



MINISTRY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2014 – 2015
CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECTORAL DEBATE

*Theme: Local Government: Creating Opportunities for
Growth and Development*

Presented by:

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At:

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
INTRODUCTION	5
CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS	6
LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	9
CONTRIBUTION TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND BUSINESS IN JAMAICA THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS	13
AMANDA	17
OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH ARE ENABLED BY UNDERPINNING LEGISLATION	18
HIGHWAY TO GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT	19
STREETLIGHTING	21
MARKETS	23
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT	25
MITIGATING RISKS AND HAZARDS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JAMAICA'S ECONOMIC VIABILITY	28
PROPERTY TAXES	28
CONCLUSION	31

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Speaker, I thank the great architect of the universe for divine guidance in serving our country.

Let me thank the Most Honourable Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading the Ministry that is closest to the people and critical in delivering opportunities for growth and development.

I acknowledge my family who have been an unending reservoir of strength. They have been unwavering in their support, and for that, I must extend my gratitude.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also use this opportunity to thank the constituents of South West Clarendon: my Councillors, my Constituency Executive, Cluster Managers, Youth Leaders, Women's Groups, NGO's, the Ministers Fraternal, Educators, and all other stakeholders who have created and taken advantage of opportunities for growth and development in the Constituency.

To my esteemed Minister of State, the Honourable Colin Fagan; your support and contribution to myself and the Ministry's mandate is greatly appreciated.

Let me thank my Permanent Secretary, Mrs Dione Jennings whose steady leadership qualities have sustained the high level of motivation and output by the staff.

Special thanks to my special advisor, my executive assistant, the support staff in my office, both at the Ministry and the constituency, my security team and driver for their significant daily support and commitment.

Mr. Speaker I have always maintained the stance that in order to achieve our full developmental capacity, we have to employ a collaborative approach. With that said, I want to say thanks to my team of Mayors, Councillors, Board Chair Persons and Board Members.

As well as the Heads of Agencies - namely, the Board of Supervision, the Jamaica Fire Brigade, the National Solid Waste Management Authority, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management and the Social Development Commission.

They have stayed the course and have met many of the demands of the Ministry, and more importantly, the people of Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, a number of our programs and projects would not have materialized without the kind assistance of our international development partners and donor agencies. They continue to show their support by being here with me today.

I want to thank my colleagues in this Honourable House for their support; and in the same breath Mr. Speaker, let me publicly recognize and commend the principled manner in which you continue to conduct the proceedings of this Honourable House.

Thank you and your staff for your continued guidance and support.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to use this opportunity to acknowledge and salute Mr. Keith Miller, former Advisor/Consultant on Local Government Reform.

He recently concluded his contract in the Ministry. His contribution to Local Government and Governance in Jamaica, the region, and the rest of the world is immeasurable.

He is frequently described as “Mr. Local Government”. As the “foremost authority on Local Government and Governance in the region”, he has given sterling service to the development of this country, and has served selflessly and unwaveringly. So I take the opportunity to thank him whole heartedly.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development has made tremendous strides in addressing some of the critical problems facing our country, both at the local and national levels. The Ministry has been unwavering in its commitment in ensuring that, with very limited resources, we maximize the impact we have on households and communities.

Last year, we were able to undertake some critical programmes, projects and activities which have benefited hundreds of communities and thousands of lives across the country.

One of our major thrusts is our Local Economic Development programme, which is aimed at creating opportunities for growth and development in our communities.

We will continue along this path to provide the platform for local sustainable development.

Mr. Speaker, given the wide gamut of this portfolio and time constraints, Minister of State, Hon. Colin Fagan will address other important areas to include but not limited to:

- Fire Safety and Protection;
- Social Protection to cover the infirmaries, Homelessness, Indigent Housing and other related matters ; and
- Governance and Institutional Strengthening to include town management.

Constituency Highlights

Mr. Speaker, permit me to recognise and hail the constituents for their understanding and cooperation as we position South West Clarendon for growth and development.

Mr. Speaker, last year in my sectoral presentation, I highlighted the challenges we faced in the constituency and outlined a plan of action to move forward. While we have not accomplished all that we wanted to do within the year, we have accomplished a lot. Thanks to all those who have participated in the consultations and have offered suggestions in the way forward. Your valuable contribution and patience is appreciated.

Mr. Speaker, based on the Constituency Development Plan, education is of high importance for South West Clarendon. We believe that providing educational opportunities for young people will break the cycle of poverty and balance the lives of the people we serve.

In this regard, in addition to the \$4M allocated from the Constituency Development Fund to assist approximately 600 students at the tertiary, secondary and primary levels, we have also established a Constituency Welfare Programme to assist needy students.

I am also happy to report that under a partnership with the Sugar Transformation Unit and the Jamaica 4-H club, over 80 young people from the constituency were trained in various skilled areas and another 60 have started the new phase of training.

Mr. Speaker, through representation made, the Jamaica Social Investment fund has completed a sanitary convenience at the Scotts Pass Primary School. 4 new classrooms will also be built at the Four Paths Primary & Junior High School as the existing structure that housed these classrooms was deemed a hazard. On a recent tour of the school with representatives from the IDB and the Ministry of Education it was confirmed that these new classrooms will be constructed during the summer period.

Mr. Speaker, as a rural constituency which is poised for growth and development, the need for good roads is a priority. This is why Mr. Speaker, we have spent over J\$70M over this past year on major road repairs in the sugar belt areas.

Special thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Sugar Transformation Unit (STU) for the assistance given. Mr. Speaker, another 3 roads are slated to be done which will impact all 4 Divisions.

The new phase of the JEEP has also afforded the rehabilitation of the Belle Plain road that has been in a deplorable condition for years, as well as the cleaning of a major drain in Havannah Heights phase 3. These roads Mr. Speaker will contribute to the growth and development of the Constituency, the Parish and the Country. In protecting lives and property Mr. Speaker, several other major drains in the Constituency were cleaned from the CDF.

Community development Mr. Speaker, empowers and enables communities to act on their behalf to address issues rather than wait, expect and complain until someone acts for them. I want to empower the constituents of South West Clarendon to act on their own behalf. In this regard Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for the newly renovated Toll Gate Community Centre and playfield which was opened in January of this year. The facility is world class and we are in the process of furnishing an area for a community resource centre. In addition Mr. Speaker, work is now under way on the Waterwell Sports complex and this is expected to be another world class facility when it is completed.

This year Mr. Speaker, I will be working with the Digicel Foundation to build a state of the art Community and Resource Centre in Havannah Heights Phase 3 which will serve two other communities. Other plans are afoot Mr. Speaker to replicate this Centre in other communities.

There are many other projects that are either finished or in progress such as fencing of playfields and the renovation of Post Offices and Postal Agencies to accommodate especially our pensioners. I want to thank Jamalco for their assistance with the Gravel Hill Postal Agency.

Mr. Speaker, I want to express my gratitude to the Most Hon. Prime Minister and the Minister with portfolio responsibility for Housing, for presenting the certificates of title to 76 home owners of the Ebony Park Settlement Project, one of whom is here today. Prime Minister, Minister, you have put power in the hands of these residents who have been waiting since 1979. Mr. Speaker, there are other communities that are awaiting titles and I know the Minister will be delivering in short order.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am most grateful to the Most Hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for the Springfield Estate Barracks Relocation where 88 houses are being constructed. These will provide suitable housing and living arrangements for persons who are currently living in dilapidated facilities in the sugar barracks. The constituents are indeed appreciative.

Local Economic Development

Mr. Speaker, last year in the Sectoral Debate I referred to the Ministry's Local Economic Development (LED) policy initiative and the strategy to enable Local Authorities, communities and other local stakeholders to collaborate in creating development in local communities.

I also spoke of the Ministry's collaboration with the Caribbean Local Economic Development (CARILED), a programme funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs Trade and Development (DFATD), formerly CIDA in five pilot Parishes namely, Kingston & St. Andrew, St. Catherine, Clarendon, Manchester, Westmoreland and the Municipality of Portmore.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out that CARILED has committed funds for 11 projects and to date has approved funding for the disbursement of six (6) projects amounting to approximately Thirty Eight Million Jamaica Dollars (J\$38,000,000). One such project is the Riverton Recycle Project.

This project involves the collection of PET bottles for export. This Mr Speaker, will improve the health of the surrounding environment. The acquisition of additional equipment, such as Shredder/Perforator, Fork Lift, construction of a ramp and installation of a lighting system, will help to expand this project. The project has empowered the residents of the Riverton community through gainful employment and training. The project now accepts PET bottles from other community based organisations around the Corporate Area. Mr Speaker this will reduce the plastic bottles going into the disposal facility and in the drains and gullies.

Other Projects approved are:

1. Cecil Charlton Park development – Manchester;
2. Spanish Town Tourism Project – St. Catherine;

3. Beeston Spring Organic Training and Agro-processing – Westmoreland, and
4. New Roads Rest Stop- Westmoreland.

Very soon, these local communities will be buzzing with economic activities. This Mr Speaker is Local Government creating opportunities for growth and development at the community level.

In so doing; one of our most important objectives which is the creation of local economic activities is being achieved.

Such an outcome allows residents within their communities to pursue various forms of enterprise. Collectively, these will reduce the rural to urban migration phenomenon, assist in environmental hazard reduction and create jobs within communities from which the positive multiplier effects require no great debate.

The Social Development Commission (SDC) will ensure the sustainability of the programme, as it continues to build Local Economic Development capacity, through its LED Unit.

Mr Speaker, this Ministry treats Local Sustainable Development Plans (LSDP) as a priority to guarantee long term support to sustainable socio-economic development within the various parishes and communities.

The Manchester Parish Council has completed its LSDP and for the fiscal year 2013/2014, the Ministry of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change used this LSDP to inform and complete a Provisional Development Order for Manchester.

This provisional development order will guide the development of the parish. It represents a significant milestone in local sustainable development planning, as the people participated in the decision making and action planning processes.

St. Elizabeth has also made considerable progress in the local sustainable development planning process.

Through collaboration among relevant stakeholders, including the St. Elizabeth Parish Council, St. Elizabeth Parish Development Committee, Social Development Commission, the Canadian Urban Institute, the Members of Parliament from that Parish and other entities, The Greater Treasure Beach Development Plan was completed and handed over in August 2013.

Selected projects are now being implemented and this includes the Sports Tourism Strategy and the Black River Revitalization Project.

Mr Speaker, Local Government is creating opportunities for growth and development.

Six (6) Local Authorities have thus far received support from the Sugar Transformation Unit, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. This has allowed them to access funds geared at supporting development plans in sugar producing Parishes; in Trelawny, Westmoreland, Clarendon, St. Elizabeth St. Catherine and St. Thomas. Local Sustainable Development Planning is critical to the national growth agenda and the Ministry is committed to leading this process.

I take this opportunity to thank the European Union and Minister Roger Clarke and his Ministry for the support given. For the 2014/2015 fiscal year, these parishes are expected to complete land use analysis, update parish vision statements and identify likely projects to be undertaken in parallel with the preparation of the LSDP.

This, Mr Speaker is evidence that the Ministry is focused on creating opportunities that will promote, strengthen and grow our local economies and attract entrepreneurs and investors.

Contribution to Economic growth and business in Jamaica through the Development Approval Process

Mr. Speaker, in recognising the importance of the development approval process to the growth and development of our economy, we have placed new emphasis on this area. I have personally visited each Local Authority to highlight and champion this new thrust and I am pleased Mr Speaker, with the progress that has been made.

In fiscal year 2013/2014, 5,248 applications with an estimated investment value of \$41.8B were made for building permits. 4,543 or 86.5% of these applications, with an estimated investment value of \$31B were approved. Of the total approved, 3,667 or 80.7% were approved within 90 days.

Mr Speaker, allow me to show the members a map of the Building Applications received and approved by the Local Authorities for the 2013/2014 fiscal year for each parish.

I wish to commend all the Local Authorities for their continued efforts in ensuring that we are accelerating along the path to growth, investment and development.

The parishes of St Catherine, Clarendon, Westmoreland, St James, St Ann and Portland are to be congratulated as these parishes were able to deliver an approval for more than 87% of all applications received. Mr. Speaker, on average 90% of the applications were approved within 90 days. This is an improvement over previous years.

An achievement Mr. Speaker which must be properly understood as tangible evidence that the Local Authorities have taken ownership of their own responsibility to the development of the communities under their charge and their own contribution to the national development agenda.

Contrary to arguments that a significant majority of applications are being held up by Local Authorities, and that this accounts for over \$40 billion investment value, as at the end of March 2014, there were 1044 applications being processed by the Local Authorities.

Only 287 of these, with an estimated investment value of J\$4B, were beyond 90 days.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, 757 or 73%, with an estimated investment value of J\$9B, were still within the 90 days commitment period. The point is Mr. Speaker, while the Local Authorities are not yet 100% compliant with the commitment, it is absolutely clear to any reasonable person that unprecedented gains have been made in expediting development approvals.

For example, Mr. Speaker:

- In St. James, the Playa Hotel made application to the St. James Parish Council for approval to renovate and expand. The application was made in May 2013 and approval was given in July 2013 (within 90 days). Today construction is in progress and completion is expected by December 2014;
- Also in St. James, Bank of Nova Scotia Western Head Office which represents over 2000 square metres of development was received in April 2013. Approval was granted in June 2013; and construction is now underway;
- In St. Catherine, Hi-Pro made application for feed silos and was given approval within 90 days. LASCO also received approval for expansion of its facility at Whitemarl.

These are all significant projects that will contribute to the country's GDP. They will provide jobs, increased services within communities and enhance productivity at the local level. In fact, Mr. Speaker, these approved projects represent the potential employment of approximately 91, 000 persons within the construction industry.

Mr. Speaker, our Local Authorities are committed to ensuring that the development ranking of the country is improved - making Jamaica the place of choice to do business.

The Ministry will continue to implement measures to streamline the development applications process in a sustainable manner to ensure improvement to the Country's ranking in the World Bank's 'Doing Business' report. These include:

- Capacity building within local authorities;
- Establishment of help desks in all Local Authorities to guide applicants before, during, and after the application process.
- Continuous monitoring of the development applications process within local authorities;
- Continuous improvements to the standardised application forms, a standardised process, checklists (including checklists of the relevant agencies) and site investigation reports within all local authorities; and
- Finally, Mr. Speaker, we will improve the legislative framework to guide a modern building industry with the impending passage of the Building Bill. I know this Bill has been promised for some time now, but I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the final version of the Bill will soon be submitted to the Legislation Committee of Cabinet. Thereafter, it will be tabled in this House.

AMANDA

Mr Speaker, the implementation of an Application Management and Data Automation (AMANDA) system is one of the strategies employed by the Ministry to improve the Development Approval Process.

I am pleased to announce that personnel from all Local Authorities have been fully trained in the use of the AMANDA system.

We are doing this to ensure transparency in the process and to enable clients, locally and internationally to track applications online.

This system will inform the client of the status of his or her application, whether it is with the Council, or any referral Agency such as NEPA, JFB or NWA.

Mr. Speaker, it was also previously reported that procurement of equipment for the installation of AMANDA in the remaining five (5) Local Authorities was underway. To date, fifty (50) computers have been received, delivered and installed within the remaining five (5) five Local Authorities.

All Local Authorities will be fully equipped to use the AMANDA system by the end of the financial year.

Mr. Speaker, while we focus on improving the Development Approval Process and promote Local Economic Development, we are mindful of the condition under

which the Councils operate. The buildings in most instances are inadequate to accommodate and satisfy the volume of work to be done.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, I wish to announce that \$90M Dollars have been approved from the Equalization Fund to start the construction of new Council Buildings for the St. Thomas (\$25M) and Westmoreland (\$35M) Parish Councils and the long awaited Portmore Municipality Administrative Office (\$25M).

Mr. Speaker, the new buildings will enable these Councils to reduce the cost of rental and to operate in a more business friendly environment.

Opportunities for growth are enabled by underpinning Legislation

Mr Speaker, we have been steadfast in our efforts to complete the process of empowering the Local Authorities, especially as we intend to, and shall be holding them to higher levels of Accountability.

I am happy to report that the Cabinet has granted approval for the issuing of drafting instructions to the Chief Parliamentary Council for the three Strategic laws. We have received and commented on draft Bills for the Local Government Financing and Financial Management Act and the Local Government (Unified Services) and (Employment) Act, and we await the Governance Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier the progress we have made with the Building Bill.

As it relates to the Disaster Risk Management Bill, I am pleased to announce that this Bill has been submitted to Cabinet for approval for tabling in this

Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, we have made significant strides over the past two years in relation to our legislative agenda. I thank Minister Golding and the team at the CPC for their assistance.

Highway to Growth and Development

Mr. Speaker, the Parochial Road Network is now estimated to be close to 20,000 km. The resources available to maintain the Parochial Road Network have never been anywhere close to the actual needs.

In fact Mr. Speaker, the only dedicated source of funds for Parochial roads is the Parochial Revenue Fund which is derived from the proceeds of the Motor Vehicle Licensing Fees. Based on resolution from the Local Authorities, a portion of the Equalisation Fund, which represents 10% of Property Tax collections, is also used for road repairs.

Mr. Speaker. \$2.8B has been spent by the Local Authorities to effect repairs on 165km of road that had badly deteriorated; carried out patching work on 184,000 sq. m. of roads; bushing of 2057 km of roads; and carried out drain cleaning and repairs which included flood mitigation measures along 1697 km of roadway.

This is not a minor point Mr. Speaker – anyone who takes the time to do the maths will discover as we have, that the significant majority of our citizens live on parochial roads. While the central system of highways, boulevards and main roads are important for commerce, business, education and health services – it is the underserved network of parochial roads within communities that are the lifelines

between families, communities and the rest of the social and public services. It is therefore obvious that new approaches with respect to the maintenance of these roads as are now required.

Mr. Speaker, based on our vulnerability to storms and other disasters, I am convinced that we will never have enough money to rehabilitate roads under our current modus operandi.

We have to find ways to invest in road construction more efficiently. This Ministry, along with the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing is assessing road construction technologies with the intent of realising value for money in the road sector. Mr. Speaker, in light of the benefits to be derived, the Ministry is endorsing concrete as one of the preferred paving material for our roads given its life expectancy, hard wearing abilities, load carrying capacities, and competitive price.

I am happy to report that the first pilot using the concrete solution will be the access road to the Riverton City Landfill. This will be done through a donation of J\$200M from the MesoAmerican Fund operated by the Mexican Government. We intend to do a further 20 km of concrete roads after the completion of the Riverton pilot.

The ability of the landfill to operate efficiently is hampered by the condition of the road. The Project will be managed by United Nations Office for Project Services

(UNOPS). I thank the Mexican Ambassador and his team for facilitating this initiative, as well as Minister Peter Phillips.

Streetlighting

Mr. Speaker, whether you represent an urban or a rural constituency, we all know how important streetlights are to our constituents feeling a sense of security. We can also agree that the current situation leaves a lot to be desired. This has to change.

Mr. Speaker, changing a system that has been in operation for decades, and entrenched in legal contracts, is never easy. However, we are now at a point where we can truly say we are on the verge of a more efficient streetlight regime.

Since I last reported to this Honourable House, we have made progress in the following areas:

1. We have completed an analysis of the current and proposed tariff for streetlighting, and submitted our recommendations to the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR).

Mr. Speaker, this is happening for the first time. What usually obtains? The Ministry of Local Government simply accepts whatever tariff is approved by the OUR based on submissions by Jamaica Public Service (JPS).

Out of this, we expect a specific tariff for LED streetlights, as well as a new system of measurement that will recognize smart streetlights that can be dimmed at various times thereby utilizing less electricity;

2. We have also completed a joint audit, with JPS, of all streetlights installed – complete with GPS mapping;
3. We have worked closely with MSTEM in the negotiation of the impending new All Island Electricity License to resolve some key issues relating to streetlights that could have become an obstacle to getting more efficient streetlights; and
4. We have had several consultations with the JPS, the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ), and the Ministry of Finance to pave the way for the introduction of modern streetlights.

Mr. Speaker, under the current arrangement, the Government of Jamaica has not been able to benefit from the reduction in costs associated with the deployment of efficient streetlights. The archaic system for the monitoring, repair or replacement of streetlights has been found to be ineffective as many streetlights across the island are now defective. Communities continue to complain about the long time it takes to repair these.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry and the Local Authorities, on behalf of the Government and people who elected us to act in their interests, will see to the replacement of the existing streetlights with efficient LED lights.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) for this new programme will be issued shortly, and we expect to complete the procurement process by the end of this fiscal year. Based on our economic model, we expect to accrue savings of at least J\$1B per annum. Mr. Speaker, we are working, working, working to provide opportunities for growth and development.

MARKETS

Mr. Speaker, markets are critical to the development of micro enterprises in Jamaica and they enable our small farmers, micro level businesses and vendors to market their produce and wares.

It is the intention therefore, to position the markets to be profit centres for the Parish Councils. Cognizant of this, the Ministry is collaborating with the Local Authorities to identify and rehabilitate key markets in all parishes across the island. Last financial year approximately one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000) was spent on rehabilitation and maintenance of markets.

This was done through support from the Ministry, Local Authorities, Tourism Enhancement Fund and Jamaica Social Investment Fund.

Mr Speaker, in April of this year, the Rocky Point Market was officially opened by the Most Hon. Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller. The Member from South East Clarendon expressed his gratitude and satisfaction with this modern multipurpose facility.

The Ministry collaborated with JSIF and the Clarendon Parish Council to finance the project at a cost of over Fifty-five Million Dollars (\$55M). I must also commend the Rocky Point Development Council, which provided labour for this project.

The Linstead Market is being given new life through the efforts of the Ministry, the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), JSIF and the St. Catherine Parish Council. Renovations are being done in three phases and phase one has been completed.

Mr. Speaker, there are other markets that are slated to be renovated or are already underway such as:

- Spanish Town Market electrical upgrade and security cameras installation
- The completion of the Black River Market(contract already signed)
- Repair works at the Ocho Rios Market
- The purchasing and retrofitting of containers at the May Pen Market

Again, we are creating opportunities that can lead to major growth and development. These include construction jobs in the building and refurbishing space – as well as greater use of the facilities with better conveniences for vendors and consumers alike. It is also well known, as the Prime Minister has said repeatedly, the majority of users of these markets are our women.

We can no longer give a blind eye or only pay lip service to the substandard conditions to which they are exposed. The improvement of these facilities is our contribution to the growth and development of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn my attention to the agencies that fall within the ambit of the Ministry.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Speaker, when you drive past some of our major gullies and drains, it is a disgrace. Our citizens continue to dump garbage in the drains while we turn a blind eye. We all need to understand and accept that “Jamaica’s beauty is our duty”. It is everybody’s business. We must stop the madness of littering our country, then weep and wail at the repercussions. We are only hurting ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, the current fines for littering and illegal dumping are J\$2000, and J\$10,000 respectively. This is not a deterrent; for any sanction to be meaningful it must be felt hard. I am pleased to announce that we have received from the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, a draft **National Solid Waste Management (Disposal of Solid Waste) Regulations, 2014**. The purpose of these regulations Mr. Speaker, is to regulate the kinds of material which may be disposed of at a landfill and the manner in which such disposal is done. The regulations also seek to impose tipping fees on users of a landfill based on the waste burden put on the landfill by those users.

We have also received a draft National Solid Waste (Public Cleansing) Regulations, 2014. Mr. Speaker, these regulations are designed to maintain a clean public environment by providing for the proper storage, conveyance and

disposal of waste by making provision for penalties where the regulations are contravened.

They also seek to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the citizens, waste haulers and the NSWMA in matters of waste management. The drafts have already been the subject of consultations with a wide cross-section of stakeholders, including NEPA, Ministry of Health, the Police, Private Waste Haulers, persons in academia, the Business Sector, the Environmental NGO community, and members of the Public. I will also ensure that the requisite public education takes place.

Mr. Speaker, the components of most of our waste are organic material, plastic bottles and bags and styrofoam. We must find ways of doing more with our waste that is the trend globally. In fact, our mantra is REDUCE, REUSE, and RECYCLE. As a result of this thrust, the NSWMA has partnered with a number of private and public sector interests to clean up Jamaica. A number of these initiatives are:

- The Clean School's Competition where registration is now 152, up from 85 last year;
- The joint project between the Government and the Private Sector Partners (such Wisynco, Pepsi, Lasco, and Tru-Juice, among others) for recycling of plastic bottles.

This project will see approximately 4690 tonnes or 35% of the PET bottles in Jamaica being recycled by 2016.

- The Riverton Recycle Project I mentioned earlier.

Mr. Speaker, Last year I indicated that we would establish a Transfer Station to assist in the management of waste in western Jamaica, where we currently have to move waste from Westmoreland to St. James in small trucks. Funds have now been provided in the budget for that project. The site has been secured, and the NSWMA has obtained a Non-Objection from NEPA with the requisite conditionalities. The procurement arrangements are being put in place and ground will be broken as soon as this is completed.

Mr. Speaker, Riverton continues to be a major problem – fires are sometimes lit with malicious intent, and there is the issue of spontaneous combustion. We are determined to do something about this. Our strategy is 3-pronged:

1. For the short term, we will be meeting with the Ministry of Finance & Planning to access funds from the environmental levy to properly cover the site with soil so that only one cell will be expose at any given time. This will greatly enhance the containment of any fire;
2. For the medium term, a request for proposals (RFP) will be issued shortly for waste recovery, and waste to energy solutions.
3. Finally, we are in the process of identifying an alternate site to Riverton where a modern landfill can be established.

Mr. Speaker, we must act once and for all to protect our citizens and businesses from the repeated exposure to smoke and fumes from Riverton, Retirement, or any other disposal site.

MITIGATING RISKS AND HAZARDS TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND JAMAICA'S ECONOMIC VIABILITY

Mr Speaker, the costs incurred from disaster over the years have had a negative impact on our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and in general the economic growth of the country. While we cannot prevent natural disasters, our concentration and efforts are on building more disaster resilient communities as this will reduce the impact and foster sustainable growth and development.

Mr Speaker, I wish to highlight a few projects that were undertaken by the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) to mitigate the impact of disasters.

- 27 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) were established in communities island-wide under the Building Disaster Resilient Rural Communities and Livelihoods Project. Communities such as Asia, Flagaman, White House, Pisgah and Devon benefitted from this project.
- 16 community hazard maps were completed as part of the community resilience programme for St. Thomas, Manchester, St. Elizabeth and Westmoreland under the Negril Climate Risk Project and JSIF Resilience Project.
- 11 Community Disaster Risk Management Groups were established under the HELP AGE Project and the Building Disaster Resilient Rural Communities and Livelihood project in the parishes of St Mary and Portland.

- Major drain rehabilitation work was carried out in Skibo, Portland funded by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA).
- The tyre-soil retaining wall project in Melbrook Heights, St Andrew under the Management of Slope Stability in Communities (MOSSAIC) Project funded by the World Bank.
- Annotto Bay benefitted from a multi-hazard mapping risk assessment which will assist stakeholders in deciding the best approach to address their vulnerability to flooding, earthquake and storm surge.

Mr. Speaker, in an effort to reduce the risks associated with hazards, ODPEM embarked on a number of sensitization, training, assessments and the development of plans to ensure that select communities were better prepared in the event of a disaster.

These training sessions were conducted in areas such as First Aid, fire safety, management of slope stability in communities, safe roofing, and shelter management (in Clarendon, St. Elizabeth, and Kingston and St. Andrew).

There were also training sessions in Emergency Operations Centre management, Disaster Risk Management (DRM), Hurricane & Earthquake Safety, Basic Emergency Telecommunications, Drought Mitigation, Help Age Operators, Initial Damage Assessment (IDA), Climate Change, and Basic Disaster Management.

Mr. Speaker, a recent probabilistic seismic hazard assessment of Jamaica, characterized the country as a medium to high seismic hazard. The greater the seismic hazard, the more probability there is of an earthquake occurring of great magnitude at the same interval. It is this awareness that led ODPEM to collaborate with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to conduct the first Seismic Risk Forum for the country.

This resulted in the development of a National Road Map for Seismic Safety which will serve as an instructional material for seismic readiness in all areas, especially on our critical infrastructure.

It will also integrate the building code and the building bill which will be tabled in this House in short order.

Mr. Speaker, Jamaica's geographic location, telecommunications, human resource and infrastructure facilities, as well as, the expansion of our port facilities, positions Jamaica as an ideal location for supporting airlift of food and humanitarian support to the rest of the Caribbean in case of a disaster.

This proposal has been supported by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordination, Mrs. Valerie Amos who has expressed readiness to explore modalities for establishing a sub-regional humanitarian hub in Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker this is as a direct result of the Ministry's collaboration with two of its international partners to hold the Sixth Regional Meeting on International Mechanisms for Humanitarian Assistance (MIAH) for Latin American and

Caribbean States right here in Kingston, October last year. Special thanks to the Regional Office of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UNDP.

Mr. Speaker at this juncture I would like us to turn our attention to the areas of Revenue enhancement and generation.

Property Taxes

Mr. Speaker, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of property taxes. It is the largest revenue source dedicated for use by the Local Government fraternity. We are also aware that the collections have never been able to sufficiently cover the cost of providing essential services required by our citizens, such as:

- Solid waste collection and disposal;
- Streetlight bill;
- General civic improvement;
- Maintenance of Public parks and gardens;
- some aspects of the Local Authorities' administration and
- Where possible, funds permitting the rehabilitation of the parochial road network.

Mr. Speaker the Ministry, and by extension the Local Authorities, is no longer receiving deficit financing support from Central Government for streetlights and

public cleansing services. What this means, is that Local Authorities and the NSWMA provide these services from their own sources.

In spite of the financial constraints, this Ministry is attentive to the difficulties which the citizens face. **Mr. Speaker, we have decided that there will be no increase in property taxes for this fiscal year but instead, more emphasis will be placed on collection and compliance.**

Despite the challenging economic environment, we realized 80% of the \$7.26B target which translated to \$5.83B in collections. This is almost 100% increase over the previous financial year. Mr Speaker, we want to extend our appreciation to the Councils, the entire field and office personnel who worked to realize this target.

In particular, special congratulations to the Portmore Council and citizens as they not only met but surpassed their target.

As an incentive for their success in the collection of Property Taxes, the Council was awarded Five Million Dollars (\$5,000,000), to be used in the development and or improvement of Community development programs or projects in the Municipality. I must also commend all those persons who have paid their property taxes and are contributing to the development of our country.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, global trends have shown a growing understanding and acknowledgement that in order to promote economic growth and alleviate poverty, there is a need to recognize and support locally-led programs and projects which aim at sustainable development. Local government has a key role in fashioning implementing and monitoring this development agenda as well as the new global development targets post 2015.

We celebrate the successes earned on our citizen's behalf, even as we acknowledge that much more remains to be done.

We are well aware of the difficulties that exist within our nation's communities, because we too, live in these communities. We therefore know the areas in which we need to do more, with the limited resources to which we have access.

We will continue to promote local economic development, delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through strengthened partnerships with central government, international development partners, local communities and civil society.

We will further implement measures to improve the delivery of key services such as planning and development, social protection, fire safety, infrastructure development- such as that of roads, markets, council buildings, and streetlights. We will increase levels of efficiency and effectiveness while strengthening governance and institutional mechanisms.

Mr. Speaker, Local government is positioned to continue to create opportunities for growth and local economic development.

We are steadfast in our commitment to continue working at the local, regional and national levels; aiming to build stronger, more cohesive and empowered communities. We will not stop until we fulfill the mandate that the Jamaican people have given to us! That's our motivation at the Ministry and it cascades throughout our Agencies and the 14 Local Authorities.

Mr. Speaker, we will transform governance at the local level. We will play our part in making Jamaica the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business.

This is our mission and we shall achieve.