

SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2025



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA



Presented by:

Hon. Desmond McKenzie, CD, MP, JP
MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

WEDNESDAY, MAY 28, 2025

GORDON HOUSE



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Madam Speaker,

This is a very special time in my life of public service. This year, 2025, is my 48th year as an elected representative. This day, May 28, is the 95th birthday of my mentor, immediate predecessor as Member of Parliament and former Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Edward Phillip George Seaga. My contribution to the Sectoral Debate today, will be my 10th successive presentation in this Honourable House as Minister of Local Government and Community Development. I continue to be grateful to the Most Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Andrew Holness, for the unwavering confidence he continues to place in me, as this Administration continues to transform Jamaica into a place that more and more people are proud to call home. The more I observe the way he works as my Prime Minister and Party Leader, the more I recall a simple but powerful quote from Nelson Mandela, “A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.”

My gratitude to the people of West Kingston is boundless **Madam Speaker**. They have given me unwavering support. Just as importantly, they are critical participants in the mission of transforming our Constituency into a place of choice in which cultural, educational and social excellence can be found all around. There are so many examples **Madam Speaker**, but I want to highlight the work and massive achievements of the Tivoli Dance Troupe, one of Mr. Seaga’s fondest creations, along with the Tivoli Drum Corps. In cultural competitions over the last year, the Tivoli Dance Troupe won 18 gold medals, 1 silver medal and 17 National Awards! In fact, since its creation in 1974, 51 years ago, the Tivoli Dance Troupe has won 3,257 gold medals in cultural competitions. This is just one example of the many ways in which the Constituency of West Kingston is continuing to change its public image, and to elevate the pride and sense of belonging that my constituents have. They know that they live and work in a place of immense economic, historical and cultural importance, and that they and their children have a positive future to look forward to.



Some members of the Tivoli Dance Troupe performing.

In this same vein Madam Speaker, I want to specially recognise a very special project, which is changing the face of Tivoli Gardens and lifting spirits in the community and beyond. It started as the Tivoli Gardens Mural Project in 2022 and has steadily grown into a tremendous expression of art that has attracted local and international artists from countries including Mexico, Colombia, the United States, Brazil, Germany and as far away as Finland. Over 50 artists from 18 countries have donated their time and talent to paint murals on wall spaces in the community. Over 5,000 square feet of walls have been converted into beautiful murals, and the aim is to transform an additional 3500 square feet of walls into large murals, which symbolise hope, resilience, and the triumph of creativity over adversity.



One of the many murals painted in Tivoli Gardens.

This project is very important to me as Member of Parliament, and I want to pay special tribute to its co-founders, Mr. O'Neil Coke and Mr. Micah Tafari. Their foresight, and their love for their community have led to the impressive collaborations and the wonderful expressions of art, that I invite you, Madam Speaker, all my colleagues, and everyone to come to Tivoli and look at, and be inspired by.

Madam Speaker, I want to use this occasion to look back at a tragic point in our country's history, and to commemorate it not only as a mark of public atonement, but also as a reminder that we must always as a society, strive to prevent our vulnerable citizens from suffering indignity or untimely death. I refer to the **Eventide Home Fire that happened 45 years and 8 days ago, on May 20, 1980**. Over 145 people died in that controversial fire, the origins of which have not been officially determined to this day. Though a National Day of Mourning was declared shortly after the incident, and the remains of the victims were interred in a single grave at National Heroes' Park, there has never been an official day to mark this incident in our modern history. As part of the contribution of the local government system to the enhancement of civic education in our country, **I wish to announce that His Excellency the Most Honourable Governor-General will be petitioned to officially designate the 20th of May as Eventide Home Memorial Day.**

Madam Speaker, the hard work and smart work of this Government, are producing positive economic and social outcomes that Jamaicans have not experienced in decades. In fact, some of these positive outcomes that are improving peoples' lives are unprecedented. Our approach to government is fundamentally driven by the fact that we choose Jamaica to be our forever home. We are working to make this country the automatic choice for every Jamaican to live in, work in and achieve prosperity. We on this side believe, as Nelson Mandela did, that "Poverty is not an accident...it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings." For us therefore, the term **from Poverty to Prosperity** is not just the slogan with which we campaigned successfully in 2016. It is a message, a philosophy, a commitment to our country and a call to action all in one.



Eventide Home

That is why this Administration continues to make bold decisions and to take critical steps to undo decades of economic mismanagement, and to use the gains from implementing sound and consistent economic policies to make historic and sustainable investments in physical and social infrastructure and human capital. In this respect **Madam Speaker**, I must refer to the findings in the recent World Bank Latin America and the Caribbean Economic Review for 2025. The Review points to Jamaica, which has an Economic Programme Oversight Committee, as a model to follow, in creating and implementing sound economic policies. The states that “economic growth and fiscal discipline have contributed to some countries making significant progress in lowering debt-to-GDP ratios, reaching levels well below pre-pandemic levels.” Jamaica, **Madam Speaker** was identified as one of only three countries in all of Latin America and the Caribbean to achieve this. **Madam Speaker**, the processes and actions of Local Government have contributed effectively to this national economic success story. My very first presentation in this House as Minister was themed “National Development Begins with Local Government,” and local government has and continues to be, critical to the achievements being seen and felt as “Project Jamaica” continues to be implemented.

One of the unquestioned benchmarks of economic performance in any country is job creation. Employment data are constantly monitored to assess whether things are improving, declining or remaining stable. Jamaica, under this Administration, continues to record historically high levels of employment, and the system of local government is a very important part of this transformation story that is still being written. In my previous presentations about the role and importance of the Development Approvals process, I talked about the number of construction projects approved, from hotels to commercial plazas to new housing, and about the billions of dollars of investment that the process generates in the economy. The Ministry, its Agencies and the local authorities have been ensuring that this continues to be the case. Specifically, **since 2016, over 37,000 applications, reflecting an investment value of nearly J\$1.7 trillion have been approved for processing.** Despite the highly technical nature of the review process, the rate of approving these applications has never fallen below 84%, ensuring the maintenance of local and international investor confidence. **What has never been talked about or highlighted, is the contribution of the development approvals process to direct job creation in Jamaica. Madam Speaker, over the last 9 years, the local government system through the development approvals process has generated approximately 740,000 jobs through construction projects of every size.** This is local government in action, on the ground, making things happen and changing peoples’ lives for the better.

In the calendar year 2024, 4,442 applications were received, representing an investment value of \$187.7 billion. There was a 117% increase in the number of industrial applications received for the calendar year. This reflects a significant upturn in the industrial sector, as business interests have submitted applications for the development of factories and related infrastructure. Just as importantly, most of these industrial applications were for larger developments, representing a 167% increase in the number of larger industrial applications received.

Twenty seven per cent of the building applications were for larger residential developments such as multi-family residences, high-density apartments and townhouses, while there was an 11% increase in the number of applications to build large resorts. The trend of investor confidence is also reflected in a 6% increase in the number of applications for larger commercial developments. **3,598 permits were issued during the year, representing an investment value of \$149.7 billion.**

Madam Speaker, the effort continues to ensure that the vast majority of applications is approved within the benchmark 90 days. I am aware of concerns that have been raised by some developers of very large projects, that their submissions for approval may not be occurring within that time. Clause 24, Sub-Clause 2 of the Building Act provides that **“A Local Authority shall decide an application for a building permit within ninety days of the date of the application or within such extended period as may be agreed upon in writing between the applicant and the Local Authority.”** I therefore encourage the Local Authorities, which are the Local Building Authorities in every parish, as well as project applicants to use this provision **in good faith** to ensure even greater levels of efficiency and service delivery.

Madam Speaker, the **Jamaica Fire Brigade** is one of the critical Agencies involved in the Development Approvals Process. I am happy to report that the JFB is still on an upward trajectory of service delivery and public confidence. This positive outcome has been driven by sound leadership, and also by unprecedented capital investments by this Government over the last nine years, aggressive recruitment of new firefighters and critical changes made to modernise the Brigade.



Hon. Desmond McKenzie inspects the new recruits of the Jamaica Fire Brigade at their graduation ceremony in June 2024.

The JFB that existed before 2016 was a cautionary tale of disinvestment, that left it devoid of sufficient equipment, fire-fighters, fire trucks and other response vehicles, and even the curriculum needed to develop the training required to make the JFB evolve in line with the new needs of the Jamaican society. In fact, over the entire life of the last Administration, just J\$605 million was spent on the JFB. **Madam Speaker**, when you see the Brigade now, what a difference a decade makes! This Government has invested over J\$5.5 billion in this critical Agency.

The JFB now has far more fire trucks, there are fire boats in Kingston, Ocho Rios and Montego Bay, and the technical capacity of the Agency has been expanded and strengthened to include the use of drones to manage fire incidents, and the improvement in the training of fire investigators. In the last financial year alone, **an unprecedented \$120 million was spent to obtain 535 bush-fire bunker gears for our firefighters. This is particularly important, as bushfires are the number one source of all emergency calls to the JFB, taking up 55% of all the calls made.**

The JFB continues to improve in efficiency through the use of modern technology. In this regard **Madam Speaker**, I am happy to advise the House that in addition to the new Records Management Software System, which I announced last year, **the JFB has been installing Starlink Satellite internet services, to increase its reach across the country.** Starlink has been successfully installed at various Divisional Headquarters in St. James, St. Mary, St. Elizabeth, Westmoreland, Manchester, Kingston & St. Andrew and St. Catherine. Starlink will shortly be installed at Divisional Headquarters in Clarendon and St. Thomas, and at the Fire Prevention Division in St. Ann. This system is greatly enhancing communication and data-sharing speed across the Brigade, especially from remote locations, as well as greater data security.

We are still writing the modernisation story of the JFB **Madam Speaker**. The Agency has started the introduction of Voice Over Internet Protocol Services, which will reduce communication costs and expand the communications options across the Brigade.

Voice Over IP has already been installed at the Core Technical Support Services Branch in St. Catherine, at the Yallahs Fire Station, and four other locations in St. Mary, St. James and St. Elizabeth.

One of the important features of the JFB's work in the field is the Emergency Medical Service, which has been saving lives through the use of an expanding fleet of ambulances to respond swiftly to fires, accidents and other emergencies. There are seven EMS sites currently in operation, in Waterford, Linstead, Falmouth, Ironshore, Lucea, Negril and Savanna-la-Mar, and they are served by 93 emergency medical technicians. The Ministry is making a special effort to acquire additional ambulances for the Emergency Medical Services, to fully support the expansion of this project into five new areas in short order. These will be Montego Bay, Port Maria, Yallahs, Ocho Rios and St. Ann's Bay. **Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that through a strong Corporate Partnership with Sandals Resorts International, the EMS fleet will be expanded with the acquisition of two ambulances valued at \$12 million.** I must express gratitude to the leadership of Sandals for being a tremendous partner to this Ministry and for being an undisputed champion of nation building.

One of the ambulances donated by CHASE Fund.



Madam Speaker, given our location in a volatile geographical area, subject to natural shocks like earthquakes and hurricanes, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management holds special significance as Jamaica's Disaster Agency. The ODPEM is not only a critical part of our national disaster risk management machinery, it is also an established and respected Regional leader in disaster prevention and response. This Administration has been making consistent investments in the ODPEM as it works to fulfil its mandate. However **Madam Speaker**, the time has come for the Agency to be appropriately reviewed, to ensure its most efficient alignment with the needs of our evolving country, as well as the implementation of our international obligations. Accordingly, I wish to advise the House that a committee authorised by the Most Honourable Prime Minister, as Chairman of the National Disaster Risk Management Council, has been reviewing ODPEM's structure and has made a number of recommendations I will say more **Madam Speaker**, as this critical reform process is implemented.

Madam Speaker, there are three days between now and Sunday, June 1, the start of the 2025 Atlantic Hurricane Season. **The prediction is that there will be 17 named storms, and that 9 of them will become hurricanes. Of these 9 predicted hurricanes 4 of them are predicted to have strengths ranging from Category 3 to Category 5.** This year's predicted activity is slightly below the 18 named storms, and 11 hurricanes that actually occurred last year. **However, we cannot relax our guard.** I am asking all elected representatives to take all the necessary steps to secure the interests of the people in our Constituencies and Divisions. While the ODPEM will be charged to intensify its education outreach activities, I also want to appeal to every Jamaican to really embrace preparedness. I ask that you gradually put things in place, so that you are not caught off guard if a storm comes.

At the same time, I am urging everyone to remember that we live in an earthquake zone, and we have to be constantly aware that January 1 to December 31 of every year is earthquake season. At the same time I want to assure the country that, due to sound economic policies and careful planning and partnerships, the Government is better prepared than ever before to recover quickly from the impact of natural disasters. The **National Disaster Fund** is now valued at over J\$550 million. In the event of a severe hurricane or earthquake, Jamaica's access to the Contingent Credit Claim with the Inter-American Development Bank remains in place, which allows a drawdown of up to US\$285 million. We continue to be members of the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, which allows access to resources for disaster recovery, linked to the severity of the event.

I now turn to the **National Solid Waste Management Authority**, which continues to record important achievements despite significant challenges.

With the purchase of 100 new collection units over the last two years, at a cost of USD14 million, and their deployment in the field, there has been a significant reduction in the backlog of solid waste.



New compactor trucks added to the NSWMA fleet.

There has been a steady improvement in the regularity of collection from communities across the island, and the Agency is putting in the work to maintain and increase collection visits. Prior to these trucks being obtained, there was a backlog of deposited solid waste awaiting collection.

There was household waste, waste illegally dumped in various places, and solid waste that had accumulated after natural disasters. With the acquisition of 100 new trucks between December 2022 and July 2024, the Agency cleared 492 backlog cases between the end of 2022 and April this year. Additionally, over the last financial year, 4300 loads of bulky waste were collected and 799 derelict vehicles were removed from the streets. The investment in new trucks also resulted in the NSWMA modifying its collection schedule to increase pickups and relieve the pressure on communities across the island. **In this respect, 21 new areas have been added to the NSWMA's collection schedule: 11 new areas in the Corporate Area and St. Andrew, 3 in the North Eastern region, 6 in the Southern region and 1 in the Western region.** It is not an easy task **Madam Speaker**, and we know that there are communities that are still underserved, and need additional work to remove accumulated solid waste and maintain effective collection schedules. **Madam Speaker**, despite this Government's reversal of the chronic pattern of disinvestment in the NSWMA, the Agency still needs partnership with all our citizens, to make our streets and communities consistently clean.

There are too many of our citizens who litter without a second thought, even where containers are provided. The challenge of commercial operators who dump waste of all kinds, from construction rubble to chemicals and expired food remains formidable. In the last year alone, the Agency issued 4,431 tickets for violations of the National Solid Waste Management Act. 1,196 of those tickets were issued to commercial operators. There has to be a much greater sense of civic pride, community and personal responsibility **Madam Speaker**, a genuine acceptance that Jamaica's beauty is our duty, so that a clean environment is the daily Jamaican experience. In this respect, I must commend the Agency for the successful launch of its **Pass Di Broom** initiative, which happened in West Kingston on May 8, and will be rolled out across the island. Truckloads of bulky waste, including derelict vehicles were removed from areas in the Constituency, and I want to thank the residents for turning out to participate.

It is a special effort which aims not only at creating clean spaces, but at enhancing community pride by recalling traditional family activities such as sweeping the yard every day. The NSWMA will be using the **Pass Di Broom** initiative to intensify public education about the importance of clean communities, about proper waste management and recycling, and will also promote community involvement in regular clean-up events. **The initiative has since been rolled out in South-West St. Andrew Madam Speaker, and the next stop will be Central Kingston.** I encourage everyone to come out and participate in this important initiative, as the NSWMA visits your communities, business areas and schools.



Hon. Desmond McKenzie and Mr. Audley Gordon at the launch of the 'Pass Di Broom' initiative in West Kingston

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development is unique for a number of reasons. Our responsibilities range from the care of the vulnerable, to establishing and expanding a new class of micro and small business-people, as part of the community development process. In this latter regard, the Social Development Commission (SDC) continues to successfully implement the Government's human improvement policies, restoring hope and dignity for thousands of people across Jamaica. **Madam Speaker**, this is a critical area of focus that this Administration has given the SDC the budgetary support to develop and implement through innovative programmes. Let me be even more specific. Nine years ago, the SDC had virtually no Budget outside of salaries for employees. Now, there is a Budget of \$1.8 billion.

Madam Speaker, the impressive work being done through the Local Economic Development Support Programme,(LEDSP) is an outstanding example of what is possible when people are taught the professional disciplines that match their talents, get help to be certified, and then make real, sustainable, life-changing income from their locally-based businesses. In the last Financial Year alone, through the LEDSP, the SDC supported **over 390 Local Economic Initiatives. Those targeted interventions created 1,285, jobs, and injected over J\$6 million to implement Economic Villages and Business Opportunity Events.**



A few of the Social Development Commission's LEDSP Economic Villages held across the country.

Last year, the LEDSP facilitated 187 Entrepreneurial Training Sessions, and **over 700 participants acquired critical business skills and knowledge of business principles. Through this Programme, 90 Business Economic Events were held, at which the participants earned a combined income of nearly \$11.5 million. I am also very encouraged by the Administrative and Entrepreneurship Grants being provided. In the last Financial Year, J\$20 million in grants was disbursed, and this money gave well-needed support to over 300 groups and entrepreneurs.** This is not an ordinary initiative. It is a methodical programme that is building out a national network of new micro-business-people, and they are building Jamaica city by city, town by town and community by community.

As a result **Madam Speaker**, the SDC has increased its value to the Jamaican people through its expertise not only through new and better implemented programmes, but also through critical and timely research, from GIS mapping to social research. This has helped to bring a fact-based, scientific approach to decision-making, which was central to the management of COVID-19, and which has resulted in the SDC being in continuous public and private sector demand.

This Administration's refinement of the focus of the SDC has resulted in this Agency becoming a vital driver of social transformation at the community level. It is realising its potential as the key connection point between macro-economic growth and the expansion of the micro-economy. The SDC is ensuring that our citizens at the parochial level are not left out of the national transformation story. **Through the SDC, this Administration is working to ensure that there is one Jamaica that everyone is benefiting from, and that everyone has a stake in.** That is why **Madam Speaker, the entrepreneurship programme will be expanded this year, to find, train and certify 150,000 new entrepreneurs!** This Administration is showing through clear action every day that **we choose Jamaica**, and we want every Jamaican to travel along the road to **prosperity** that is being built by Labour.

I want to give the assurance that the work to transform our communities across Jamaica will be intensified, and more of our citizens will experience the benefits of better policies and better programmes at a personal level.

Madam Speaker, the **Board of Supervision (BOS)** is a key actor in the Ministry's and the Government's strategy, to ensure that no citizen is excluded from the better country that we are building. I am very proud of the leadership of the BOS, which continues to introduce new initiatives that are transforming the delivery of human services in Jamaica. One of these is the infusion of psychiatric nursing aides into the care provided at our infirmaries and Golden Age Homes. These professionals are critical to the management of the residents, a significant number of whom struggle with a range of mental challenges. They require specialised care, and the patience and understanding that only love for vulnerable people plus thorough medical training can generate. **Madam Speaker**, I was privileged to address the very first graduating class of psychiatric nursing aides in March, and 31 of them are from the Poor Relief System. **I am also happy to advise that another 31 psychiatric nursing aides will be trained in this financial year.**



Hon. Desmond McKenzie conversing with some of the psychiatric nurses' aide graduates.

Strident efforts are also being made **Madam Speaker**, to increase the provision of ambulatory care. Ambulances have been deployed to the Portland and St. Elizabeth Infirmaries. **This year, three new ambulances will be acquired for the St. Thomas and St. Ann Infirmaries, along with the Vineyard Town Golden Age Home, at a cost of J\$63 million.**



Ambulance donated by CHASE fund

Since 2016, this Administration has been on a concerted and successful drive to transform the infrastructure of Infirmaries across the country. We have built new male and female wards, built new administrative buildings and therapeutic parks, and provided new equipment, furnishings and security systems to provide the best quality of life for all who reside, work in and visit these places of care. **This year Madam Speaker, we will be spending \$60 million to build a new wing at the St. Catherine Infirmary.**

One of this Ministry's most important activities is the provision of Scholarship opportunities to the children of less fortunate families. **Through the work of the BOS and the Poor Relief Departments, over 500 students have received special awards and bursaries for outstanding academic achievements at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels since 2019. In that time, over \$15 million was spent on providing grants and scholarships for registered children.** We are proud of these young people and their families, who are living symbols of hope, and who we are certain will cross the river from poverty to prosperity through education.



Hon. Desmond McKenzie presents Devonte Walker with the Top CXC Achiever Award at the BOS Reward and Recognition Ceremony.

Madam Speaker, the functionality and conditions of our markets, are among the most heavily discussed subjects under the Local Government portfolio. They are critical economic and social hubs that provide reliable employment and self-employment for thousands of Jamaicans. **This Administration has made critical strides in rehabilitating a number of markets, and in the last financial year, just under \$100 million was spent on repairs.**



Hon. Desmond McKenzie on a tour of the Buff Bay Market, which is under construction.

However, the reality is that most of them are over 100 years old, and their outdated construction features and materials make them highly vulnerable to fires. Going forward **Madam Speaker**, both new construction and market rehabilitation projects will reflect more modern materials and features, such as sprinkler systems to isolate and put out fires. As the work to change our market infrastructure continues, we are also striving to ensure far greater levels of public order in and around the market districts. This includes working with the police to restore proper traffic flow on the roads adjoining the markets, as well as providing a secure environment in which people can buy and sell goods and services. The Ministry, in partnership with other Ministries, Departments and Agencies, will be working with the National Security Council, led by Dr. the Most Hon. Prime Minister to develop and implement specific measures to increase public order and safety.

The Ministry continues the work of improving life in our communities through the provision of minor water supplies. Additionally, we continue to assist the Local Authorities to transport water to areas affected by drought. In the last financial year, \$135 million was spent to deliver this essential resource. We will continue to provide this vital service this year, and to partner with other Ministries and Agencies such as the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, and Rural Water Supply Limited, to ensure the continued elevation of living standards through the reliable provision of potable water.

Madam Speaker, the local government system accounts for approximately 2200 kilometres of road across Jamaica. The cost to rehabilitate and repair these roads, some of which have been in poor shape for decades, is immense. In the last financial year, \$200 million was spent to address parochial roads.

To refine and modernise this effort, **the Ministry has developed a comprehensive Geospatial Database of local roads**. Data has been captured about road length, width, condition, drainage features, physical location, the Divisions in which these roads fall and other important characteristics. This Database is accessible in real time from anywhere in the world and facilitates precise and informed decision-making. A total of 9,261 km of roadway has been mapped to date, with activities completed in Portmore, St.Mary, Manchester, Trelawny and Clarendon. At the same time, mapping activities in St. Ann and Westmoreland are nearing completion with over 80% of the road network mapped.

Despite this critical move forward, It has become increasingly clear that a comprehensive, nationally-oriented road rehabilitation programme is the most viable path to restoring and maintaining our roads. Accordingly, **Madam Speaker**, this Ministry supports the Government's work to establish a singular Road Authority. I want to make it very clear that this Authority will not take away or dilute the Local Authorities' responsibility for parochial roads. It will instead be a hub, a one-stop shop of shared services and expertise, which will review and set standards for the construction and repair of roads as shared public goods. This approach is supported by the World Bank, which is presently consulting all the entities responsible for roads, including main roads and farm roads, to develop and refine the operations of the Authority. I will keep the House advised as the process unfolds.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, there is no question that Jamaica in 2025, is a far better country than it was when this Administration took over in 2016. Through hard work, through smart work, supported all the way by our citizens, we have turned the economy around, and given Jamaica a fighting chance to be elevated from a developing country, to a developed country. The system of local government has been a major contributor to this new and improved Jamaica, and we are committed to making life even better for every Jamaican.

This Government made a commitment to improving our peoples' lives whatever their social standing. We have been keeping that promise by doing many things, including building modern, dignified concrete indigent houses, which are fully furnished, and presenting them to the recipients. These houses not only benefit the families who receive them, they also bring communities closer and change the physical landscape. Last year \$150 million was spent to build and hand over indigent houses. This year **Madam Speaker**, we will be building 45 concrete indigent houses, at a cost of \$450 million, an amount never built before in one year!

Madam Speaker, this Administration continues to make historic investments in improving the national network of streetlights, as part of our public safety infrastructure. The Ministry of Local Government and Community Development in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service took the most critical step in 2020, to light up our public spaces by paying off the last Administration's \$7.2 billion debt to JPS, which was a millstone around Jamaica's neck. Due to the greater fiscal space created by this Government, **I am pleased to announce that an additional 22,800 streetlights will be installed across the country over the next two years. This means Madam Speaker, that each of the 228 Divisions will have 50 streetlights installed in each year.** We are ensuring that the benefits of superior economic management are transferred to all our people, instead of the transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich. We are ensuring that all our citizens, wherever they live and work, can be more secure and feel more secure, in this new Jamaica that is being ***Built by Labour***.

This Administration continues to champion a strong sense of civic pride and civic duty, by paying attention to the needs of our young people through the Youth Summer Employment Programme, the largest of its kind in the Caribbean.

Since 2017, this programme, which enjoys strong bi-partisan support, has employed over 50,000 young people to help the Ministry and the Local Authorities to implement their programmes, while earning a good income and learning critical social and professional skills. The YSEP is over-subscribed every year, with more and more young people wanting to get involved. **Last year, a historic 10,000 young people were employed through YSEP. The young people look forward to the salaries they receive, to assist in paying school fees and related expenses, and so I am pleased to announce that the pay for this year's participants will be increased to \$17,000 per week!**

Madam Speaker, we have achieved great and historic things. However when all is said and done, the greatest success of this Administration is the hope that we have given our fellow citizens that they can live their best lives right here in Jamaica, the land of their birth. I am proud

to be part of a Government that is still creating and implementing new ideas to speed up the development of Jamaica. We are driven by the constant desire to turn vision into reality. The positive things that are happening are not accidental. They are happening because the people of Jamaica are accepting that we are working hard for them, and they are giving us their critical co-operation and support. **These positive things are happening because we are working as a joined-up Government, putting in the teamwork to make the Jamaican Dream work.**

In this tenth year of service as an Administration, our focus on developing Jamaica and our commitment to the people of Jamaica are even greater than they were a decade ago. We knew when we were seeking office, that the task of overcoming decades of economic and social damage was huge, that it would mean short nights, long days and tremendous personal sacrifices. We chose to take on that task because we chose Jamaica as our home, the place to live the rest of our lives in, among our people. ***In this year of national decision-making, we reaffirm that we choose Jamaica, and we stand ready to continue serving the people of Jamaica as their Government.*** **Madam Speaker**, I want to paraphrase a well known biblical quotation from the book of Joshua Chapter 24, verses 14 & 15, that reflects our view of public service. "...fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness...choose this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Madam Speaker, we continue to be blessed and guided by the Lord Almighty. We continue to give service with sincerity. We do it because We choose Jamaica, and **_we choose to serve the people of Jamaica, land we love.**

Thank you **Madam Speaker**.

Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP

Minister of Local Government and Community Development

May 28, 2025

