



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:

Hon. Colin Fagan

At:

Gordon House

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Speaker first and foremost I must give thanks to the Almighty, who has made all things possible, including my being here to participate in yet another Sectoral Presentation.

I am grateful that the Most Honourable Portia Simpson-Miller granted me the opportunity to serve in the capacity of State Minister; I am humbled by the level of confidence she has invested in me.

Mr. Speaker, I am equally grateful to the people of South East St. Catherine who have elected me to serve and represent them in the capacity of Member of Parliament.

Special thanks to my Councillors, my constituency secretary, members of the constituency executive and the many groups and organizations which have continued to work with me for growth and development of the constituency.

I would also like to use this opportunity to acknowledge and thank my Minister, the Hon. Noel Arscott and my Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Dionne Jennings for their continued guidance and commitment to the vision of the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development.

Special thanks to my personal staff; my Consultant, Executive Assistant, Executive Secretary, Chauffeur and Security.

Mr. Speaker I am deeply appreciative of the work and support of the staff at the Ministry, Mayors, Councillors and staff of the Island's fourteen (14) Local Authorities, Board Chairmen, Directors and staff of the Ministry's five (5) Agencies.

To my immediate family - my children and my wife, Joy - thank you for your unwavering commitment and support. You have gracefully accepted and shared in the challenges that are associated with representational politics and for that I am forever indebted to you.

To you Mr. Speaker, I say thanks for conducting the proceedings of this Honourable House in a dignified and commendable manner.

To my fellow colleagues on both sides of the House, I say thanks for your support.

Mr. Speaker, whilst I am here to present on my portfolio responsibilities at the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development, I ask that you allow me a few minutes to highlight some of the programs and projects undertaken in my constituency, which have helped to improve the lives of many.

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS

Mr Speaker, residents of Portmore are now experiencing improved distribution in water supply. As Member of Parliament, I have lobbied hard for significant improvements in this area. I am therefore pleased, Mr Speaker, that over J\$1 billion dollars were spent on the development of new water sources for South East St. Catherine. The project involved the construction of 10 kilometres (km) of 30 inch transmission main from the Rio Cobre pipeline in Caymanas, across Mandela Highway, along Municipal Boulevard, and to the existing Marley Hill Reservoir at Braeton.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the issue of the Waste Water Treatment Plant Systems at every presentation that I have made in this Honourable House – especially as it relates to Bridgeport and Independence City. Today I feel very achieved and proud to announce that more than 200,000 residents across the Portmore Municipality are expected to benefit from improved sewage facilities, as work is underway on the approximately Two point Three Billion Dollars (\$2.3B) Portmore Sewage Project.

The duration of this project will be over Forty Five (45) months and involves the decommissioning of the five existing wastewater treatment plants, which are in an advanced state of disrepair.

The plants include: Independence City, Bridgeport, Hamilton Gardens, Portmore Villas, and Caymanas Gardens, which receive a combined flow of just over 18,200 cubic metres per day. They will be converted into transfer pumping stations for the delivery of effluent to the Soapberry Wastewater Treatment Plant in St. Catherine, which has the capacity to treat some 75,000 cubic metres of sewage per day. South East St. Catherine will be impacted by eighty percent (80%) of the overall project.

Mr. Speaker, another major project being undertaken in South East St. Catherine at the cost of Seventy Million Dollars (\$70M), is the total rehabilitation of the George Lee Boulevard. This involves the rehabilitation of the road as well as drain cleaning and the reconstruction of drains. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing Hon. Dr. Omar Davies as well as my fellow State Minister, Hon. Richard Azan who with his technical team visited the constituency, recognized the need for the project and saw to its implementation.

Mr. Speaker, approximately \$9.6M Dollars was spent in Waterford to rehabilitate a cross-drain and the retaining wall at the Adair Drive gully which was undermining the road. Mr. Speaker, I must announce that procurement is presently being done by the Portmore Municipal Council for the rehabilitation of Adair Drive which is expected to cost approximately Twenty-Seven Million Dollars (\$27M).

Jamaica Emergency Employment Programme (JEEP)

Mr. Speaker, the Jamaica Emergency Employment Programme, the JEEP, is still driving in and around South East St. Catherine, and on better roads. In the third phase of the JEEP we were able to do three (3) major infrastructure projects: in the community of Armada Court, a retaining wall which threatened to undermine the apartments was rehabilitated at a cost of approximately Four Million dollars (\$4M). Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that we are in the hurricane season, I am happy that these homeowners can sleep much more comfortably knowing that their properties are secured. Another project, Mr. Speaker was the building of a guidance counsellor's room and multi-purpose classroom at the Waterford Infant School. Finally Mr. Speaker, there was total rehabilitation of Block 1 in Westmeade – again the residents can breathe a sigh of relief as the dust nuisance and flooding problems have been addressed. These projects under JEEP provided employment for just under One Hundred (100) persons.

EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Mr. Speaker, I would have liked to speak to the achievements of all the schools in the constituency but time would not allow me. Kindly allow me though, to highlight Bridgeport High, Waterford High and Waterford Primary Schools.

Bridgeport High School

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the The Bridgeport High School family I want to extend gratitude to the Ministry of Education and the Minister, Rev. Ronald Thwaites for assisting with the construction of four classrooms completed at a cost of Thirteen point Four Million Dollars (\$13.4 M).

Mr. Speaker, the aim is to have a single shift operating along with the 6th form programme. I know the Minister of Education is committed to the process of removing all schools currently on the shift system and I am very happy that the Prime Minister announced in her recent budget presentation that Bridgeport High School will be one of the schools to be taken off in short order. I can tell you Mr. Speaker that the expectations of the Board, Principal and teachers, PTA and other stakeholders are very high.

Mr. Speaker, John 1:45 and 46 read “Phillip findeth Nathanael and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth? Phillip said unto him, come and see.”

Waterford High School

Mr. Speaker, an independent survey report published in the Gleaner on March 27, 2014 tracked schools’ performance on receiving GSAT students through to CSEC. In the 2008 GSAT intake, students’ average in Mathematics was 35%. In that same year, the surveyors ranked Waterford High 135th from 150 in Mathematics on the list of high schools. In a more recent survey, the institution managed to

move up 97 places and is now the number 38 best-performing high school in the subject.

Waterford Primary School

Mr. Speaker, I now speak of Waterford Primary School which is reporting significant improvement in the literacy competency of its students. Its success is attributed to the 'Pull Out Programme', undertaken in its enrichment centre. The school is seriously aiming at the eighty-five per cent (85%) mark that the Ministry had set for 2015.

The public-private partnership is evident here, Mr. Speaker, as Digicel Foundation has invested in a reading room at this institution which has helped the students' reading level to move from an average of 56% mastery in 2009 to 77% mastery in 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I was told that every year when the students leave the reading room they are reading at 3-4 times the levels which they started. This is commendable Mr. Speaker.

I must also hasten to say that the world's third fastest man, in the 200m Mr. Warren Weir, is a past student of Waterford Primary School.

Again, I want to commend the staff and encourage the students to continue to do well.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be associated with the many achievements of our students and the schools as a whole, that is why this year through my

Constituency Development Fund (CDF), I am making available upwards of Three Million Dollars (\$3M) towards assistance in education.

Mr. Speaker, the Independence City Community Centre which was rehabilitated at a cost of approximately Four Million Dollars (\$4M) from the Constituency Development Fund was further refurbished by the Universal Service Fund and equipped with twenty-five (25) computers to provide for computer access for the community. This Centre will also provide educational assistance through the ELearning programme with volunteers from the neighbouring Portmore Community College and others. The Westchester Community Centre also has an approved project from the Universal Service Fund and a similar programme will be in place in another couple weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to some of the Ministry's portfolio matters.

SAFEGUARDING THE MOST VULNERABLE AMONG US

Mr. Speaker, in our quest for economic growth and development we need to ensure that the most vulnerable in the society are adequately protected. The Ministry, the Board of Supervision (BOS) and the Local Authorities continue to address and improve the delivery of social assistance services to support the well-being and protection of the country's vulnerable persons.

Infirmaries

Mr. Speaker, the residential facilities, namely the infirmaries, are critical in protecting the dignity of our most vulnerable citizens. While the system isn't

perfect, and much of the infrastructure is old, we are making strides in the gradual but substantive improvements to these facilities.

Mr. Speaker, during the 2013-2014 Financial Year, the sum of Sixty Two Million Dollars (\$62M) was spent to undertake the following activities:

1. The B Ward at the Portland Infirmary was repaired, and the infirmary re-roofed at a cost of \$2.3 Million;
2. The new sewage system at the St. Thomas Infirmary was completed at a cost of Eleven Million Dollars (\$11M). This will enable the connection of the new sewage system to the ward, which will be occupied shortly.
3. At the Hanover Infirmary, a new ward was completed at a cost of Thirty Three Million Dollars (\$33M); and a new sewage system completed at an additional cost of Nine Million Dollars (\$9M);
4. The Isolation Ward at the Manchester Infirmary was completed at a cost of J\$5M;
5. St. Mary and Hanover Infirmaries received solar water heaters and panels from the Civil Aviation Authority at a cost of Six Million Dollars (J\$6M). In addition, the perimeter fencing at the St. Mary Infirmary was completed at a cost of One point Two Million Dollar (\$1.2M) and new lighting fixtures were installed to improve security at the premises.
6. In addition we are sustaining the food and vegetable gardens and poultry projects at the Infirmaries which are used mainly to supplement the diet of the residents.

Mr. Speaker all this was done to improve the accommodation, safety and security of the residents and staff at these facilities.

But we are not stopping there Mr. Speaker; in this financial year we will continue in our efforts to improve the facilities with infrastructural works to be carried out at the Manchester, St. James, Portland, Clarendon and St. Ann facilities. We will be focusing on improving the perimeter fencing at some infirmaries, as well as installing solar and water harvesting systems to reduce the water and energy consumption costs.

We understand that we do not have the resources to do everything. Therefore, we continue to develop partnerships in order to support the social protection programmes. We congratulate and thank the many volunteers from the communities, the faith based organisations, schools, private sector entities, voluntary groups, and friends in the diaspora whose immeasurable support and contributions have not gone unnoticed. To date we have a total of Six (6) Friends of the Infirmary established, the most recent being in Hanover and St. Elizabeth. We thank this special group from the diaspora in Canada spearheaded by Mr. Lloyd Seivewright. Last year we received donations from them valued at Two point Four Million Dollars (J\$2.4M) through which the Ministry assisted in improving the living conditions of the residents of the Infirmaries and patients in some hospitals. The Ministry is taking steps to secure Charitable Certificates for all Infirmaries under the recently promulgated Charities Act. The Hanover Infirmary has already received the Charitable Certificate.

Homelessness

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry continues to provide budgetary support to all Local Authorities for their homeless programmes. Last year the Ministry provided Sixteen Million Dollars (\$16M) to supplement the homeless programmes such as

shelters, drop-in centres and feeding programmes. Additionally, support is provided by our many partners and we cannot overstate its value. The focus is now on a coordinated approach to the administration of the outreach and support services to this group. Given the needs of this group we have increased the support to the programmes to Twenty one Million (\$21M) in this financial year. The Board of Supervision continues to forge partnerships with several groups to support the homeless programme; indeed homelessness is everybody's business. For example, some of the proceeds from an initiative with the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) Kingston City 5K Walk Run were used to support homeless shelters.

Six (6) Homeless Parish Committees (Hanover, St. Catherine, Portland, Manchester, Clarendon, Kingston and St. Andrew) have been established to develop strategies and measures to address homelessness in the respective parishes. Some of these measures include the implementation of skills training for the rehabilitated homeless in select care facilities through HEART/NTA.

Based on a survey done, there is the need Mr. Speaker to focus our attention on new care facilities for the homeless. We will be seeking the required funding through public-private partnerships for the following Parishes - St. Catherine, Manchester, St. Ann and Kingston and St. Andrew.

We are presently refurbishing the facility for the homeless on the infirmary's compound in Clarendon to accommodate persons in that parish.

Indigent Housing

A total of 1031 houses were either built or repaired at a cost of over One Hundred and Four Million Dollars (\$104M); 888 houses were repaired and 143 houses were

built. This was done through the Parish Council's and the KSAC's partnership with Food For the Poor, in order to improve the living conditions of clients. These repairs are facilitated through the use of poor relief funds, local donors and Members of Parliament Constituency Development Fund (CDF) programme.

Mr. Speaker, providing the necessary care for the most vulnerable in the society requires partnership. The Prime Minister in her Budget Speech highlighted the significant financial support we will receive from the National Housing Trust (NHT). The Ministry has already engaged the NHT regarding programmes for:

- Providing Indigent housing;
- Improving infirmaries' facilities; and
- Providing care facilities for the rehabilitation of homeless persons.

The Ministry has provided estimates of costs for the works at some facilities and completed joint site visits to critical facilities in Portland, Manchester, Clarendon, St. James and Kingston and St. Andrew. We expect these discussions and site visits to bear good fruit very soon in this fiscal year. We thank The Most Hon. Prime Minister and the NHT for their commitment to creating housing solutions for all and I anticipate that others will get involved in supporting poor relief activities.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform this Honourable House of the progress that we have made at the Ministry in the Community Development portfolio. In today's world of brand marketing, we sometimes make the grave error of discounting and devaluing our human capital which is vital to national development. I am privileged to be involved in a Ministry which focuses on the development and

renewal of our communities, without which brand Jamaica could not succeed. In essence we create opportunities for growth and development at all levels.

Across the Jamaican landscape, the Social Development Commission (SDC) has cemented its role to empower communities through implementing and ensuring strong governance mechanisms. In addition, they also provide the capacity for planning and developing reliable community data, project development and implementation. While the Commission continues to be impacted by limited financial capital, the resolve and commitment of the staff, supported by partnerships, realized positive impact in all performance goals. The 'whole of government' approach embraces coordination among Ministries, Departments, Agencies, civil society, the communities, support from our MPs and international development partners. We thank our international partners such as United Nations Development Plan (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Department for International Development (DFID), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Canadian Urban Institute, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The communities' database which is unique to the SDC was boosted in the period with the completion of ten (10) Parish and twenty six (26) Community Profiles that have already begun informing community intervention strategies in rural and other areas. Mr. Speaker, the thirteen (13) PDCs and other governance structures (3617) played a key role.

For example:

- Westmoreland & Clarendon PDCs collaborated with local community groups and assisted in the preparation of project proposals and business plans in the amount of US Seventy Thousand Dollars (US\$70, 000).

- St Mary PDC's initiative, plastic bottle recovery programme focuses on working with schools to place receptacles to facilitate processing.

Today we welcome the Mount Peto CDC from Hanover with their Western Spices and Pastries business model and Trench Town Ceramics and Crafts. All projects conceptualized by the SDC.

Vibrant and diversified growth in urban and rural areas

Mr. Speaker, the process of development brings rapid urbanization. While this urbanization puts pressure on local governments and communities, it stimulates creative solutions in cities and towns which promote local economic development and fight poverty.

Town Management

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is happy to facilitate the process of sustainable development, capacity building and transformation by providing the framework for responsive governance mechanisms; one such is our Town Centre Programme. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, St. Catherine is the parish in which the first Municipality was created as a pilot. The profile of the parish mirrors in many respects, the global trend of urbanization referred to earlier. The parish is therefore ideal for the pilot.

Mr. Speaker, the Town Centre response to the challenges of our urban centres makes good sense, in that it seeks to create a mechanism for citizen participation through the presence of a Town Manager and the creation of an Advisory Committee.

Our urban centres cannot continue to operate as they are currently. We have to create an environment in which all stakeholders engage with representatives of local government in identifying the actions that must be taken to improve our urban centres. This facilitates orderly development and increases the investment potential and ultimately the economic development of towns.

The town of Linstead, therefore, has been selected for the first pilot in this Town Management Programme and the official launch of this town centre will be announced soon.

We are making significant progress towards the creation of another Town Centre this time in Ocho Rios. We have advanced and facilitated discussions with the UDC and the St. Ann Parish Council which will own the process. The next stage will involve consultation with the MPs and other stakeholders to identify their vision for the town and the priorities.

University Town

Mr. Speaker, each urban centre will have its own unique issues for resolution. Last year I referred to the interest of residents in the communities of Papine, Liguanea and the immediate environs in creating a University Town. Since then significant work has been advanced by various stakeholders and we thank the KSAC, Members of Parliament, Papine Development Area Committee and the residents, the University of Technology (UTECH), University of the West Indies (UWI), Vocational Training Development Institute, Management Institute for National Development and several representatives from other educational institutions in the community. We recognize the significant work done by the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of Technology in this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, while the process is by nature lengthy, we are committed to moving it along. We have facilitated recent meetings with the KSAC, UTECH and PDAC, and we will meet with our partners at the UWI and other stakeholders to conclude their perspective, roles and position on this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the next step which will be spearheaded by the KSAC will seek to conclude the MOU, the Management Structure, Master plan, and the corresponding budget. Mr. Speaker, as part of this initiative, we are moving ahead with the KSAC's proposal to construct a pathway to specially accommodate the physically challenged who traverse the Papine and Elletson Flats area. In fact, Minister Arscott has approved Eleven Million Dollars (\$11M) for this project and works are to begin shortly.

Sustainable City Initiative

In 2013, the Ministry facilitated a partnership between the St. James Parish Council and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) under the Emerging and Sustainable Cities Initiative (ESCI). This initiative targets cities in Latin America and the Caribbean countries and employs a multidisciplinary approach to address challenges facing urban areas. ESCI has three dimensions of focus - Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change, Urban Sustainability and Fiscal Sustainability and Governance.

Out of this initiative we have The Draft Action Plan for Montego Bay which identifies some critical sectors that must be addressed to ensure the sustainable development of the city. The St. James Parish Council through the support of the IDB now has an opportunity to develop a Local Sustainable Development Plan

(LSDP) and secure funding for the implementation of feasible projects. In this fiscal year Mr. Speaker the Action Plan for Montego Bay will be finalized and funding support sought. We couldn't have done it without the support of the IDB. We express our appreciation to them as we anticipate further support.

Vibrant and diversified rural development initiative

The participatory governance framework is an indispensable and indisputable platform for good governance and economic development. This has been bolstered by the emergence of sixty five (65) governance structures consisting of thirty two (32) new and thirty three (33) reactivated groups. It is a fact that community groups are at varying capacities, therefore the organizational strengthening done through the provision of Two point Four Nine Million Dollars (\$2.49M) grant from the SDC community grant fund facility enhances opportunities in our rural communities.

SDC in its facilitating and coordinating role, worked with a number of community groups to develop economic development projects across Jamaica such as:

- In Hopewell (Hanover) - Sorrel and Ginger project by the DAC geared towards usage of vast acres of unused farm lands.
- In another rural community in Alps (Trelawny) – Eco-Tourism project, by the CDC, creates employment and encourages community based tourism while learning about traditional Jamaican herbs and remedies. Estimated project value is Jamaican Three Million Dollars (J\$3M); six (6) persons are employed.
- In rural Manchester – A Two point Five Million Dollars (JM\$2.5M) Bee Keeping project by Grove Place Community Club is aimed at training

farmers in the production and marketing of honey which will yield economic benefits including employment to the community.

- In Jeffery Town St. Mary – Jeffery Town Farmers Association operates three (3) community based enterprises: multimedia centre, radio station and green house where its products and services are used to generate income for a number of persons. Estimated value of project is Jamaican Eight Million Dollars (JM\$8M).

Community Priority Plans, better known as the people's plan, have become the standard document from which communities create project proposals to address rural development and improve their livelihood. Sixty Five Community Priority Plans have been documented from which over Six Hundred Million Dollars (\$623,600,000) worth of projects have been developed.

The achievement of the Local Economic Sustainable Development Plans in less than one full year was encouraging. Forty two (42) economic initiatives valuing in excess of Two Hundred Million Dollars (\$200M) emerged. The majority (50%) were in the area of agriculture, which included the use of new or emerging technologies such as greenhouse and aquaponics, livestock rearing, honey production and agro-processing.

The Commission also utilized sports to promote community development through the staging of the SDC 20/20 National Cricket Competition and the SDC /PCJ Netball Competition which resulted in 382 cricket teams and 132 netball teams competing. More than \$700,000 won by the respective national and Parish teams were also donated to community charities.

GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development plays a strategic role in achieving the goals outlined under Vision 2030. More specifically, much of our work relates to National Outcome #6 – Effective Governance through the Governance Thematic Working Group. We continue to facilitate capacity building in a governance framework that will allow opportunities for citizens to participate in addressing the challenges in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, as we create the framework and facilitate a greater level of independence within Local Government we are facilitating increased transparency and accountability. Previously we had piloted the establishment of Local Public Accounts Committees and there are now five Local Authorities with active operating Committees. Through collaboration with the Houses of Parliament, Ministry of Finance & Planning and the Auditor General’s Department we are now refining operating guidelines and will extend the operations of these Committees to all Local Authorities within this Financial Year.

Portmore Municipality Review

Mr. Speaker, in reference to the Consultant’s Review of the Portmore Municipality Experience and my Report and Action Plan, I can report that we have concluded the following priorities outlined in the implementation schedule:

- a) The examination of the Municipality structure, which is being implemented in collaboration with the Corporate Management Development Division and in which the Portmore Municipal Council is one of the priority areas of focus.

b) The Review of the Charter of the Municipality including recommendations for amendments, including voting rights of the Mayor and committee chairpersons and a Constitution for the Portmore Citizens Advisory Council. Drafting instructions have been prepared and issued to the office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and these amendments are being done in tandem with the Municipalities Act.

c) Submission for approval for funding of the first Local Economic Development Project for Portmore under CARILED.

Parish Safety & Security Committees

Mr. Speaker, we thank the UNDP for collaborating with the Ministry on the **“Enhancing Civil Society Participation in Local Governance for Community Safety”** project which was completed in March 2014. Through this project we have established Parish Safety Security Committees in twelve (12) Local Authorities. Communities have been exposed to training in safety audits and various safety tools for urban crime and prevention. A safety and security handbook is now completed. This is a practical example of the strategy in which Local Government is assuming its expanded role as parish government; our Mayors must be congratulated on the leadership role which they have undertaken in leading the collaborative process.

Mr. Speaker, growth is facilitated in safe and secure communities and we are committed to the sustainability of the project. In that regard, Parish Safety and Security will continue to form part of the overall thrust of the Local Government agenda.

JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE

Business Facilitation and Business Support

The work of the JFB is sometimes perceived as mainly responding to fires. Mr. Speaker, the JFB's support to businesses goes far beyond that and needs to be highlighted. The Agency significantly supports the economy and businesses by:

- Promoting compliance with the International Fire Code and the Building Code
- Conducting development plan reviews and approving new construction permits for fire safety,
- Providing Fire Protection and Prevention Information and public education programmes,
- Conducting Fire Protection Audits on specified properties island-wide including their own fire stations and
- Providing technical consultations and giving free advice to businesses and the general public on fire prevention and fire protection.

Mr. Speaker, the JFB is also making a valuable contribution to business facilitation in this country. For the last two years (2012 and 2013), the Fire Department conducted inspections and approved approximately One Thousand Six Hundred (1600) Subdivision and construction fire plans for new developments. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Brigade conducted over One Thousand Four Hundred (1400) building inspections for the same period. These plans and buildings were reviewed for Fire and Building Codes compliance. Due to the large number of buildings for inspections and the resource constraints, JFB conducts follow up inspections employing a risk based approach.

The Brigade is committed to enhancing the community development process through various social intervention programmes. One such is the recently established Portmore Resource and Outreach Centre which benefits children, youth, young adults and our senior citizens in Waterford and the adjoining communities of Passage Fort and Independence City. This programme managed by the JFB staff and volunteers already has 100 persons registered. The purpose, Mr. Speaker, is to create an environment that can complement our fire prevention and public education interventions while promoting community involvement.

The services being offered include homework-assistance, eLearning access point, computer appreciation and improvement, literacy and numeracy, as well as personal development through mentorship. The Centre which has 19 computers, a server, printer and a multi-media projector is made possible through collaboration with this Ministry, the JFB, the SDC and the substantive assistance from the Universal Service Fund, Jamaica. I thank Hon. Minister Paulwell and his team from the Universal Service Fund for this support.

This is tangible proof that we are indeed creating opportunities for growth and development.

Fire Stations

Mr. Speaker, we cannot escape the realities of the economic climate that currently exist but we will not allow our fire fighters to operate under less than favorable conditions. While we are not in a position to carry out the large scale

upgrading that is required we are striving towards meeting full compliance with fire safety standards at our fire stations.

Mr. Speaker, last financial year, the Ministry funded repairs and construction to a number of fire stations. These include:

- The construction of two (2) new engine bays at the **Santa Cruz Fire Station**, at a cost of Four Million Dollars (\$4M) to protect the fire units from the elements.
- You may recall Mr. Speaker, the fire fighters at the **Port Royal Fire Station** were relocated due to the discovery of asbestos in the roof of the fire station. Today, the station is asbestos free, the roof is replaced with aluminum steel sheeting material and it is currently functioning at full capacity.
- In my Sectoral Presentation last year, I had mentioned plans to renovate the **Savanna La Mar Fire Station**. Today I am happy to report that a contract in the sum of Twenty Nine point Five Million Dollars (\$29.5M) has been awarded for rehabilitation and construction works.
- **The Brown's Town Fire Station** is to be rehabilitated in this financial year; the process has already begun as a contract valuing Two Million Dollars (\$2M) has been awarded to effect repairs to the station.
- Funds have been allocated in the budget to commence preliminary works at the **Port Maria and the Barnett Street fire stations**.
- The rehabilitation work started at the **St. Ann's Bay Fire Station** on Labour Day, this year is still on-going. The labour for this project is provided by the building and maintenance team of the Brigade and volunteers in the community. The cost for rehabilitative work is Six Million Dollars (\$6M) and

the JFB will save about Four Million Dollars (\$4M) from the community volunteer work and the Brigade team. We thank the volunteers and Brigade team for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, this demonstrates and underscores our commitment to address deficiencies at our stations and to ensure fire safety standards are maintained.

Equipment

Mr Speaker, like many other entities, the Jamaica Fire Brigade has had to grapple with real challenges but they are not daunted.

In the approved Budget for this year, a total of **\$171.3M** Dollars has been approved to address equipment needs and fire station repair. These include:

- **REHABILITATION (REPAIRS) OF FIRE VEHICLES \$21.4M to include:**

Repairs to the fire boat, fire trucks and two ambulances for the Emergency Medical Service (EMS).

- **REPAIR TO FIRE STATIONS \$39.9M**

- **ACQUISITION OF FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT \$20M**

To include 100 bunker gears and fire hose

- **ACQUISITION OF FIRE VEHICLES \$90M**

To enable the purchase of three additional fully equipped fire trucks and one ambulance for the EMS.

FIRE TRUCKS

Mr. Speaker, history will show that this administration is committed to the needs of the Jamaica Fire Brigade, especially in relation to the purchase of fire trucks. Within two years of returning to government we have acquired three (3) new fully equipped fire trucks at a cost of One Hundred and Thirty Three Million Dollars (\$133M). We have already commenced follow on procurement for three (3) more trucks. It is important to highlight this, as the last time the Jamaica Fire Brigade received new trucks was in 2006. Furthermore Mr. Speaker, the Japanese government is also donating two fire trucks for the parish of Westmoreland; these are to arrive in the island in a few days and we say thanks.

- **AMBULANCES FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)**

Mr. Speaker, we are mindful that the pilot Emergency Medical Service (EMS) of the Brigade has its challenges but provides a critical service. Therefore, in this financial year, and as mentioned earlier, we will be purchasing one ambulance, repairing two and the Japanese government has donated two ambulances which will be arriving in the island soon. This Mr. Speaker, will bolster the fleet of the pilot EMS to the previous complement of **six working ambulances**.

FIRE HYDRANTS

Mr. Speaker, I wish to report to this House that as at June 2014 sixty five percent (65%) of the fire hydrants are working. The Brigade will be intensifying its hydrant maintenance programme having received a Thirteen Million Dollar (\$13M) grant from the Japanese government for island-wide Fire hydrant rehabilitation

programme. Some of the equipment has already been received to commence this programme in a few weeks. The donation will also facilitate the purchase of a vehicle dedicated for this purpose.

Support for the JFB, Mr. Speaker, continues with the receipt of state of the art equipment from the US Government valuing US\$300,000. This donation followed a three week training course for members of the JFB in Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Emergency Operations.

Mr. Speaker, the costs associated with providing fire services are significant and increasing but we are working with the JFB to reduce the risk and impact of fire on our communities. This government is committed through partnership to provide a modern fire service.

Today I really want to express thanks to the Ministry team, and salute the vibrant and dedicated Board, the Commissioner and recently retired Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and other service men and women who have worked assiduously and who remain dedicated as we are to serve Jamaica land we love.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I have outlined a raft of programmes, projects and initiatives that the Ministry has been embarking on over the past year, and as the visionary international artiste, Stevie Wonder, sings, these have been **signed, sealed and delivered.**

Mr. Speaker, our firefighters and indeed our citizens have called for fire fighting vehicles; we have answered that call with five. Three (3) bought, two donated, all fully equipped - **signed, sealed and delivered**; and Mr. Speaker, expect more, because we are procuring three additional fire trucks.

Mr. Speaker, Sixty Two Million (\$62M) was spent on infirmaries to improve the accommodation, safety and security of the residents and staff at these facilities this has been **signed, sealed and delivered**. With support from the NHT and other partners we will be doing more.

We care about the indigent and homeless as evidenced by the eight hundred and eighty (888) houses have been repaired and one hundred and forty three (143) built to the value of One Hundred and Four Million Dollars (\$104M), in partnership with the Food for the Poor and the Councils these have been **signed, sealed and delivered**.

Mr. Speaker, we are rolling out the town centres, so you can look out for the launch of the Linstead town centre, followed by Ocho Rios, and the University Town.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to empower communities and revitalize rural development through the SDC with projects - Forty two (42) economic initiatives valuing in excess of Two Hundred Million Dollars (\$200M) - **signed, sealed and delivered**.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we are aligned to the global agenda of developmental local government. Our programmes support this, our commitment underpins it and our collaboration assures it.

So Mr. Speaker, when we declare that Local Government is Creating Opportunities for Growth and Development it is clear from my presentation that this government is actively and persistently moving towards having this GOAL!!!!!!! **signed, sealed and delivered.**

May God continue to bless us and bless Jamaica land we love, I thank you.