housing projects cannot happen without Local Government. Commercial activity cannot happen without Local Government. Tourism, our biggest foreign exchange earner, cannot happen without Local Government. There is no development small or large, that is not subject to the development approvals process.**
- In this respect **Madam Speaker**, let me say something about the benchmark time of 90 days for approvals. The vast majority of approvals are indeed given in that time.
- In fact, the approval rate has not dipped below 84% in more than 10 years. However, I must emphasize that structural safety, zonal compliance and environmental integrity are the most prominent issues when applications are considered. Applications for large and more complex developments, such as apartments and hotels, some of which are over 300 square metres in size, will take longer to assess **Madam Speaker**, and in some cases have to be sent back for adjustments if they are to be approved.
- We must remember too, that Jamaica is squarely within an earthquake zone. Our infrastructure has survived these tremors and quakes because of the rigor of the development approvals process. **Development, public safety and environmental integrity must all go hand in hand, and the Government will never promote one element at the expense of the others.**
- The development approvals process continues to contribute heavily to Jamaica's economic recovery.
- **A total of 5,945 applications were received for the 2022 Calendar Year, reflecting an investment value of \$264.8 billion.** There was a 150% increase in the number of applications received for resort developments; with 73% being for larger resorts. There was a 5% increase in the number of commercial development applications, with 49% of these applications being for larger developments.
- Additionally, there was a 5.4% increase in the number of large residential development applications submitted. I want to acknowledge the hard work of the Local Authorities and the Agencies that together, undertake the huge responsibilities critical to assessing development applications in Jamaica. I also want to remind the House that the three Boards established under the Building Act - the Building Practitioners Board, the Building Appeals Tribunal, and the Building Advisory Council - are all operational and available to the public.

- The expansion of **access to electricity**, was another area in which Local Government transformed national outcomes and elevated the quality of human life. **Since 2020, \$600 million has been spent through the GOJ Community Electrification Project**, to provide house-wiring support and pole line expansion in vulnerable urban and rural communities. **Over 10,000 individuals from 2,500 households in thirty communities have benefited from this programme.** The Jamaica Social Investment Fund, by way of a Memorandum Of Understanding, is our implementing partner, and I thank the leadership and staff of this Agency.
- The network of **pole lines was expanded**, and designs were completed for over 5 kilometres of lines. One of the areas that benefited in the last financial year was Green Mount in Trelawny, where over 2 kilometres of pole line infrastructure was installed at a cost of \$30 million. It is a significant milestone for the residents of the community, as they have not had access to pole lines for over 45 years!



House wiring project.

RURAL WATER SUPPLY LIMITED

- The drive to increase access to water in the non-urban spaces across Jamaica, was greatly enhanced by Rural Water Supply Limited, and I must commend its leaders and staff for the very professional manner in which they go about their business.

- **The Agency** implemented major water supply works at Watermount and Penn/Lucky Valley in St. Catherine, Portland Cottage and Rocky Point in Clarendon and Comma/Mango Valley in St. Mary, at a combined cost of \$446 million. **Twenty thousand people in these communities are now enjoying reliable access to potable water.** As we speak, similar works are being finalized at six communities at a cost of \$135 million. They include Bangor Ridge and Cornwall Barracks in Portland, Pear Tree Grove in St. Catherine and Maybole in St. Elizabeth. **Over 5,000 people will benefit from these projects.** Rural Water Supply Limited also rehabilitated catchment tanks and installed rainwater harvesting systems in various communities and schools across the country.



Commissioning of the Watermount Water Supply System.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- As I indicated in my last presentation, work is in full progress at Chambers Pen in Hanover, the pilot for the Rural Development Programme. In addition to house wiring, roads, educational infrastructure and other amenities, the provision of potable water is a key feature of the project. I am pleased to advise this House that the **\$50 million Chambers Pen Water Supply System was commissioned into service on February 16 this year. As a result, 1,500 people in 300 households now have access to 52,000 gallons of fresh water every day.**



Commissioning of the Chambers Pen Water Supply System.

- Additionally Madam Speaker, 360 black tanks were provided to households in the community, at a cost of \$10 million. Over 200 houses were wired at a cost of \$27 million, and the Chambers Pen Basic School was rehabilitated at a cost of \$20 million. Tools and agricultural supplies were distributed to the farmers in this intensely agrarian community. \$10 million was spent to construct two indigent houses, and two more are now being built, which will cost \$18 million. Road repair and construction works are also being undertaken, at a cost of \$84 million.



Black Tank Distribution – Chambers Pen

- In addition to the works being implemented during this \$223 million pilot project, activities surrounding the Rural Development Programme will expand beyond Hanover in this financial year. I will say more about this shortly **Madam Speaker**.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- **Madam Speaker**, one of the important responsibilities that come with managing the Local Government system, is the review of its strengths and weaknesses, and the determination of the measures that must be taken to make it stronger and better.
- After 7 years that time has come, and in this respect, **a special review mechanism is being developed, to involve representatives from a wide range of backgrounds, including former and current local government practitioners - to review and make recommendations. I will say more about this process in due course Madam Speaker.**
- Another important matter on the governance agenda **Madam Speaker**, is the process that will result in Portmore becoming Jamaica's 15th parish. The House will recall that in February, when I piloted the Bill to further postpone Local Government elections, I indicated that among other things, the postponement period would be used to initiate public consultations about the draft legislation, that will establish Portmore as the next parish. **One of the features of this law will be the parish boundaries of Portmore.** I have initiated the consultative process at the political level, with an invitation for discussions with the Members of Parliament and the Councillors who represent Constituencies and Divisions currently located within Portmore. I will keep the House and the country advised about the progress of this important governance project **Madam Speaker**.

MARKETS

- **Madam Speaker**, our markets are important economic hubs that create contact between urban and rural communities. They have much to contribute to the rural development process.
- In the last financial year, the Stony Hill Market in St. Andrew was completed at a cost of \$7 million. The Clarks Town Market project was finally completed and works at the Hopewell Market in Hanover were done at a cost of \$24 million. In this financial year **Madam Speaker**, the process of transformation will continue, as part of a comprehensive **Markets Rehabilitation Programme** that I announced two years ago.



The New Stony Hill Market

- The projects to come include the Savanna-La-Mar Market Phase 1, which will cost \$20 million. This is part of a \$70 million project, to be built out over two years. Phase 1 of the Charles Gordon Market in St. James, slated to cost \$8 million and the reconstruction of Highgate Market in St. Mary. Attention will also be paid to the Alexandria Market in St. Ann, and the Buff Bay Market in Portland. The first phase of the Buff Bay Market will cost over \$20 million, and is part of a 3-year, \$120 million rehabilitation programme for this market. Madam Speaker, I want to state very clearly, that when these facilities are completed, I expect that our vendors will operate inside them. I appeal to them to come in off the streets when these markets are transformed and earn their livelihoods while making their contribution to public order.



Tour of the Highgate Market which was destroyed by fire.

- **I also want to indicate that consultations are now being facilitated, with the objective of developing a unified approach to vending. This will ensure that once and for all, the development and expansion of our markets will occur by consensus, in tandem with the re-establishment of public order.** This is a critical issue, as many roads in our cities and towns are almost impassable due to chaotic vending practices. The areas most affected include Kingston and St. Andrew, Clarendon, St. Elizabeth and Montego Bay.
- **Madam Speaker**, I am aware that there are concerns about the state and number of public cemeteries. This is an issue that many of the Municipal Corporations are trying to address, by identifying suitable lands in which the dead can be interred with dignity, while ensuring that environmental, zonal and other requirements are met. It is not an easy or cheap process **Madam Speaker**. The reality also is that the maintenance of existing or new **public cemeteries** is challenging, if the current schedule of fees is retained. I will be meeting with the mayors shortly, and we intend to make notable headway in dealing with this matter **Madam Speaker**.

OUR AGENCIES

JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE

- **Madam Speaker**, if you want proof that this Government has a clear vision to build Jamaica through institutional development, just look at the Jamaica Fire Brigade. The JFB is over 150 years old, and its firefighters and staff have had a proud history of service.
- However, the levels of investment in the Brigade over the years, were nothing to be proud about. One of the first headaches I had to face in 2016, was the fact that for all of Kingston and St. Andrew, there were only two - **two** fire trucks. Over the entire term of the previous Administration, \$605 million was allocated to the JFB. Fast forward 7 years **Madam Speaker**. The Fire Brigade now has 7 new trucks serving Kingston and St. Andrew alone. Over the last 7 years, the JFB has been allocated over \$4 billion, to improve its traditional services and infrastructure, and to acquire new tools as it evolves rapidly into an ultra-modern institution.
- \$246 million was spent in the last financial year to improve the capacity of the JFB. Eleven utility vehicles including box body trucks and pickups were obtained. Firefighting equipment inclusive of bunker gears, respiratory devices, gloves as well as lighting equipment, foam, rescue ropes and portable extinguishers were procured at a cost of over **\$100 million**. Four standby generators were procured at a cost of **\$45 million**, bringing the total number of standby generators in our fire stations to twelve. These generators ensure that fire stations remain operational if there are minor or major power outages. **Madam Speaker, up to the year 2019, the York Park Fire Station was the only fire station in all of Jamaica that had a standby generator.**
- Six drones were acquired over the period at a cost of **\$14.5 million**. They will assist with surveillance at emergency locations for more effective fire scene management, and we intend to acquire more this year.
- **Madam Speaker**, the Government is obtaining modern equipment and the latest technology, to protect lives and property. Let me put some stark numbers on the table. The estimated value of property currently at risk from fires is \$335 billion. **In the calendar year 2022, \$8.8 billion worth of property was destroyed by fire.** At the same time, the **Jamaica Fire Brigade saved \$326.8 billion worth of property from fires.**
- **It is intended, beginning in the next financial year, to obtain fire trucks with the latest features, to respond to the expanding infrastructure being constructed around the country.** One of the critical features of these trucks is their specially extended ladders, which reach a height of 20 floors or 200 feet. Currently, the ladders on our fire trucks can reach a maximum height of 10-12 floors, or 104 feet. The new trucks will cost approximately \$250 million each **Madam Speaker**, and we will assign the first two units to the cities of Kingston and Montego Bay, which have significant numbers of high-rise buildings. Ultimately, more units will be assigned to regions with the buildings that require their presence.
- When it comes to infrastructural development, a new fire station was built at Old Harbour at a cost of \$60 million, and officially opened in April 2022. Ground was broken for the construction of a new fire station in Ulster Spring in Trelawny, in 2022, and it will be built in this financial year, at a cost of \$80 million.



Proposed drawing of the Ulster Spring Fire Station.

- Phase Three of the renovation works at the Black River Fire Station, was completed at a cost of \$9.8 million.
- The three fire stations built under the World Bank Project through JSIF were completed at a total cost of over \$900 million, and officially opened in the last financial year:
 - ✓ Barnett Street Fire Station was opened in May 2022.
 - ✓ Yallahs Fire Station was opened in October 2022.
 - ✓ And Port Maria Fire Station was opened in January 2023.



Official opening of the Port Maria Fire Station.

- I must report **Madam Speaker**, that the operations of the Brigade are still being undermined by people who place prank calls. The official term for these acts is **Malicious False Alarm**, and I think that this really sums up the nature of these calls. The number of Malicious False Alarms rose by 4% in 2022, to 1,220. I am appealing yet again for an end to this dangerous practice. It wastes the time and resources of firefighters, and sharply increases the chances of death and destruction at the places where fires are genuinely occurring.
- **Madam Speaker**, the strategic development of the Fire Brigade includes its expansion with highly skilled personnel. In the last financial year, an additional 188 recruits joined the Brigade as full-fledged firefighters. Their areas of speciality include **Nuclear and Radiation Emergencies, Water Rescue, Electric Hybrid Motor Vehicle Response, and Emergency Medical Technician Training**. In the last financial year alone, more than 80 of the applicants for the job of firefighter have first degrees and associate degrees in disciplines ranging from **Electrical Engineering to Environmental Studies**.
- Our women are making an important contribution to the Fire Brigade. Currently, they make up 13% of the firefighter force, and based on the application figures, this is projected to increase. I must tell you **Madam Speaker**, that the percentage of female firefighters in Jamaica places us above developed countries such as the United States, where 5% of all firefighters are female, and Canada, where the figure is 4.5%.

- **Madam Speaker**, the Jamaica Fire Brigade is one of the two paramilitary organizations in Jamaica, the other being the Jamaica Constabulary Force. The members of the Fire Brigade, just like the members of the police force, are first responders to dangerous situations. One of the things that this Government has been doing, is strongly supporting the health and welfare of the firefighters.



Members of the Jamaica Fire Brigade.

- Over the last two years, a modern system of support has been put in place, which includes a full package of life and health insurance. This also addresses accident support including specific payments for debilitating injuries such as loss of limbs and eyesight, and psychological support. **This support structure is being provided at an annual cost of \$500 million. None of this existed before 2021 Madam Speaker, and it is a testament to our commitment to build out and modernize our institutions of public service.** The Jamaica Fire Brigade is one of the most important of those institutions. It is both preventive and responsive.
- The JFB has been and continues to be a stellar example of professionalism, and I am very proud to be its Minister.

NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

- **Madam Speaker**, the transformation of the National Solid Waste Management Authority, from a story of shame to a story of success is a study in outstanding public administration.
- The last financial year was not easy for this entity. The whole country knows that in the first half of 2022/23, the NSWMA's public cleansing operations were severely hampered by backlogs and instances of non-collection of solid waste, due to a shortage of efficient collection units. It was a difficult situation, and once again, I must express my regret that our citizens were inconvenienced. I am also grateful to the many people who expressed patience and understanding.
- **Madam Speaker**, November 30, 2022 was a day of joy and relief, when the Most Honourable Prime Minister officially handed over 50 new Shacman trucks to the NSWMA, to build out its collection fleet islandwide. **The result of this investment of US\$6.9 million, has been a massive improvement in garbage collection across all regions, with the collection backlog islandwide being reduced by 93%! Over the last financial year, more than 89 million tonnes of solid waste was collected.**



New Compactor Trucks.

- There are, however, still collection challenges in the Metropolitan Parks and Markets Region, as there remains a substantial reliance on units that are not owned by the NSWMA. In this respect I am heartened **Madam Speaker**, to tell the House that another **50 brand-new trucks will be procured by the end of this financial year.**
- The management of non-degradable waste is a special area of focus **Madam Speaker**. The NSWMA continued implementing **plastic separation projects** across the island, with the latest being launched in Rocky Point in Clarendon, in February 2023. Similar projects will be launched in Manchester and St. Elizabeth in this financial year. Important progress is being made, as over **450,000 pounds of plastic was collected through these projects over the last financial year.**



Plastic Bottle separation – Chambers Pen

- Significant progress was also made in developing the infrastructure to accept **electronic waste**. The Authority commenced an E-waste programme and is developing partnerships for the operation of “drop-off” sites, to properly manage this type of waste.
- Lands have been leased for the establishment of an E-waste facility, and I will update the House on the progress of this project.
- **Madam Speaker, there is a significant change that is coming for the sanitation workers of the NSWMA. From the time it was established in 2001, all the sanitation workers were classified as temporary staff, which means they have no pension benefits. I am very happy to announce that this situation is now being resolved by the leadership of the NSWMA, working with the Ministry of Finance. In this financial year, this wrong will be put right, and the status of these critical employees will be changed from temporary to permanent. This is unprecedented Madame Speaker, and it shows that this Administration continues to listen and to be responsive.**



NSWMA Sanitation workers collecting garbage.

ENFORCEMENT AND THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- The NSWMA's efforts to enforce the law was assisted in the last financial year, by the addition of 11 new officers and 10 motorbikes to its Enforcement Unit. As a result, there was a 165% increase in the issuing of Litter Tickets, and a 27% increase in the issuing of Removal Notices.
- Enforcement will ultimately be facilitated by the Regulations to the NSWM Act, which are in the latter stages of finalization. The proposed schedule of fines in these Regulations have been reviewed by Cabinet, which has made its recommendations. I will therefore at the appropriate time disclose this information publicly.

OFFICE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- **Madam Speaker**, the prevention, mitigation against and recovery after disasters are stern tests of the resilience of any society.
- You will recall that in January 2022, Port Maria was almost submerged after very heavy rains. While thankfully no one died, the effect on lives and livelihoods was devastating. Over 800 households and businesses of various sizes were affected. I stated in my last presentation that the town would be next in line for a Tsunami Early Warning System, following its implementation in Old Harbour Bay.

- I am pleased to announce that an additional \$17 million has been allocated to the Ministry, to provide this System for Port Maria. In addition to the siren that would be triggered when waters exceed a prescribed level, the System will produce data that will ultimately help to produce a Flood Prediction Model. The ODPEM will collaborate with the National Works Agency, the Meteorological Service of Jamaica and the Water Resources Authority of Jamaica to implement the System.
- **Madam Speaker**, this System is a vital complement to the **Community Flood Alert Systems Improvement Project**. As the name suggests, a Flood Alert System is a mechanism developed to inform people in flood-prone areas that flooding is possible or imminent. When a threat occurs, the System will also give an alarm, so that preventive action can be taken. **In the last financial year, Flood Alert Systems were implemented at Benson Ford in St. Andrew, Aeon Town and Alley in Clarendon.**



A flood warning sign erected in Alley, Clarendon.

- The first phase of the Project involved the erection of public education and flood warning signs. Community flood gauges, which show the movement of water levels and stages of danger, were installed at Thatchwalk Bridge in Aeon Town and at Alley Bridge. Traffic control gates are also being built at Alley Bridge. The ODPEM held consultations with the residents of these two communities, so that **Community Emergency Response Teams** can be formed.



Flood gauge installed at Thatchwalk Bridge (Aenon Town).

- The final phase of this Project involves the installation of remote flood monitoring and automation systems. This phase is expected to be completed just about now **Madam Speaker**, to coincide with the start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season. Through the use of sensors that will be attached to the bridges, a Real-Time Remote Flood Monitoring System will collect data and transmit text messages and email to all stakeholders, so they can make informed and rapid decisions. This real-time alert system will also feature horns and lights, so that people in these vulnerable areas can hear and see that danger is at hand.
- **Madam Speaker, the ODPEM's capacity to provide relief supplies will be expanded by the allocation of an additional \$17 million.** Work is also being done at the emergency facilities where the supplies are stored. This year, an additional \$10 million will be spent to rehabilitate the emergency storage facilities in the ODPEM's Eastern and Western Regions. **Overall Madam Speaker, an additional \$50 million has been allocated to this critical institution, to ensure total readiness for natural and man-made disasters, including the 2023 Atlantic Hurricane season, which begins the day after tomorrow.**
- In this context **Madam Speaker**, it was my distinct honour to have represented Jamaica at the United Nations General Assembly, on the Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. This important meeting was held at its headquarters in New York on May 18 and 19. Jamaica maintains the respect and admiration of the international community as a leader in disaster risk management.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

- **Madam Speaker**, we cannot talk about the role of institutions in national development, without including the Social Development Commission.
- Its role in community integration and community development through a range of programmes and projects is critical, as the Government works to ensure that macro-economic achievements are felt on the ground by our citizens.
- The SDC is one of the critical partners of Project STAR **Madam Speaker**. STAR, which means **Social Transformation And Renewal**. This was created by the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica in collaboration with the Jamaica Constabulary Force, to create social transformation through interventions in specific deprived communities.
- Over the last two years, the Agency has been placing greater emphasis on economic expansion in the urban parts of rural Jamaica. Under the **Local Economic Development Support Programme**, the SDC has been moving more people from the incubation stage of business, to being full participants in the formal economy.



Local Economic Initiative – small entrepreneurs selling their products.

- In 2022/23, 143 Entrepreneurship Training sessions delivered training and business support for 399 Local Economic Initiatives, which generated employment for 1,500 people. **It is important to note that the average Local Economic Initiative employs 4 persons. 64% of the trainees also registered their businesses.** Five local economic villages were established in partnership with the Municipal Corporations in St. Catherine, Manchester, Trelawny and St. James to facilitate legitimate and sustainable grassroots businesses.



SDC Entrepreneurship training session.

- Importantly **Madam Speaker**, support was given to **151 small self-owned business** in Westmoreland, Kingston and St. Andrew, Hanover and St. Mary through economic grants valued at **\$6.5 million**.
- The development process at the local level was also strengthened. **One hundred and twenty two projects and programmes** valued at **\$356 million**, were developed and submitted for approval, with over **190,000 people** expected to benefit. **Eighty five** of these projects, valued at **\$189 million** are being implemented, while another **5**, valued at **\$1.5 million** have been approved.
- I indicated last year **Madam Speaker**, that Community Centres will be critical to achieving social cohesion, civic order, crime reduction, and supporting the education system by improving the rates of school attendance. Important work has since been done.
- Forty one Community Centre Management Committees were appointed, to streamline social improvement activities through targeted community centres. As a result, 41 summer camps were held across the island, in which 2,700 children and youth between 7 and 17 years of age participated. They were given guidance in career development, social and communication skills, emotional development and safety and security.
- With the revocation of the **COVID-19 Orders last year**, the **Commission facilitated over 100 sporting competitions** in various communities islandwide. **This year, \$28 million** has been set aside for sporting activities.
- **Madam Speaker**, the SDC is delivering on its mandate and potential. This Government's decision to give credible budgetary allocations to the Commission has yielded tremendous dividends for the Jamaican people, from 2016 to this very day, and I commend the management and staff of the SDC.

BOARD OF SUPERVISION

- The **Social Protection Programme** is very close to my heart. It is connected to my history as Councillor and Mayor, and in my present capacity, I will always go the extra mile to assist our vulnerable population.
- The repair and maintenance of our **Infirmaries** continues **Madam Speaker**. This is even more important, since the total ban on visitors to the residents was lifted earlier this month. Since the restriction on new admissions was lifted in July 2022, over 200 new residents have been admitted to the Infirmaries and Golden Age Homes, with the Vineyard Town Golden Age Home accounting for 137 of them.
- Major repairs were carried out at the Trelawny and St. Thomas Infirmaries, as well as the



New male ward at the Westmoreland Infirmary.

Vineyard Town and Denham Town Golden Age Homes, at a cost of \$35 million. Rehabilitation and repairs were also done at the Hanover and Manchester Infirmaries, and the George Abrams Home in August Town, at a cost of \$28 million, while two new Male Wards at the Westmoreland and Portland Infirmaries were completed. Two Therapeutic Parks were constructed at the St. Mary and St. James Infirmaries, at a cost of \$12 million.

- This year, \$15 million will be spent to build a new Matron's Quarters at the Hanover Infirmary. A Therapeutic Park will also be built there at a cost of \$5 million.
- \$22 million will be spent to build a new kitchen & dining area at the **St. James Infirmary**. In **Westmoreland**, the Infirmary will benefit from a new kitchen and dining area, and design works



Therapeutic Park at the St. James Infirmary.

are being done. The Poor Relief Office will also be rehabilitated. The roof of the wards of the **St. Ann Infirmary**, as well as the kitchen, will be repaired at a cost of \$15 million, while the walkway at the **Trelawny Infirmary** will be rehabilitated.

- The provision of dedicated ambulance services for all our Infirmaries has been an ongoing challenge **Madam Speaker**. We intend this year to procure two ambulances, one each for the St. Elizabeth and Manchester Infirmaries, at a cost of \$38 million. The CHASE Fund has also been approached to assist in the provision of funds for more ambulances.
- I must say a few words about our Golden Age Homes and in particular, the Vineyard Town Golden Age Home, the largest in the country, with a maximum capacity of 550 residents. In the last financial year, infrastructure works valued at \$25 million were implemented, and another \$25 million will be spent this year.

- The quality of direct care is always at the centre of operations **Madam Speaker**, and I applaud the partnership between the Golden Age Home and the UWI School of Dentistry, which is of tremendous benefit to the residents. I also want to highlight the strategic initiative of the Board of Supervision, which resulted in Psychiatric Nursing Aides being included in the revised public service structure. These professionals are well needed throughout our care system.

HOMELESSNESS

- With regard to homelessness **Madam Speaker**, Phase One of the Transitional Centre for the Homeless at King Street was completed at a cost of \$40 million, officially opened, and presently houses an average of 35 homeless persons.
- Construction of Phase Two, which will accommodate approximately 45 people, will take place this year, at a cost of \$30 million.
- Construction works started in the last financial year, for Night Shelters in Ocho Rios and in Falmouth, which will be each be able to accommodate 20 persons. The Falmouth Night shelters has been completed and was officially opened on May 5. Repairs also commenced at the Clarendon night shelter, which when completed, will facilitate 25 homeless persons at any given time.



Falmouth Night Shelter for the Homeless.

- **Madam Speaker**, I cannot talk about homelessness, without expressing my total disgust at the mostly fatal attacks on these vulnerable people. **A disturbing pattern seems to have developed over the last two years, between January 2021, and April of this year. In that time, 12 homeless men were viciously chopped, shot, slashed and set on fire, with only one surviving. Eight were attacked in Kingston, 1 in St. Ann, 1 in St. Mary and 2 in Portland.**

- It is a pattern of brutality. It is a pattern of outrageous incivility. It reflects badly on us as a society, and we have a collective duty to care for our fellow citizens whatever their circumstances and respect their right to life. Our development trajectory is measured by these social indicators as much as our economic performance. We can and must do better.
- Most unfortunately **Madam Speaker**, the plans to establish **DROP-IN CENTRES** in Portland and in Manchester did not materialize, due to challenges in identifying suitable locations for these special facilities. It is expected that this situation will change in this financial year. **We also intend to serve the vulnerable population in St. Ann, with the construction of a new Homeless Shelter in Ocho Rios. This Shelter will cost \$18 million. Additionally, Madam Speaker, \$24 million will be allocated to build a new Homeless Shelter in Falmouth.**

INDIGENT HOUSING

- The Ministry continued to serve the needs of our less fortunate citizens, by constructing concrete Indigent Houses for them.
- For the reporting period, \$23 million was spent to build 3 houses to completion at Heywood Hall and Port Maria in St. Mary, and at Moreland Hill in Westmoreland. As earlier mentioned, 2 indigent houses were built at Chambers Pen in Hanover, with another 2 under construction. We intend to increase the pace of implementation this year.



Indigent Housing Unit in Moreland Hill, Westmoreland.

YOUNG BEACONS OF HOPE - CHILDREN OF FAMILIES SERVED BY THE POOR RELIEF SYSTEM

- **Madam Speaker**, I am very pleased with the work that the Board of Supervision, and the Poor Relief Departments have been doing with the families they serve, and especially the education of their children.

- The Ministry is committed to the scholarships programme for outstanding students from these families. In the last financial year over \$2.7 million was spent on grants.
- The annual ceremony to recognize the students who excelled academically was held in March. 48 students were awarded for outstanding achievements in the 2022 PEP, CAPE and CSEC exams. We will continue to increase the allocations on a yearly basis, and ensure that **more of our children cross the bridge from poverty to prosperity through education.**



Ministers Desmond McKenzie and Alando Terrelonge with Recipients at the Board of Supervision Awards and Recognition Ceremony 2023.

CONCLUSION

- **Madam Speaker**, the Jamaica we are living in now, is not the same one we inherited in 2016. **It is better today than it was then.** Over these 7 years, inspired leadership and institutional development have resulted in better service for more of our people. These attributes have also been seen in Local Government, which has gained respectability in its own right as parochial government, serving the people from cradle to grave.
- **However Madam Speaker**, it must be acknowledged that the price of hard work is more work. **My interactions with our people, reveal that there are greater levels of public expectation across all 228 Divisions of the country. The people are saying that they appreciate what has been done, but more needs to be done. They are saying that the Government did a great job at keeping Jamaica stable through COVID-19, but now, they want to see our focus reapplied to one main task: the task of taking the country upwards into prosperity, while ensuring that no one is left behind. Madam Speaker, the Government is seeing, the Government is listening, and the Government accepts this instruction from the people. The Ministry of Local Government has therefore resolved to intensify its contributions to national development.**
- **Accordingly, Madam Speaker**, given that proper housing is fundamental to human dignity, especially in the case of our indigent citizens, the **Social Protection Programme will be boosted with the allocation of \$73 million, to construct more concrete indigent houses across Jamaica:** Namely:
 - **At Chambers Pen in Hanover;**
 - **At Cheswick in St. Thomas;**
 - **And at Banks in Clarendon.**
- **Madam Speaker**, greater institutional capacity is needed for the **National Solid Waste Management Authority** to further improve service delivery. Therefore, **US\$6.9 million will be spent this year, to obtain an additional 50 garbage trucks.**
- **Madam Speaker**, the modernization of the **Jamaica Fire Brigade** will continue this year, with the recruitment and training of **200 additional firefighters at a cost of \$125.5 million. This money is part of an additional \$640 million allocated to the Fire Brigade.**
- The JFB'S ability to prevent fires through building inspections, public education, fire investigations, and hydrant maintenance will be expanded. Through the new structure of the JFB approved by the Ministry of Finance, **the staff of the Fire Prevention Department will be doubled, from 70 to 140.**
- Our firefighters will get more Personal Protective Equipment. **310 Bunker Gears will be procured at a cost of \$152 million. Over \$147 million will be spent, to give the JFB more specialist equipment. Three Fire Command vehicles will be procured at a cost of \$22.5 million. The process of purchasing a brand-new fire boat to serve the town of Ocho Rios will begin, with a 50% deposit of \$109 million.**

- This year **Madam Speaker**, the network of **fire stations** will be expanded and improved. **This year, a new fire station will be built at Balaclava in St. Elizabeth, at an estimated cost of \$22 million.**
- **A new fire station will be built at Lionel Town in Clarendon, which will cost \$90 million. \$70 million will be spent to give the Annotto Bay Fire Station in St. Mary a complete makeover. The York Park Fire Station in Kingston will be renovated to the tune of \$36 million while \$18.5 million will be spent to renovate the Half Way Tree Fire Station. The Buff Bay Fire Station in Portland will be renovated at a cost of \$8 million.**
- Water is the source of life **Madam Speaker**. We completed Water Shops at Commodore in Portland and at Mile Gully in Manchester last year. However, we have heard the cry for more water from other communities in Manchester. Accordingly, **new water shops will be built at Porus, Somerset and John's Hall at a cost of \$36 million, providing over 30,000 gallons of fresh water daily, while the Plowden Hill water catchment system will be rehabilitated.**
- Finally **Madam Speaker**, we are ramping up the **Rural Development Programme**. The country knows about the work being done at Chambers Pen.
- This year, the **community of Cheswick in St. Thomas will benefit from infrastructure works, new roads at a cost of \$13 million, improvement of piped water systems at a cost of \$15 million, a new community centre which will cost \$20 million, and the construction of 8 indigent houses at a cost of \$50 million.**
- But there is more! **This year, the community of Banks in Clarendon will be added to the Rural Development Programme.**
- **Six indigent houses will be built at a cost of \$10 million; the rehabilitation of the Basic School and the construction of a brand-new, state-of-the-art, multi-purpose community centre at a cost of \$45 million.**
- **Madam Speaker**, this Administration is at the midway mark of this second term given to us by the people. **Much has been done, much more needs to be done, and more will be done. We are doing serious work to give hope to our citizens. Seven years ago, the people rejected empty, trumpeted promises, and elected to be saved by the bell. From that time till now, we have worked hard every day to make Jamaica a far better place, a place we will be increasingly proud to call home.**

- **Madam Speaker, the country is watching us. The first half has ended and we have scored a few goals. We will not be complacent.**
- **We have been fired up by our Captain, we are motivated, and we are about to re-enter the field for the second half. I say to everyone: keep watching, stay tuned. The best is yet to come!**

- **Thank you Madam Speaker.**

Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP

Minister of Local Government and Community Development

May 30, 2023

