



GOVERNMENT OF JAMAICA

SECTORAL PRESENTATION

Presented by:

Hon. Desmond McKenzie, CD, MP, JP
Minister of Local Government & Community Development

**Increasing Hope for all
by driving National Development
through Local Government**

TUESDAY MAY 28, 2024

GORDON HOUSE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Jamaica Fire Brigade	5
New Records Management System - A Transformational Tool for the JFB	6
Fire Warden Clubs in Schools Project.....	6
Bushfire Management	7
NSWMA	8
Drum A Di Gate Campaign.....	9
Board Of Supervision.....	10
Homelessness.....	11
Infirmiry Care	12
ODPEM.....	13
Flood Hazard Early Warning System for Port Maria, St. Mary.....	16
Social Development Commission.....	16
Conclusion.....	19



Introduction

Madam Speaker,

I stand to make my contribution to this year's Debate, with the unwavering support of my Cabinet and Parliamentary colleagues, and on the shoulders of some great Jamaicans who have gone before me. One of the greatest is the man who shaped my life and career like no other, the Most Honourable Edward Phillip George Seaga, who entered and left the world on this day, May 28. I feel particularly honoured and grateful this year for the direction of my life and the opportunities I have had to serve my country, over the last fifty years as an elected representative of the people of Western Kingston at the parochial and national levels.

My service as Councillor, Mayor, and Parliamentarian would have been impossible without the bedrock support of my political family, my social family, my biological family, and especially my rock, the Queen of my castle, Marcia. Their absolute faith in me is complemented by the support I continue to receive from my administrative and protection personnel, the leadership of my Ministry and from the Local Authorities.

Madam Speaker, after eight years of leading local government, I am very heartened to report that despite historical challenges, there is a greater public appreciation about the role of local government and the huge national impact that it has when its functions are effectively implemented. This Administration has made unprecedented investments in the personnel, systems and structures of local government, and in many instances, we are seeing the fruit of the new projects and programmes that are being **Built by Labour**.

Despite this **Madam Speaker,** we are attuned to the soundings that we are receiving from our citizens. They acknowledge that we are doing positive things, and that some of our achievements are unprecedented. Their expectations about the timelines in which development should happen, are significantly shorter than anything you will find in any Economics textbook. This Government recognizes and accepts that challenge and instruction from our people **Madam Speaker,** to continue to expand **Hope** as we build this new Jamaica.

We see it as the expectations of a rapidly evolving society, where our people want to achieve the Jamaican Dream for themselves here and now, and not only for their children.

The Right Excellent Alexander Bustamante founded the Jamaica Labour Party in 1943, to give political support to the labourers all over Jamaica who were agitating for better working conditions, for a little more bread and a little more butter.

He stated shortly after Independence, that the Party is **"aimed at lifting the small man, for his time has come to have better consideration and a better life."** Today, under the leadership of the Most Honourable Dr. Andrew Michael Holness, this Jamaica Labour Party Administration has not only created better conditions for our working people and their families but has created more opportunities to work than ever before! Employment levels are at a historic high **Madam Speaker,** and more of our people are obtaining the sense of satisfaction and dignity that jobs provide.

To those who claim that we cater exclusively to people at the upper end of the social ladder, I say that the Jamaica Labour Party is devoted not only to protecting the poor, but to elevating them by taking them out of poverty.

I stand here as living proof that the Jamaica Labour Party is everybody's Party.

Madam Speaker, our mission as an effective, joined-up Government, is to ensure that no-one is left behind. The Ministry of Local Government and Community Development has a unique role in making decisive contributions to macro and micro-economic development, parochial advancement, community improvement and social protection.

Madam Speaker, my Presentation today will address the big things that are happening and will happen through local government. Let me first declare **that all our programmes and projects are designed and implemented to bring HOPE to our people**. From employment and social assistance programmes to infrastructure projects and the care of our vulnerable persons, everything we do is geared toward maintaining and elevating **Hope** as the national project of transforming Jamaica continues.

JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE

Madam Speaker, the Jamaica Fire Brigade's role in protecting the people and assets of our rapidly evolving country is of greater importance than ever before. The Agency continued to build capacity by inducting 206 highly trained new firefighters in the last financial year and adding essential vehicles and equipment to ensure optimum service delivery, at a cost of just under J\$400 million. Of special note **Madam Speaker**, is the **historic roll-out of standby generators at our Fire Stations to guarantee 24/7 operations under any circumstances**.



Batch of highly trained firefighters.

J\$24.5 million was spent to obtain five generators in the last financial year, and seven more will be purchased this year. **This will result in an overall 25 standby generators in service at the Fire Stations, something that has never happened before.** In a similar vein **Madam Speaker**, the revolutionizing of our fire service delivery infrastructure is continuing at a rapid pace. In the last financial year, J\$138 million was spent to repair and rehabilitate 10 Fire Stations across the country, from Morant Bay Fire Station in the east to Negril Fire Station in the west.

The remaining Fire Stations repaired include Buff Bay, Ocho Rios, St. Ann's Bay, Santa Cruz, Black River and Waterford. As we speak, rehabilitation works are being carried out at the Halfway Tree Fire Station, at a cost of \$15 million.

Phase Two of the Annotto Bay Fire Station renovation project is well underway, and the final Phase of this \$103 million project is scheduled to be completed in this financial year. We are keeping the promise we made, to give the people of Ulster Spring and surrounding communities a brand new Fire Station. So far **Madam Speaker**, \$27.6 million has been spent on grading and walling works which are 80% complete, and by next month, construction from the ground up will begin, which is projected to cost \$153 million.

NEW RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM – A TRANSFORMATIONAL TOOL FOR THE JFB

Madam Speaker, this year, for the first time in its history, the Jamaica Fire Brigade will be installing a modern, first-world electronic Records Management System. This has massive implications for the quality of the already high levels of service being provided by the Agency. In addition to providing inventory management, this System will streamline the JFB's entire building inspection process for properties, including inspection schedules, reports of violations, and compliance tracking. It will store building plans islandwide into an electronic database, thus giving firefighters quick access to floor plans and fire escape routes. It will provide live tracking of fire personnel and equipment to ensure maximum safety and efficiency.

It will create and manage our firefighters' shift schedules, including overtime and leave requests, thereby ensuring the efficient rotation of these front-line employees and preventing undue stress and burnout. Just as critically, **it will manage emergency calls, log them, specify the nature and priority of incidents, and dispatch the appropriate personnel and equipment. Five modules of this new Records Management System are now being tested.** This is a total game-changer in the life of the Brigade, as this Administration continues the work of creating a first-world fire service in Jamaica.

FIRE WARDEN CLUBS IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

Madam Speaker, of all the important projects being initiated by the Fire Brigade, the Fire Warden Clubs in Schools Project has the greatest potential to transform national attitudes to fire safety.



This is a new and special component of the Fire and Life Safety Education Programme, and it aims to provide our children in the primary education system with the skills they need to avoid and prevent fires and bring them into a culture of disaster prevention. The Fire Wardens Club is a uniformed Club, endorsed and supported by the Ministry of Education and Youth, and it now forms part of the extra-curricular programmes in our primary schools. This is a social transformation initiative **Madam Speaker**, and I am highly optimistic that it can help to save our children's lives now and create an inter-generational culture of fire safety that will preserve lives in homes and communities all over Jamaica.



JFB Fire Warden's Club programme

BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT



Madam Speaker, I want to make some short but important remarks about bushfires. They account for the highest number of genuine fire calls that the Brigade receives, and in 2023, our firefighters were called to put out 6,443 bushfires across all parishes. This is a whopping 81% increase over the number of bushfires recorded in 2022. Since the start of 2024, we have already had 2,134 bushfires. The Brigade is now anticipating where these fires will occur, by using the Bushfire Warning Index provided by the National Meteorological Service. These initiatives are having the desired effect **Madam Speaker**, as the Brigade has been able to respond strategically and save hundreds of hectares of residential, commercial and government lands, rather than being blindsided by bushfires.

NSWMA



Madam Speaker, the National Solid Waste Management Authority has been facing a number of criticisms, as it works to clear backlogs, and ensure consistency in collecting residential waste. I know the challenges that the leadership and staff are tackling, and they have my total confidence as they work hard to rectify the problems in the field. **The addition of 50 new compactor trucks to the fleet has resulted among other things, in over 1.1 million tonnes of solid waste being collected over the last financial year.**



50 New Compactor Trucks added to the NSWMA fleet.

Eight of these trucks are exclusively being used to address backlogs and are making a big difference in this respect.

I can assure this House and the country that national public cleansing efforts will intensify this year. In keeping with this Administration's commitment to substantial investments in the NSWMA, another batch of 50 assorted trucks are arriving as we speak.



One of the ten (10) new trucks to be added to the nswma fleet.

10 are already here and the remainder are on the way. Their deployment across the Regions will lift the standards of service to a new level. This will go beyond general improvements in public cleansing, which I will disclose later.

Drum A Di Gate Campaign

Madam Speaker, while public education campaigns are still being used to encourage proper disposal habits, one of the important initiatives launched by the NSWMA, is the Drum A Di Gate Campaign. The Agency is identifying residences across the country that have no garbage bins, and placing storage containers at the gates. The initiative is in its early stages, and just under 1,500 bins have been placed so far. This is important not only for encouraging proper waste management at the household level, but also for enhancing a more orderly and physically pleasant community environment.



Drums being received by Executive Director of the NSWMA, Mr. Audley Gordon, for the entities 'Drum A Di Gate' Initiative.

Madam Speaker, the accumulation of disposed plastics continues to be a national challenge, which the Agency is tackling through a plastics separation and collection drive that currently involves 69 communities across the country.

Over half-a-million pounds of plastic have been collected so far, and this critical initiative will be expanded this year. It will be supported by the dedicated assignment of ten tipper units, which are already in the island. This is a vital complement to the work that is constantly being done to clear waste from gullies and drains, of which plastic is a huge component. Preventing plastics from entering our waterways is of even greater importance as we enter the Hurricane Season.



Collecting plastics separated by residents, for proper disposal.

BOARD OF SUPERVISION

Madam Speaker, the Board of Supervision continues to provide Hope for our vulnerable citizens, as the Ministry's driver of the Social Protection Programme.

HOMELESSNESS



Madam Speaker, the work of the BOS is bringing HOPE to our citizens in homeless circumstances. Two night shelters were built in Falmouth and Ocho Rios at a cost of \$42 million, the Clarendon Night Shelter was completed, and Phase 2 of the King Street Transitional Centre was completed at a cost of \$40 million.



St. Ann Night Shelter

This year, a new homeless facility will be built in Portland, at a cost of just over \$50 million. While infrastructure projects and care services are providing solace to our homeless persons, the truly beautiful story of Hope and triumph is that **since 2020, 66 of them have been rehabilitated and reintegrated into their communities.**

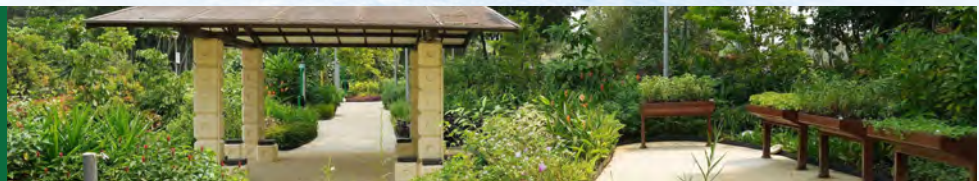
Even better Madam Speaker, they have become productive members of society. Some are employed within the private and public sectors, and a few have become entrepreneurs who, through the efforts of the BOS, were trained at HEART.



Another 20 previously homeless persons were successfully reunited with family members who had earlier abandoned them and are now employed in a variety of places including the Municipal Corporations, hotels and at Business Process Outsourcing centres. Five of them are currently attending school, with two pursuing a Law degree and Software Programming degree respectively.

Madam Speaker, this is the ultimate objective of our interventions...to treat homelessness as temporary rather than permanent, to help the people who use these transitional facilities to find or rediscover their full potential, to help to reunite them with their families, so that everyone can enjoy a better life.

INFIRMARY CARE

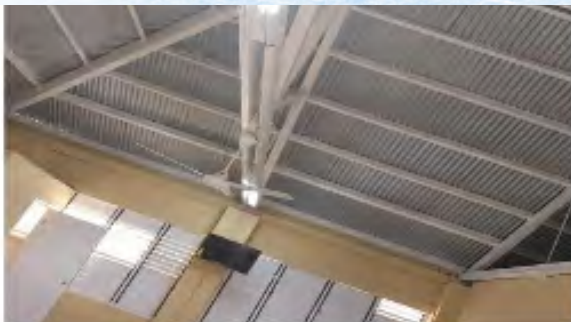


Madam Speaker, through the Ministry's partnership with the National Housing Trust, new Male Wards were completed at the Westmoreland and Portland infirmaries. Additionally, various renovation and rehabilitation projects were completed at the Hanover, Manchester, St. James, St. Mary and Trelawny Infirmaries, as well as the George Abrams and Vineyard Town Golden Age Home, at a combined cost of over \$80 million.

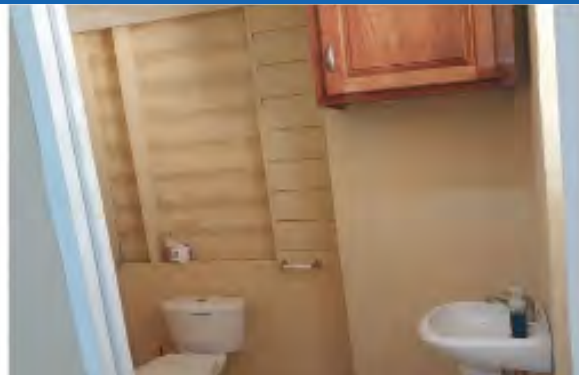


A section of the newly constructed Therapeutic Park at the Vineyard Town Golden Age Home.

Madam Speaker, the infirmaries have been helping to reduce the numbers of social cases in hospitals. I must commend the Westmoreland Infirmary, which took in 8 such persons, and the Vineyard Town Golden Age Home, which accommodated 25 people. Critically **Madam Speaker**, the **Vineyard Town Golden Age Home will be doing infra-structure works, to create an additional 50 bed spaces for social cases in this financial year.**



A renovated physiotherapy room at the Hanover Infirmary



Madam Speaker, one of the greatest examples of Hope, of triumph over adversity, is the children of less fortunate families who are lifting themselves into prosperity, through educational support being managed by the BOS and the Poor Relief Departments. Since 2019, 446 students have received special awards and bursaries for outstanding academic achievements in PEP, CSEC and CAPE exams.

\$16 million was provided in the last financial year for school expenses for registered children, while \$3 million in Grants and Scholarships was officially awarded to 61 Registered students who excelled in PEP, CSEC CAPE and at the Tertiary level. **Madam Speaker**, these students are a source of pride to their families, the people of the Poor Relief System and to us in the Ministry.



One of the many awardees receiving her cheque from the Minister, Hon. Desmond McKenzie.

ODPEM

Madam Speaker, the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management continues to make major contributions to the elevation of Jamaica's disaster profile, through a range of programmes and partnerships. In this regard, I want to focus public attention on the **Project for the Improvement of Emergency Communications System in Jamaica.**

Madam Speaker, a huge part of emergency management prior, during and after any disaster is an effective, dedicated communications network. In this respect, ground-breaking advancements have been made in implementing this Project. The essential feature of this bilateral initiative between the Governments of Jamaica and Japan, is the installation of a wireless communication system and related equipment, to ensure swift and secure communication between critical Agencies and vulnerable communities through a single radio communication platform. Over J\$2 billion has been invested in this Project,

and I am pleased to advise that 15 Early Warning siren towers were built at Port Maria in St. Mary, Old Harbour Bay and the Angels to Bog Walk corridor in St. Catherine.

This early warning system will transmit messages issued by ODPEM to residents and commuters in these vulnerable areas. It will also facilitate evacuation training and simulation activities in these communities.



Early Warning siren towers

As part of this Project, 292 mobile radios have been installed in emergency vehicles, to make first responders better able to coordinate emergency response activities. Additionally, 120 base station radios are now located at 14 integrated command stations islandwide, including the Municipal Corporations and Public Health Departments, Fire stations, police stations and hospitals. There is now repeater and microwave equipment at 24 repeater sites across the country, thereby extending Jamaica's emergency communication coverage to approximately 95%.

This is a new day in emergency management. This has never happened before. The effective completion of this Project could not not have come at a better time **Madam Speaker**, just before the start of this year's Atlantic Hurricane Season. Next month, the Japan International Cooperation Agency is scheduled to officially hand over this disaster communications infrastructure to the Government of Jamaica. This will coincide with the 60th anniversary of bilateral relations between our Governments, and mark 34 years of cooperation between JICA and Jamaica. It is a tremendous partnership and friendship that we value highly, and we look forward to achieving greater things together in the years to come.

Flood Hazard Early Warning System for Port Maria, St. Mary



Madam Speaker, in my last Presentation I indicated the Government's intention to initiate a flood warning mechanism for Port Maria, as part of a wider effort to protect property and especially the people of this extremely vulnerable town.

This year, work will begin to install the Flood Hazard Early Warning System for Port Maria. Specifically, this will be comprised of a Siren Tower that can be automatically and manually operated.

Two automatic weather stations, and two rainfall intensity gauges in the watersheds will be linked to the siren. Additionally, clearly identifiable evacuation routes with appropriate signs will be developed to ensure rapid escape from flood-prone areas.

The ODPEM will also undertake a public education and awareness campaign, in which residents and business owners will be trained to manually operate the siren, interpret warning messages and take the necessary actions to reduce the effects of flooding on their homes and businesses through special flood mitigation techniques. A Community Disaster Risk Management Group for Port Maria will also be established.

This Project will be implemented at a cost of \$17 million, and I am looking forward to its efficient and effective installation. Madam Speaker, this Government does what it says. Commitment made, commitment kept.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Madam Speaker, it cannot be overstated that this Government is serious about elevating **HOPE**, by ensuring that all Jamaicans feel connected to the significant economic and social changes being implemented across the country.

The work of the Social Development Commission is invaluable in this respect, and the Agency is making a notable impact on our citizens' lives at the community level. In the last financial year, the Agency successfully supported 49 community projects valued at \$93 million, which had infrastructure development, education and economic empowerment as their main objectives.

These Projects have had a direct impact on nearly 157-thousand people Madam Speaker, and they are part of our drive to create economic incentives and opportunities within communities, as part of the Community Development objective.

Additionally, the SDC issued 357 grants amounting to \$19.6 million, and Special Entrepreneurship Grants valued at \$7.4 million, to 149 small business owners in several communities.



Two recipients of the SDC Special Entrepreneurship Grants.

Through the **Local Economic Development Support Programme**, the SDC conducted 154 entrepreneurship training sessions to 416 Local Economic Initiatives. The deeper value of this **Madam Speaker**, is found in the **Economic Villages and Business Opportunity Events, and 105 of these were held last year**. These activities have generated sales revenue of over \$12.5 million, and they are proving to be valuable opportunities for small community entrepreneurs to access commercial space, run their businesses successfully, and stimulate the micro-economy.

These and other community-building initiatives resulted in the SDC receiving over 200 project proposals and providing funding for 184 of them to the tune of \$14.5 million. These are critical activities that are increasing sustainable community entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, and raising the personal pride that people have in their local spaces.



Some of the various Local Economic Development initiatives undertaken by the SDC.

CONCLUSION

Madam Speaker, the Government of Prime Minister the Most Honourable Andrew Holness gave a commitment to the Jamaican people eight years ago, that we would change their lives for the better, that **HOPE** was on the way. We have been honouring that promise every year since then. This Government has delivered public services to more people in more communities than any other. Many who have felt isolated and resigned themselves to lives without public amenities, are now connected through modern infrastructure and services to the new Jamaica that is still under construction.

This Ministry is making a strong contribution to this process by improving traditional services and by introducing new approaches to service delivery. When people in drought-stricken communities called for water, we not only trucked water to them, but also developed a network of modern, community-based **Water Shops** that have significantly lifted their standards of living and brought dignity and hope. This Government has made tremendous inroads in expanding water access and bringing piped potable water to our citizens. **This year, we will be building new Water Shops in selected areas in Clarendon, to address the needs of affected residents.** We are improving living standards and bringing **HOPE** by rehabilitating more **parochial roads** for our citizens. **This year, we will be spending \$200 million to repair more of these roads.**

We will be restoring and expanding the network of public cemeteries, as places of dignity for the departed, and tranquility and reflection for the living. **This year, \$100 million will be spent on cleaning and beautifying our public cemeteries.**

Madam Speaker, I cannot adequately describe the smiles on the faces of individuals, families, and their surrounding communities, every time I hand over an indigent house. **Under the Indigent Housing Programme, Built by Labour,** the construction of modern concrete houses with proper amenities and conveniences, reflects this Government's determination that the humblest among us must live in dignity. Last year, over \$100 million was spent to build indigent houses in St. Mary, Hanover, Westmoreland, Manchester and St. Elizabeth and Kingston and St. Andrew. This year **Madam Speaker**, I am very happy to announce that this Government, the caring Government led by our Builder, the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, **will be spending \$150 million to build new Indigent Houses across our parishes,** so that those in need have a modern place they can finally call home.

We continue **Madam Speaker**, to improve public cleanliness through historic investments in collection units for the National Solid Waste Management Authority. We will focus on removing old cars and other types of bulky waste, which are eyesores and health hazards. The NSWMA has been tagging these old vehicles, **and now, with the acquisition of four brand-new crane trucks, I am announcing a massive islandwide derelict vehicle Removal Programme that will be carried out this year. Additionally, we will be**

obtaining 8 specialized Scout trucks that will collect solid waste from hard to reach areas in communities across the country. This Government will continue to change the face of Jamaica in a fundamental way.

Madam Speaker, since its creation in 2017, the **Youth Summer Employment Programme** has been a beacon of **HOPE** for our young people. Over 40-thousand young people have been professionally trained and deployed to help the Ministry and the Local Authorities implement critical functions, while earning a good income. This is an immensely popular Programme, the largest in the Caribbean, and we are already being flooded with requests from the youngsters about the details for this year. I am very pleased to announce that **this summer, we will for the first time in any year be accommodating 10-thousand young people in the Youth Summer Employment Programme.**

All of our projects and programmes are bringing the Jamaican people **HOPE: H for Human advancement, O for Opportunity, P for Progress at the personal and community levels, and the E means Everyone will share in the better Jamaica that this Government is developing. No one will be left behind.**

Our philosophy of governance and our performance have elevated public expectations of us, and we accept the commendations and criticisms that come as a result. **Madam Speaker** you know that "People don't stone fluxy mango." Public expectations are very high, and we will work even harder to fulfil them. **This Government is still mission-oriented and focused. We still have the passion to serve, and the vision, vigour, vim and vitality.**

On behalf of this Government, I bring to you, the new Jamaican young and old, the evidence of our achievements today, the message of **HOPE**, and the commitment that we will continue to deliver a better tomorrow. You or someone you know has been positively touched by the work of this Government. We will continue working until all our citizens are prouder and stand taller, because they live in the greater Jamaica that we were elected to build. The Book of Galatians 6 vs 9 says it best:

"So let us not become tired of doing good, for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest." I say to every Jamaican: Keep being positive. Always be hopeful. We will achieve the Jamaican Dream together. Greatness is in us and in our country, and under this Government, our greatest days are near at hand. We are grateful to the people of Jamaica for their confidence in us now, and for their further confidence that we know will come at the right time. We commit ourselves to continuing the great work of **Building for You and Your Community.**

Desmond McKenzie CD, MP, JP

Minister of Local Government and Community Development

May 28, 2024