



**Ministry of Local Government
and Community Development**

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eTIMES

2025/2026 FINANCIAL YEAR

QUARTER 1



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A Therapeutic Park for the Residents of the St. Catherine Infirmary

A therapeutic park for residents of the St. Catherine Infirmary in Spanish Town is now officially open at the facility and was handed over by the Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie.

While speaking at the ceremony, Minister McKenzie emphasised that residents should feel a sense of comfort while they are in the care of the State.

“It allows the residents the opportunity to sit outside under the gazebo, take in the cool evening, read, laugh, play and enjoy themselves. This is something that will help to ease their mind, relax them in an environment that is conducive for care, because this is what we are offering,” Mr. McKenzie said.

The Minister further pointed out that many residents from infirmaries across the island have enrolled into universities to improve themselves so that they can contribute to the country.

“Right now, there are residents of our infirmaries who are presently at the University of the West Indies at class improving their education despite their circumstances,” he said.

The therapeutic park features a cascading waterfall made from rustic stonework and framed by lush greenery, adding to the relaxing ambience. The area is also cordoned off with grid railings to ensure safety for residents.



The Hon. Desmond McKenzie showing a section of the St. Catherine Infirmary's Therapeutic Park.

First 3-Bedroom Unit to be Constructed Under the Indigent Housing Programme

The Nation family in Porus Manchester will have a new place to call home upon the completion of their three-bedroom unit being built under the Indigent Housing Programme spearheaded by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development.

The unit, for which ground was broken, will be the first three-bedroom house to be built under the programme and signals an expansion of the initiative which previously focused on providing one and two-bedroom houses for Jamaicans living in derelict conditions.

In 2024, following Hurricane Beryl, a fire ravaged the home of Ms. Yvette Nation and her family. They applied for assistance through the Board of Supervision and approval was granted for a new unit to be constructed.

“We are standing on what is left of a family residence that was gutted by fire after the hurricane,” said the Minister of Local Government and Community Development, the Hon. Desmond McKenzie, during a visit to the site shortly after the disaster took place.

The minister used the opportunity to remind residents that they should take the necessary precautions to safeguard their properties while they wait for electricity to be reinstated by the Jamaica Public Service (JPS).

Fast-forward to May 2025, representatives from the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development and the Board of Supervision returned for the ground-breaking ceremony to mark the commencement of the construction for a new unit.



Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie (centre), Cllr. Claudiah Morant Baker of the Porus Division (right), along with members of the Nation family at the groundbreaking ceremony after they lost their home in a fire following the passage of Hurricane Beryl in 2024.



St. Elizabeth Infirmary Receives Ambulance Valued over \$17M

The St. Elizabeth Infirmary has received an ambulance valued more than \$17 million.

The provision is the first facilitated under a partnership between the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development and the Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education (CHASE) Fund.

Speaking during the handover ceremony at the Santa Cruz-based institution on April 10, Portfolio Minister, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, highlighted that, apart from the facility in St. James, all other infirmaries across the island along with two golden age homes currently lack ambulance services.

He advised that the second ambulance being provided under the partnership will be handed over to the Portland infirmary shortly.

Mr. McKenzie further informed that consequent on the collaboration, each infirmary across Jamaica will, “[for] the first time... be equipped with an ambulance to support the work of the staff and to provide for the residents.”

The Minister underscored the importance of the infirmaries being equipped with the vehicles. “In an institution where we have 99 per cent of those who reside here [being] elderly... it is not an easy thing if they get sick, to put them in anything that you can find to take them to the hospital,” he highlighted.

Mr. McKenzie urged the staff at the St. Elizabeth Infirmary to ensure the ambulance is properly maintained and only used for its intended purpose.



Ambulance donated by CHASE Fund to the St. Elizabeth Infirmary

Chase Fund Donates Fully Equipped Ambulance to Portland Infirmary

A fully equipped ambulance is now in service at the Portland Infirmary, enhancing the institution's ability to respond to emergencies.

The vehicle, donated by the Culture, Health, Arts, Sports and Education (CHASE) Fund, was handed over on May 21. It is the third ambulance CHASE has donated to an infirmary.

Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, said the donation will significantly enhance the infirmary's ability to care for its residents.

He indicated that the Ministry is currently procuring three additional ambulances, adding that "when we have completed the circle, every infirmary in Jamaica will have an ambulance at its disposal".

Mr. McKenzie commended the leadership of the Portland infirmary and, by extension, the Portland Municipal Corporation for their role in the parish's transformation

and the "social revolution" being driven by improved care for the poor, homeless and infirm residents.

For his part, CHASE Fund Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Wilford 'Billy' Heaven, said the donation of the ambulance reflects CHASE's shared commitment to ensuring that quality care is accessible, responsive and compassionate.

"We expect that this ambulance will improve the response time to medical emergencies and enable timely transfers to hospitals and elsewhere," the CEO said.

He urged the infirmary's staff to ensure the vehicle is used solely for its intended purpose.

"It's not a general-purpose vehicle. While we are sympathetic to you wanting some lunch down the road or a little transportation home because it is late, we do not expect that this ambulance will be used for that purpose. It is purpose-specific and must be used that way," Mr. Heaven emphasised.

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His Worship the Mayor Cllr. Paul Thompson, Mayor of Port Antonio looks on as Minister of Local Government and Community Development, the Hon. Desmond McKenzie, inspects the ambulance that was donated to the Portland Infirmary through the CHASE Fund.



Chase Fund Donates Fully Equipped Ambulance to Portland Infirmary

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He pointed out that CHASE has been actively supporting the Local Government Ministry through various projects at infirmaries islandwide, as well as through equipment and infrastructure upgrades.

Member of Parliament for Portland Eastern, Ann-Marie Vaz, welcomed the ambulance donation.

“This ambulance has been well needed. We now have a fully equipped ambulance to ensure that there is no time wasted between the illness and the treatment. This is... more evidence of the care this Government gives to the less fortunate,” Mrs. Vaz said.

“[The ambulance] must be driven at a particular speed. The driver who is going to drive it must ensure that he drives it in the way that it must be driven. I don’t want six months after, to hear that it is in the garage because the driver forgot to check the oil. It must not skip a beat when it’s time for servicing. That is one of the things that destroys a lot of government vehicles, because we don’t take pride in them,” he emphasised.

For his part, CHASE Fund Chief Executive Officer, Wilford ‘Billy’ Heaven, said the occasion of the handover is indicative of how much the organisation cares.

“It’s an indication of the service that we want to provide for the most vulnerable in our society. As we all know, infirmary residents often live with multiple health issues, multiple health challenges, and depend on timely and specialised care to really bring them back to where they ought to be,” he stated.

“This ambulance is intended to ensure that we provide the service that they need, as the needs arise, in safe, reliable transportation mode... that is available here on spot. Whether it be for diagnostic, whether it be for emergency care or hospital visit, it doesn’t matter, the ambulance is here to provide that service. The CHASE Fund, of course, is always pleased to play roles like these to help the less fortunate in our society,” Mr. Heaven added.

In her remarks, Acting Matron of the Infirmary, Bianca Mitchell-Smith, thanked the Ministry and CHASE Fund for the vehicle which, she said, was greatly needed.



Ambulance donated by CHASE Fund to the Portland Infirmary

Government Commits to Ensuring that Accountability Systems Continue to Work During Disasters

With the Atlantic Hurricane Season due to start in three days, Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, has indicated that the island is in a state of readiness.

He gave the assurance while making his 2025/26 Sectoral Debate presentation in the House of Representatives on Wednesday (May 28).

“The shelters have been visited [and] assessed by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) team, along with the Ministries of Labour and Social Security and Health and Wellness. “All shelters in Jamaica, based on the reports, are in a state of readiness in case there is a need to use our shelters,” he told the House.

He informed that several recommendations that came out of an evaluation undertaken by the Disaster Risk Management Review Committee on the state of Jamaica’s disaster infrastructure, are now being implemented.

The Committee, headed by former Commissioner of Police and current Ambassador to the United States, Major General Antony Anderson, was named by Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, last September. The recommendations being implemented from the Committee’s report are intended to strengthen Jamaica’s response to disasters, which is led by ODPEM.

Minister McKenzie said, “It is important that our emergency service response capabilities are at a level so that when it becomes necessary, we can respond.”

He assured that the Government continues to strengthen the operations of ODPEM, and informed that this year, the agency will be introducing Starlink satellite internet service as one of its communication tools.

Meanwhile, the Minister called for national unity in preparing the country for what he said is expected to be one of the most active hurricane seasons in Jamaica’s history.

“I urge the country to listen to the various bulletins. Members of Parliament [and] Councillors, engage your

constituents, especially those who are in areas that are prone to flooding,” he encouraged.

Mr. McKenzie reiterated that the Government is doing its part, having allocated the necessary funds for drain cleaning and other mitigation activities.

“I am saying that we are prepared as a country, but we need everybody to join us in that crusade,” he said.



The Hon. Desmond McKenzie delivering his remarks at the National Disaster Risk Management Council Meeting 2025.



Reigniting Readiness: Annotto Bay Fire Station Rehabilitated

ANNOTTO BAY, St. Mary: On June 10, the Jamaica Fire Brigade opened the newly refurbished Annotto Bay Fire Station that was funded by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development.

This comes after Honourable Desmond McKenzie, Minister of Local Government and Community Development announced that work was underway to repair the previous structure during the handover ceremony of the Port Maria Fire Station two years ago. During that speech, he pledged to invest \$70 million to upgrade the building that was in a state of disrepair and desperate need of modernisation.

The new two-storey structure, which features a gym, conference room, laundry area, kitchen and other facilities, stands as a testament to the ministry's commitment to fulfilling its mandate to Jamaica.

During his address, Hon. Desmond McKenzie stated, "We [the Ministry] have been making significant investment in our firefighting capabilities."

He added that he has identified gaps where firefighting services are required pointing to the Balaclava area, where there is currently no firefighting response.

"I am pleased to announce today that the process to purchase and to commence operations of a new firefighting facility in the Balaclava area is almost complete," he continued.

Also present was Mayor of the Parish and Chairman of the St. Mary Municipal Corporation, Councillor Fitzroy Wilson who commended the Minister on his work.

"I am sure that all the residents of St. Mary and the firefighters will agree with me to say that you are one of those performing ministers who will heed to the request," he said as he called for a fire station to be built in Richmond, St. Mary.

The Annotto Bay Fire Station adds to the list of state-of-the-art stations and is one of 35 fire stations across the island.



Annotto Bay Fire Station before renovation



Annotto Bay Fire Station after renovation

Construction of Negril Fruit and Vegetable Market to Begin in 3 Months

Residents of Negril can expect the construction of the new fruit and vegetable market for the town to begin in the next three months. On Friday, the Minister of Local Government and Community Development, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, visited the town to meet with key stakeholders about the construction of the Negril market.

During the visit, the Minister disclosed that the town, which is currently the only major town in Jamaica without a market, will see the construction happening in two phases.

“I’m expecting that within the next two to three months, we will physically see major movements and some level of work that will commence on the long-awaited Negril market,” he said.

In phase one, the members of the Westmoreland Municipal Corporation will re-engage the vendors, who are

currently occupying the site for the permanent home of the market to prepare for relocation to a temporary space while construction is taking place. The Minister noted that the temporary space for the market is ready, noting that only the painting of the bathrooms and repairs to the fencing are left to be completed.

“The temporary location that was prepared couple months ago is fully ready. The bathrooms, water, [and] electricity is in place,” the minister said.

“We did some work on the ground but because of Beryl, the fence is down. There is some minor works to be done on the road surface. As soon as the estimates which I’m expected to get by Monday (June 23) for that comes, the funds will be made readily available for the work to commence on the temporary cleaning and re-erecting of the fence and painting of the bathroom, that should not take more than two weeks,” he added.

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Minister of Local Government and Community Development, the Hon. Desmond McKenzie, staff of the Ministry and the Westmoreland Municipal Corporation, and other stakeholders during a visit to the temporary site for the Negril Market.



Construction of Negril Market to begin in 3 months

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The Minister added that the new market will be retrofitted with translucent roofing for natural lighting to prevent fires; noting that 90% of fires in the markets across the island are because of illegal electrical wiring. He added that vendors who require additional lighting, will need to approach the Jamaica Public Service (JPS) for a pre-paid system to be established.

“The municipality cannot undertake the cost of electricity when vendors bridge light or steal current and when the bill is to be paid it falls on the local authority,” the Minister warned.

The Mayor of Westmoreland, Councillor Danree Delancy said that Westmoreland Municipal Corporation has been waiting for the announcement and is committed to doing their part in the project’s success.

“For years, the WMC have been anxiously awaiting such pronouncements and we’re doing everything to ensure that this project runs as smoothly as possible because we are on for the development of our parish,” he said.

“I think all in all...parties concerned are on the same page at this time and are working towards that same common end,” he continued.



His Worship the Mayor Cllr. Danree Delancy, Mayor of Savanna-la-Mar, Hon. Desmond McKenzie (centre) and staff of the Ministry and the Westmoreland Municipal Corporation tour the site for the Negril Market.

Youth Summer Employment Programme Launched

Since 2017, the Youth Summer Employment Programme (YSEP) launched under the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, has been more than just a summer job, it has been a launchpad for thousands of Jamaican youth to immerse themselves into meaningful work and community-building activities.

This year, the programme launched on Tuesday, June 17 in the Kenneth Rattray Conference room at the Jamaica Conference Centre with Prime Minister Dr. the Most Honourable, Andrew Holness being the keynote speaker. Starting this July, 10,000 participants will engage in four (4) weeks of impactful social welfare services, earning \$17,000-\$18,000 weekly.



YSEP participants look on as presentations are made during the programme launch.

Over the last 9 years, the programme has employed approximately 42,000 Jamaicans ages 17-29, helping them to prepare for the world of work, while gaining hands-on experience within the ministry, its agencies and municipal corporations with some receiving permanent employment within those entities.

While speaking at last year's launch, Honourable Desmond McKenzie, Minister of Local Government and Community Development cited that the programme is the largest youth summer employment programme in the region.

"This is a programme that takes into consideration the needs of young people. It is the largest youth summer employment programme in the Caribbean," he said.

Participants will assist with infrastructure mapping, traders' surveying, streetlight auditing, and vulnerable population surveying — data that are crucial to improving the ministry's database and its agencies.

Some of the entities involved in the programme are the Municipal Corporations, Social Development Commission (SDC), National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA), Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB), Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), Board of Supervision, and other government ministries and agencies.



Participants at the launch of the Youth Summer Employment Programme (YSEP).





YSEP Orientations 2025



Disaster Preparedness Expo – Trelawny



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