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Acknowledgements

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Senators and Former Members seated in the well,

Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps,

His Worship the Mayor of Kingston,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen in the gallery

Patriotic Jamaicans here and in the diaspora, listening, watching and following virtually via the media

We all give God thanks for sparing us individually and collectively so that we can meet here to discuss the business of the Nation, report on the achievements of the last Fiscal Year, and consider the plans and programmes for the coming year.

Mr. Speaker, our thanksgiving is appropriate, though we had our share of climate variability resulting in unseasonal rain and flooding and consequently negative economic impact, we have been spared the total devastation wreaked upon our neighbours in the region, for whom we again spare a thought.

Mr. Speaker, I am always humbled when I consider the awesome responsibility entrusted to me by the people of Jamaica, to lead the management of public affairs and create the environment in which our people can self-actualize. I do not do carry this responsibility alone.

I stand here literally with my family in this House, my wife Juliet a Member in her own right.

I stand here with an astute and innovative team.

I stand here with responsible and enterprising Cabinet of Ministers,

I stand here with diligent and committed chairmen and members of boards,

I stand here because of effective and efficient permanent secretaries, heads of agencies and their staff,

I stand here because of strong supporters and constituents who thought it important to exercise their civic responsibility to vote,

I stand here in Partnership with civil society stakeholders, the Church and the private sector,

I stand here bolstered by the hopes and prayers of every well thinking Jamaican who believes that Jamaica will increase in peace and prosperity,

I stand here, by the grace of the Almighty.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here to make a difference in the lives of the people of this country and though some may wrongly characterize politics as nasty and brutish, it is undoubtedly the means by which the widest and most profound changes can be made to the lives of the largest number of people.

I want to start my presentation today speaking about how we are solving a problem that will make a big difference in the lives of many people.

Part I: Simple Action Can Make Big Differences

Action on Energy Poverty Solar Initiative

Mr. Speaker, in my constituency of West Central St. Andrew, I have spent the last two years focusing on the roads and gullies. This year I will turn my attention to improving the housing stock. This is especially critical as many of the houses, in their current condition, pose are fire hazards.

Mr Speaker, in January of this year, four children, one-year-old twins and two three-year-olds, perished in a fire that destroyed their home in my constituency. A lit candle started the fire. Although electricity was on the premises, this particular household was without and they relied on open flame lighting at night. It is the case that there is a significant number of rural and urban households without electricity connections or that are disconnected pending payment, that rely on open flames as their source of light. As a result, every year, right across Jamaica, and I have tracked several cases in my constituency, we see these tragic incidents of children perishing in fires ignited by candles and lamps.

Mr Speaker, so far this year there have been thirteen deaths due to fires. (8 adults and 5 children)

Fire Statistics as recorded by the JFB for the past Five (05) years.

Year	Structural	Adults	Children
2013	1424	14	5
2014	1374	15	6
2015	1438	14	8
2016	1431	34	4
2017	1513	23	2
Total	7180	100	25

Data from the Jamaica Fire Brigade

With simple and inexpensive actions, Government can make a difference in the lives of energy poor households and significantly reduce or virtually eliminate the risk of these tragic fires. I have therefore directed the Minister of Science, Energy and Technology to develop a programme to make solar lamps available to energy-poor households. An initial quantity of five thousand solar lamps have already been secured, and a system of identifying and distributing these solar lighting solutions to needy households is being developed. Using solar solutions to replace open flame light sources is an established policy response to address energy-poverty and there are many such programmes successfully implemented all over the world.

This is a real opportunity for social enterprise to support the ecosystem around the production, installation, user education, servicing and recycling of these solar lamps. To this end I have directed the Housing, Opportunity, Production, Employment (HOPE) programme, to develop a National Service Corps to support all elements of this programme and to work with existing social entrepreneurs in this area. These would include members of our Jamaican Diaspora, such as Nathaniel Peat of Gennex, which is a renewable energy company that is providing this service to countries in Africa. We are not just giving solar lamps, we want to make it so convenient and practical to use these solar lamps that households no longer use open flame lighting sources such as candles and lamps. After the full implementation of this programme, no child should perish in a house fire caused by a candle or a lamp used for lighting.

Too often the investigations into these fires reveal that the parent or legal guardian left the child in the care of another person who themselves are either children or not capable of taking care of children. While this programme will remove one of the risk factors in such fires, ultimately however, parents and guardians are responsible for the safety, care and protection of their children. We must educate, support and empower our parents so that those who want to do better will, while ensuring that the organs of the State are in a position to protect children from those parents who refuse.

Action in Consensus on Plastics

Mr. Speaker, Jamaica faces a solid waste management crisis. This is evident in towns and cities, rural areas, waterways, on beaches and in the sea. The main evidence of this crisis is the prevalence of improperly disposed of and unrecycled plastics all over our natural and built environment.

It is not just a nuisance; it is a devaluing of the cleanliness of our environs, a real threat to our ecosystems, and the efficient working of civil infrastructure.

There have been many attempts at introducing national solutions for proper disposal of plastics. We continue to work on a complete solution to this complex, multi-sectoral and multifaceted issue.

With the collaborative action of stakeholders through the National Partnership Council, the private sector has presented the Government with a proposal for a Plastic Bottle Return System which will see funding coming from the private sector for a "deposit and pay-out on return" mechanism.

The consensus on the part of the producers of plastic bottled products is a major step in overcoming the improper disposal of plastic bottles. The Government will

support the Plastic Bottle Return System with the necessary regulatory and financial support where possible. There are other initiatives being considered by the Government with regard to plastic bags, plastic packaging material and Styrofoam. Decisions will be taken on these later in the year as we continue to act to secure the health of our land and marine environments.

Action on HOPE

Mr. Speaker, HOPE is the flagship social intervention and support programme of the Government. It focuses on targeted assistance with housing support, education, training and economic opportunities, support for persons in productive activities in communities, and engagement towards sustained employment. A critical element of the HOPE programme is the engagement of unattached youth through a system of apprenticeship and national service, called LEGS, which means “learning” and “earning” while “giving” service and “saving”.

HOPE is Helping Our People Excel.

Mr. Speaker, the exposure given to young people under the HOPE project allows them to build life skills, positive attitudes and attributes of good citizens. We want to maximize the potential of all our young people and provide opportunities for them to self-actualize. Let me report on some successes so far:

- More than 14,000 young people were engaged through the HOPE Youth Summer Employment Programme and we have just started the recruitment process for this summer.
- Over 5,000 unattached young people trained in core skills, values and attitudes and are ready for placement.
- 2,000 interns have been placed in various National Service Corps across Government in agencies including the Urban Development Corporation, National Housing Trust, National Water Commission, Port Authority of Jamaica, National Land Agency and Administrator General's Department. They are working in digitization, GIS mapping, maintenance and customer service. Three Hundred and Eighty (380) youth have been trained in document digitization under the Youth Employment in the Digital and Animation Industries (YEDA) Project and will now be placed.
- Mr. Speaker, more opportunities will come on-stream this year:
- 500 young persons will be placed at the Ministry of Health in the Vector Control Corps and Medical Assistant Corps (critical to disease prevention)

- 6,000 young persons will be placed across Ministries, Departments and Agencies in the Documentation and Digitization Corps in keeping with our policy of digitizing Government
- 1000 interns will be placed at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries, as part of the Verification and Audit Corps, to conduct surveys and registrations and to ensure the accuracy of the farmer and agriculture database.
- Over 1,000 young people will be deployed in the Hospitality Service Corps and the Transportation Cadet Corps across various projects.
- The National Unattached Youth Programme will now be absorbed under the HOPE programme and the aim is to double the number of persons that are engaged per constituency. Mr. Speaker, we will now engage 200 per constituency targeting a total of 12,600 young persons to be now attached and contributing to the productivity of our nation.

Mr. Speaker, all Ministries are on board and budgetary allocations made accordingly to ensure that adequate funding is in place. In addition, HOPE has secured \$60M through the Development Bank of Jamaica to increase training and placement island-wide. The Jamaica Information Service has benefitted from over \$28M from the CHASE Fund to digitize the archives which contain video footage, photographs and audio files compiled over decades. This project will employ persons from the HOPE programme who will be trained in media archive management skills and intellectual property management. This will not only provide our young people with marketable skills and experience that makes them more employable, but it will open up opportunities for innovators and players in the creative industry to use print and electronic material that will promote Jamaica.

It is the intention of this Government to provide more opportunities to set our young people on the path to achieving prosperity. Mr. Speaker, now more than ever before, more unattached youth are being engaged in meaningful ways and increasing their productivity.

Mr. Speaker, we are giving them LEGS – to step up in life, they are learning, earning, giving back and saving.

Mr. Speaker, let me also again note for the record, the JDF's support of the LEGS Initiative with the recruiting of new members. The Jamaica National Service Corps have already completed two batches of recruit training of over 220 persons in each batch. They are now undergoing further developmental training at varying stages of their initial one-year engagement. A third batch is currently going

through basic recruit training and they are scheduled for completion in June 2018, at which time a fourth batch will commence their training.

The first batch is now going through the process of signing up for full service as enlisted soldiers; and I must point out that all of them have chosen this route. Mr. Speaker, the new process of recruiting members for service in the JDF through an initial one-year national service period is widely accepted and supported. In the future, I hope to promote a policy where every unattached male between 18 and 24 has to do a compulsory one-year National Service with the JDF. Mr. Speaker, the gangs are actively recruiting our unattached youth, giving them a misguided sense of purpose and belonging and illicit economic opportunities. We must become better recruiters and provide our youth with alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, HOPE is a critical tool in the whole of Government approach to sustainable growth. We are engaging our young people through all means, including through the Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs) and security operations islandwide. As we expand HOPE even further, having now worked out the modalities and operational activities related to the merger of HEART Trust/NTA, Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL), National Youth Service (NYS) and the Apprenticeship Board, we are now able to provide a coordinated suite of training services and programmes for wide-ranging youth needs. We are now examining modalities in which we could invite the private sector to participate in offering internships and apprenticeships after we have done the initial personal development and skills training.

Mr. Speaker, it is very satisfying to meet young people who are participating in a service corps or another form of engagement within the HOPE programme. They are grateful and excited. They feel connected; attached to a purpose. We are giving more young people opportunities to realize their potential and by so doing, giving Jamaica a better and more "HOPE-ful" future.

Action in the National Identification System (NIDS)

Mr. Speaker, the increasing use of modern network technology is changing people's daily social and economic lives, creating new ways for greater participation and innovation, efficiency, transparency and democracy. Today, anyone and everyone can engage interactively in digital spaces. I am even seeing the Leader of the Opposition more often on social media. Digital networking platforms are penetrating all spheres of life, social, corporate, and Government - disrupting conventional ways of doing business and creating new value propositions. More services are being offered online and more customers are expecting online service rather than standing in line for service. Recently, I read a report ascribed to the newly elected PNPYO president proposing online

voting as a way to gain the interest of young people and native internet users. I found it interesting because her Party stoutly rejected the very means by which this kind of e-governance would be possible – the National Identification System. To support transactional activities, secure entitlements and provisions from the State, and adequately plan for our citizens, there must be a civil registry uniquely identifying every person, securing identity data and allowing verification of the identity as needed.

Mr. Speaker, the National Identification System (NIDS) will provide a comprehensive and secure structure to capture and store personal identity information of individuals. NIDS will become the primary source for identity assurance and verification and will improve service delivery, security and governance for the citizens of Jamaica. By way of update:

- National Identification and Registration Act was passed in November 2017 and the Governor General gave his assent on December 8, 2017.
- The IDB loan to fund the NIDS project was approved by the IDB Board on December 8, 2017 and the loan agreement for US\$68 million between the GOJ and the IDB was signed in February 2018.
- **I want to point out that of the US\$68 million; only 20% of the loan is for NIDS.**
The majority of the funds will be utilized for the broader modernization and digitization of Government and the improvement of Government's ICT infrastructure.
- We are 90% complete with all the business processes needed to implement the NIDS.
- A legal working group will be established shortly to develop the Regulations with relevant members from the legal profession within the GOJ. Representatives from the Church, Private Sector and Civil Society will be invited to sit on the Committee. An online platform will also be made available for persons to provide comments via that means. We look forward to broadest possible participation at this stage before the consideration of Parliament.
- **Public Education** – This activity will increase during 2018. The Public Education programme will be rolled out in the next two months. It should be noted that in addition to the **68 presentations** done in 2017, the NIDS project team has made a further **37 presentations** since January 2018, and continues to engage our citizens to address their concerns. These meetings

have been held with various churches, communities and NGOs across the island.

- Concerns have been raised about **privacy and protection of data**. We wish to assure the public that the Government is putting in place the necessary legislative framework with the Data Protection Bill which is now before the Parliament as well as protections built in the National Identification and Registration Act (NIRA) and pending Regulations. The legislative framework will be supported by ensuring that Jamaica procures the best quality system and processes to protect and host our data.
- The request for proposals for the **NIDS Solution** was published in local newspapers and on the IDB website on April 25, 2017. The first stage of the procurement process was completed in January 2018. In Stage 2 the shortlisted vendors will be asked to submit a final technical and financial proposal for the NIDS Solution in April 2018. A high level technical team from across the GOJ along with local and international cyber security experts will evaluate and recommend the best solution for Jamaica.

Jamaica now leads the region in developing its framework to become a digital society. On full implementation, I am sure that the ease of doing business, public order and security, citizen participation and financial inclusion, will all improve.

Part II: Economy, Infrastructure & Housing

Action in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)

Mr. Speaker, last year I emphasized Jamaica's competitive advantage with respect to BPO investments. I also noted increased focus on the **Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO)** sector which involves more value-added activities such as application and software development, market research and data analytics, information-technology-managed services, medical and insurance billing and legal process outsourcing. Additionally, **nearshoring of outsourcing operations** has grown and continues to offer tremendous opportunities.

Kingston is fast emerging as an outsourcing location for high-value services, with new developments and expansion of existing operations across the Corporate Area and Portmore. In order to promote and increase awareness of Jamaica's BPO industry the Caribbean's first independently funded BPO conference, **Outsource2Jamaica (O2J)**, supported by the Government and existing BPO players and stakeholders will take place April 11-13, 2018 during Jamaica's National Outsourcing Week 2018 (NOW 2018). The conference will bring together global experts, technocrats, local entrepreneurs, Government officials, BPO leaders, buyers and service providers.

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to grow this industry. An estimated additional 10,000 jobs have been created in the sector in the past year; bringing the total to an estimated 32,000. Of this 10,000 new jobs, 1,400 were from new companies. These include:

- Concentrix Corporation -- 300
- Fusion BPO -- 600
- Collective Solutions -- 450

The remaining 8,600 is from growth by existing companies.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to focus on our two most critical success factors for sustainability in Outsourcing Services – **availability of purpose-built space and adequacy of the labour pool.**

Action on Availability of Purpose-Built Facilities

An estimated additional 800,000 sq. ft. of space were built or retrofitted for BPO operations in the last year.

Major projects that were completed include:

Name	Location	Size
IteIBPO	St James	70,000 sq. ft.
Grace Kennedy	Kingston	60,000 sq. ft.
Mobay Free Zone	St James	60,000 sq. ft.
IBEX Global	Kingston	50,000 sq. ft.
Collective Solutions	St James	70,000 sq. ft.
IBEX Global	Portmore	30,000 sq. ft.
Barnett Tech Park	St James	100,000 sq. ft.
IteIBPO	New Kingston	25,000 sq. ft.

In 2018/19, the push to increase space by both the public sector and private sector will continue. The Government has signed off on a partnership initiative to **develop a comprehensive BPO campus on lands at Old Hope Road consisting of 300,000 square feet of purpose-built BPO space**, accompanying retail, medical facilities and other amenities. The BPO complex will provide approximately 4,000 new seats and 8,000 new quality jobs.

Notably, the following are slated to come on stream in 2018/19:

- A new 63,000 square foot purpose built BPO facility has been constructed at the Montego Bay Free Zone. Already tenanted, the facility will accommodate 1,500-2,000 new employees. The Facility is to be officially launched in April, 2018.
- A new BPO/KPO Campus is being constructed at Portmore Informatics Park. Four new buildings totaling over 160,000 square feet of new space are being constructed to augment the 50,000 square feet already in place. The foundations are completed and the buildings will be completed for occupancy in 2018, adding approximately 4,000 new jobs.
- Bioprist, Freeport (80,000 sq. ft.);
- Ferry BPO (50,000 sq. ft.);
- Usain Bolt's building on Half Way Tree Road (60,000 sq. ft.) and;
- an additional 50,000 sq. ft. in Mandeville to support growth for Sutherland Global's operations.

Additionally, the Naggo Head Technology Park, which will include the construction of 810,000 square feet of BPO and support space will get underway in the 2018/19 budget year.

Action on Adequacy of Labour Pool

Given the projected growth opportunities, we must have persons ready to take up positions. The HEART Trust/NTA and the Business Process Industry Association of Jamaica (BPIAJ) in February 2018 signed a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) targeted at providing wide-ranging skills training for Jamaicans to take advantage of jobs in the fast-growing sector. Trainees would also be equipped with transferrable skills, which will be useful in other areas of business. **HEART Trust/NTA, in collaboration with private sector bodies, also plans to break ground for a BPO Finishing School at the HEART College of Innovation and Technology in Montego Bay by year end.** Participants in the HOPE programme are also receiving general training in interpersonal and communications skills which would make them ideal candidates to find employment in the BPO sector.

Action on National Land Titling System

Mr. Speaker, Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto Polar, says in his book the “Mystery of Capital: why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else”, that massive exclusion generates two parallel economies, legal and extra-legal. An elite minority enjoys the economic benefits of the law and globalization, while the majority of entrepreneurs are stuck in poverty, where their assets languish as [dead capital](#) in the shadows of the law. To protect their assets and do business the ‘extra-legals’ create their own rules. However these informal arrangements are not standardized, transparent, or enforceable. Extra-legals therefore’ create their own social, political and economic problems that affect the society at large. De Soto believes that the real cause of informality and the poverty it generates, lies with the flawed legal systems of developing nations that make it virtually impossible for the majority of their people—and their assets—to gain a stake in the market.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to me that what the poor majority in the developing world do not have, is easy access to the legal system which provides the gateway to economic success in the advanced nations of the world and for the elite in their countries. It is in the legal system that property documents are created and standardized according to law. This process of documentation in a public ledger or register builds a public memory that permits society, on an equal footing, to engage in crucial economic activities such as identifying individuals and property and establishing property rights and obligations between individuals and properties. This public ledger of property which transparently secures the rights and entitlement of the recorded owner, in turn facilitates the market in determining the value and price of the property and the risks associated with the property. This is the basis on which property becomes an asset in a market. This means the value in the property can be used to acquire other benefits for the owner such as access to credit, mortgages, insurance, or conveyed for sale.

In the same way that we are now seeking to create this public ledger/registry of identity through the NIDS, we must now seek to give “identity”, formal, unique, and justifiable ownership to property.

Historically in Jamaica, land ownership practices are informal. This is so, particularly in the rural areas where agriculture is the major economic activity. Consequently, insecure land tenure is a major challenge for many small farmers. In the absence of a title, landowners and in particular, small farmers are not able to access loans for future economic development. This undermines their capabilities for capital investment and potential wealth creation. There are currently (as at March 2018) 837,988 parcels of land in Jamaica, of which an estimated 500,245 parcels, amounting to 59.70%, have registered Titles. The remaining 40.3% are unregistered. Approximately, 40% of all parcels of land in Jamaica cannot now realize economic value for the owners.

Mr. Speaker, I concur with the Leader of the Opposition when he states that “there is no single area of our national life that requires a more radical treatment than the issue of land and land titling”. That is why in January 2017, **long before the Leader of the Opposition took office** and **even longer before he announced his Land Ownership Commission in April 2017**, my Cabinet considered and gave approval, among other measures, for the merger of the Land Administration and Management Programme (LAMP) and the National Land Agency (NLA), to create a public body that is purposely designed, tasked and resourced to systematically see to the titling of all parcels of land in Jamaica. The merger is in keeping with our Public Sector Rationalization Plan.

Mr. Speaker, there have been many studies and recommendations done on the matter of land ownership and titling. Another commission to study the problems may add some academic value, however, this Government is implementing. We are taking action. The roadmap has been prepared. The merger of LAMP into the NLA to create this new land titling agency and legal machinery will start officially April 1, 2018 and last for a transitional period of 12 months. An extensive review of other jurisdictions, in addition to the local body of knowledge and experience in this area was done in order to develop an effective operational scheme for the newly formed agency. The study addressed adjudication systems, land tenure regularization, land registration, compulsory/systematic land registration, policies and legislative frameworks, land administration and sustainable land management.

The final Report of the Consultant has now been issued. Among the recommendations approved by Cabinet, is that Jamaica adopts **Systematic Land Registration**, which is a process of land titling of a designated area, using a

participatory approach and an adjudication mechanism. It is recognized globally, as one of the most effective means of methodically registering land and providing landowners with a title. This is to be implemented, along with the current voluntary (*ad hoc*) approach.

Mr. Speaker, we are cognizant of our land management environment, as well as, the topography of our island and the culture of our people, therefore, there will be a massive public education programme to sensitize people accordingly. There will be a clear separation of planning and subdivision from land titling and it is proposed that the Special Provisions Act be used for the titling of lands for first registration and there will be a revision of the registration fees for parcels titled under this Act.

These broad Policies will be implemented within a Legislative framework, which will require amendments to the **Registration of Titles Act**, the **Registration of Titles Cadastral Mapping and Tenure Clarification (Special Provisions) Act (SPA)** and the **Limitation of Actions Act**, among others.

It is projected that 20,000 parcels of land will be registered with titles over a 3-year period and will be partly funded by the National Housing Trust in the sum of \$2 billion. Systematic land registration results in a lower cost per parcel and increased registration can be done in a shorter period, whereas the voluntary system of registration takes a much longer time to complete. Under the current LAMP, the cost of producing a title is **\$192,000** per parcel. Under the proposed systematic programme, the cost of producing a title will be reduced to approximately **\$134,000** per parcel.

As the agency develops its know-how and efficiency and the process of systematic registration becomes accepted, and more resources are added, the rate of titling will increase. It is possible that within a generation we could have 80% of all parcels of land titled in Jamaica. We are not just talk and theory and commissions when it comes to land ownership and titling. We are substance. We are taking action to transform lives.

Action in Logistics and Ports

Mr. Speaker, an important development during the first year of the life of this administration was to conclude the Concession Agreement with CMA CGM, requiring the Company to assume operating responsibility for the Kingston Container Terminal and to undertake the critical investments required to develop the facility into a modern world class terminal. The objective is to restore Kingston to the position as the most competitive Transshipment Port in the region. On July

1, 2016, Kingston Freeport Terminal Limited, a fully owned subsidiary of CMA CGM, assumed responsibility for the terminal and in the last eighteen months have been aggressively investing over US\$450M in the terminal. Among the achievements to date are the following:

- The Access Channel and the basin of the Kingston Harbour have been dredged to now cater to the largest vessels traversing the Panama Canal which have a capacity of 14,000 TEU.
- The Gordon Cay is being entirely rebuilt to better withstand more severe earthquakes and other disasters. Of the 1200 meters of berth, 600 meters have already been rebuilt and have recently been returned to service. During the remainder of the 2018 calendar year the other 600 meters will be rebuilt in two phases. Already vessels of over 11,000 TEU capacity are being successfully processed at the terminal, even though the construction works are incomplete.
- The terminal has been repaved.
- New IT Infrastructure has been installed including new high-speed computer systems, fiber optic communication systems to facilitate modern CCTV and other security devices
- A new Terminal Operating System has been implemented to coordinate all the activities on the terminal in a far more efficient manner
- New Cargo Handling equipment has been acquired and commissioned including 2 new Gantry Cranes, 21 straddle carriers, 4 empty container handlers, 3 train tractors and 12 forklifts.
- A new engineering workshop was commissioned in January 2018 designed to facilitate improved maintenance of the terminal's equipment
- Over 200 new jobs have been created, primarily equipment operators and engineers, with the overall employment increasing from 800 when operations were taken over to over 1,000 in January of this year.

The Company is aggressively pursuing the investments as agreed under the Concession Agreement. Already it is clear that as soon as the construction phase is completed, the volumes will increase to fill the 3.2 Million TEUs of which the terminal will be capable.

Mr. Speaker, complementing these investments in the terminal, the Port Authority of Jamaica has during the past year, invested in creating a modern Maritime Services environment in partnership with the Private Sector. The Port Authority has acquired two new and very modern Pilot Boats which assure the availability of Pilot services to ensure safe navigation of the new very large cargo vessels to and from the terminal. A Concession Agreement for the provision of much expanded Tug Boat services is currently being concluded with an international service

provider. A new Buoy Tender vessel is being acquired to ensure that the navigational aids are efficiently maintained. Discussions are underway with international and local private sector firms for the provision of Bunkering, waste disposal and Chandelling Services. The effect of these developments is to create a Maritime Services Ecosystem supporting the operation of the terminals which will be comparable to the best in the region.

Mr. Speaker, the Port Authority is at an advanced stage of implementing the Port Community System which will complement the ASYCUDA system already implemented by the Jamaica Customs Agency to ensure that the island will have a modern technology platform. Together with the terminal operators, the Port Authority and Customs have developed plans for much enhanced security at the Port with control points to manage and track both cargo and people on the terminal.

Currently the terminals in Kingston are served by 12 major shipping lines and with over 100 weekly port connections. Kingston is currently served by the most comprehensive feeder networks connecting the Port to all points on the East Coast of North America, the East and West Coasts of South America and all of Central America. With the new developments now taking place, the Port of Kingston is well on its way to being restored as the leading terminal in the region.

[Action in Transshipment and Logistics](#)

Mr. Speaker, with the developments now at an advanced stage at the terminals in Kingston, the attention of the Government is on developing the lands adjacent to the port into a modern competitive near Port Logistics Center. These include the lands lying between the Causeway and the terminal referred to as the "West Terminal Lands", the lands currently occupied by the Kingston Free Zone and the Jamaica International Free Zone, the lands referred to as the Old Zinc Factory lands which are immediately adjacent to the KFTL, and the lands at Tinson Pen which are separated from the terminals by the Marcus Garvey Drive roadway.

The plans are to develop all of these lands to house modern logistics facilities which will be connected to the terminal by an efficient and cost-effective transportation system. With the boundaries of this entire area sealed and protected, the objective is that cargo entering and being processed in the logistics complex will effectively be treated as extra-territorial, until they cross the perimeter into the customs territory. The objective is to attract companies that wish to have their cargo repackaged, finished, labelled, repaired and assembled to have these services undertaken in the Near Port Logistics Facilities.

Already Kingston Wharves Limited has launched its new 160,000 square ft Total Logistics Center and already the entire volume has been exhausted. Kingston Wharves has also leased some of the lands at Tinson Pen with a view to converting Kingston into the Automobile Logistics Center for the region.

Mr. Speaker, the Port Authority of Jamaica has entered into a contract for the construction of a modern 200,000 sq ft logistics facility immediately adjacent to the Kingston Free Port Terminal Limited, and construction which is beginning will be completed before the end of this calendar year.

The technical studies for the development of the remaining Near Port Lands have been undertaken. Work will commence on the build out of these areas immediately following the development of the new facility. A contract is being negotiated with a major international development company for the development of the remaining facilities on a joint venture basis.

An international tenant attraction programme is also underway. The legal and regulatory reforms required to create a more business friendly environment are being implemented and the development of the Near Port Logistics Center in Kingston is in progress and rapidly gaining momentum. This Government is taking action to turn the long talked about Logistics Hub into a reality.

[Action in Cruise Shipping at Port Royal](#)

Mr. Speaker, last year I gave a directive that the Port Authority should seek to develop Kingston as a port of call for cruise shipping. Earlier this year, Cabinet approved the development of a Cruise Shipping Terminal at Port Royal creating a platform for the restoration of Cruise Shipping in the Port of Kingston. Port Royal is one of the most fascinating locations in the entire Caribbean, with well over 500 years of incredible history, full of the most interesting characters to ever have lived. Since the devastating earthquake which suddenly sank most of the town in its heyday, it has been sitting below the surface of the water for over 300 years, silently waiting.

The Port Authority has identified modern technology which will allow berthing of Cruise Ships while being highly respectful to the fragile and extremely important environment in Port Royal with specific reference to the sunken city. The solution is a floating, articulating berth, which unfolds under electronic controls to meet the Ship. Capable of offloading a large cruise vessel in half an hour, the new berthing systems requires no piling of the harbor. The system has received the support of the key agencies including NEPA and the Jamaica National Heritage Trust.

The Port Authority is responsible for the establishment of the berth and all the related infrastructure. Already the berth has been ordered and is under construction. Technical work and engineering design for the land side facilities are at an advanced stage of completion.

The Authority is working collaboratively with the National Heritage Trust and the Urban Development Corporation to develop the first phase of authentic displays and attractions that will reveal the history of Port Royal in vibrant living experiences. There will be interaction with the culture of Port Royal through its people, food, music, art and way of life. Every period of Port Royal's existence between the 17th Century and today is to be represented in the attractions, including the Spanish Occupation, the British Rule, the Piracy era, the Age of the Admirals, the 20th Century and the modern era.

Mr. Speaker, the UDC will be coordinating the activities of a number of agencies including the National Works Agency, the National Housing Trust, the National Water Commission to ensure that the town of Port Royal is developed in a planned and coordinated way, responding to the needs of the current inhabitants of the town, even as the historic attractions are developed to world class standards.

Provisions will be made to ferry guests across the harbour of Kingston to the numerous attractions of the city, to Port Henderson, to Lime Cay and to other destinations in the harbour. This Government is taking action to turn the long talked about dreams, into a reality that is prosperous for our people.

[Action on the Development of the Port of Montego Bay](#)

Mr. Speaker, the Port Authority is undertaking a number of developments at the Freeport Terminal in Montego Bay to respond to the growth in demand for Cruise and Cargo services. The objective is to make it one of the best mixed use terminals in the region. The developments which have been completed in the past year include the following:

- The redevelopment of the Main Cruise Berth to accommodate the expanded demand for Home Porting Operations, with provisions for the processing of baggage for guests boarding or departing the cruise vessel in Montego Bay. The terminal has been reconfigured. A new shopping arcade has been built and the shops formerly located inside the terminal have been relocated to the new facilities. The terminal has been airconditioned.
- A second Home Porting Terminal has been created at Berth 2, by converting a section of the Cargo terminal for this purpose. The New

terminal has been constructed to the most modern standards for home porting.

- A new LNG Storage Facility has been constructed on the terminal to handle the LNG used in fueling the Bogue Power Plant. This facility is owned by New Fortress Energy and was constructed on lands owned by the Port Authority.
- A new Berth 1 is currently under construction, designed to handle both containerized and bulk cargo as well as fuels
- New cargo handling equipment is being procured to improve the efficiency of cargo handling on the terminal.
- The terminal has been resurfaced and is being reconfigured for improved efficiency
- A new Container Freight Station is to be constructed in the coming year
- Berths 3 & 4 are to be dredged to accommodate cargo and fuel.

Action on Developments in Falmouth – Bringing the Benefits of Cruise Tourism to the People

Mr. Speaker, I am particularly proud of the work we are doing in the historic town of Falmouth to develop an authentic tourism product by including the people. The local people must benefit from tourism, but there must be order, seamlessness and security. I believe we are striking this sustainable equilibrium in the town.

- The Bend Down Market in Falmouth is well known across Jamaica. It is one of the largest flea markets in that part of the island. The conditions however are less than desirable, in fact deplorable. We could not in good conscience invest in new facilities for tourists and not seek to improve the condition of the people who make the product possible. JA\$300M was therefore allocated to build a new market facility which is now complete and will be officially opened in April, 2018.
- A New Craft Market is under construction to replace Blue Tarpaulin vendor arcades. They are to be completed in July 2018.
- Water Square is currently being renovated
- Pedicab services are to be introduced on a wider scale in April 2018 after a successful pilot. The Pedicabs are now being procured. This is another way in which Jamaicans can legitimately participate in the tourism industry.
- The Hampden Wharf Artisan Village Complex construction is underway
- New Green Space Development for Terminal currently under development
- Mr. Speaker, Falmouth like many of our historic towns has outgrown the physical infrastructure and town planning laid at their inception. If left to evolve on its own, under existing planning regulations and the increasing

urbanization demands on infrastructure, these towns will become unsustainable and unlivable. Indeed, this is now the case.

The Government has taken a policy decision to re-establish our town centres on a more sustainable basis, with smarter and well laid out facilities and public infrastructure. The Port Authority has identified 50 acres of land in close proximity to the existing town to be developed as the new town centre for Falmouth in similar fashion to the Morant Bay Town Centre development announced last year. Old Falmouth has significant heritage and historical value which if properly preserved and utilized could see the significant expansion of the town as a tourism, cultural and lifestyle centre.

Action on Developments in Ocho Rios – Bringing the Benefits of Cruise Tourism to the People

Mr. Speaker, the Port Authority is also actively developing Ocho Rios:

- The Fisherman's Village Complex has been completed and is scheduled to be launched in April, 2018
- The Reynolds Pier Development is underway. Waterside construction, including new piles, repair of existing piles, installation of new breasting dolphins are scheduled for completed in April, 2018.
- Construction of landside developments, including new terminal building, new ground transport handling area and promenade to Fishing Village and the Main terminal in Ocho Rios to commence in April 2018.

Mr. Speaker, there is serious and significant investor interest in developing the cruise shipping product in Ocho Rios. I will not say too much at this stage but great things are in store for Ocho Rios.

FCJ Enterprise Projects

Mr. Speaker, two years ago after reviewing a damning Auditor General's Report on the FCJ, I established a new Board of Directors. I issued a new mandate to them to improve governance and management controls, optimization of fixed assets and cash assets and for the company to become a business enabler. Mr. Speaker, I can stand here today and say I am proud of the FCJ Board and Management for the focused and committed way that they have executed their mandate.

At the end of the 2015/2016 budget year, the financial position of FCJ was negative ninety million dollars (-\$90 million). Mr. Speaker, after the implementation of a number of business and operational strategies, the financial position in the 2016/2017 budget year improved to Two Hundred and Nine Million dollars (\$209 million). This year is even better; it is projected that the financial position for budget year 2017/2018 will be Three Hundred and Thirty Million Dollars (\$330 million).

The organizational structure of the FCJ has been strengthened with a number of management capabilities and the establishment of a number of critical departments. A total of eight (8) new managers have been employed in the areas of Client Services, Finance, Engineering, Property Management, Procurement and Marketing and Communications. The efficiency of the FCJ was further reinforced with the introduction of Legal, Procurement, Project and Planning, and Marketing and Communications Departments. These actions have led to the following:

1. Reduction in operational and maintenance costs;
2. Greater accuracy in the preparation of engineering designs and costing;
3. Greater efficiency in the implementation of projects;
4. Formulation of contracts which gives greater protection to the company; and
5. Enhanced awareness and communication with staff and the general public.

Management matters Mr. Speaker. Leadership matters.

Mr. Speaker, economic activity can be seen in the sustained uptick in the demand for commercial and industrial spaces in Jamaica. Last year alone, the demand for space was 470,000 square feet of space island wide. At Garmex Free Zone, the largest commercial complex on the island, prospective investors demanded over 241,000 square feet of production space. This high demand for space is also reflected in the increase in occupancy from 86% to 93% over the last twelve (12) months in FCJ facilities.

With this in mind, the Government has mandated the Board of FCJ to focus on the implementation of three (3) enterprise projects, which will see the construction of over 1.5 million square feet of space over the next three (3) to five (5) years dedicated to agro-processing, business process outsourcing, manufacturing, distribution and warehousing. Thirty percent (30%) of this space will be dedicated to small and medium size enterprises.

Mr. Speaker, the Garmex Free Zone sits on 52.7 acres of land, 8.7 acres of which is unused green field which is ripe for development. The present architectural design of the existing buildings is of a flat construction. These buildings will be redesigned to create multi-level buildings of higher capacity. The first phase of the project will see the construction of 360,000 square feet of space across fourteen (14) buildings of varying sizes. The FCJ has already completed the design and has received approval from the KSAC for the construction of three (3) new buildings in the first phase totaling 60,000 square feet. The FCJ has already received full approval from PIMSEC for the project. The procurement process has already started and these buildings are expected to be delivered in the Second Quarter of 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the revitalization of the Morant Bay Town and by extension, the parish of St. Thomas, is an important focus of the Jamaican Government. The FCJ has been mandated to establish the Morant Bay Urban Center at the site of the former Good Year Tyre Factory. The Morant Bay Urban Center will be a 365,000 square feet integrated business centre, housing both public and private sector entities. The development plan includes the renovation of the existing footprint of buildings, the construction a number of new buildings for commercial and industrial usage and the construction of a heritage park.

The major anchor of the urban center is the new Municipal Corporation, town hall and conference facilities, a training institution for higher learning, business process outsourcing complex and the establishment of two (2) court houses. Other services will include banking, commercial and industrial services, restaurants and other retail outlets. The FCJ has also received conditional approval from PIMSEC for this project and is awaiting Cabinet approval of the Joint Venture Agreement.

Action on Housing

As we listened to the Opposition Leader present from the stands last week, shouting loudly to us who are on the pitch to use the NHT money to fix squatting, I wondered to myself whether he has not been watching the game since he was bowled out, and whether he has totally forgotten that his 22 years on the pitch did not yield much runs. Not with the provision of affordable housing, nor any proactive system of land titling.

In the last PNP administration the NHT did 6,298 housing starts which was **less** than the number of housing starts under the previous Jamaica Labour Party Administration.

The PNP Government did

- 1,790 housing starts in 2012
- 1,689 housing starts in 2013
- 1,549 housing starts in 2014
- 1,270 housing starts in 2015

That is a total of 6,298 housing starts over four years.

Mr. Speaker in one year alone, in the 2017/18 year, the NHT will complete 5,200 housing starts in 12 months alone – almost as much as was done during four years under the PNP. Housing starts in this financial year exceed by a factor of almost two, the number of housing starts done by the NHT in every year over the past twenty years.

Mr. Speaker, housing is a critical social need and the surveys conducted by the NHT suggest that there is unfulfilled demand for housing that far outweighs what the NHT has historically provided. So when we came into office, the policy of my Government has been to “build house”....and that is exactly what the NHT has done. They have proceeded with clarity of purpose and focus around this singular objective with no distractions.

So, Mr Speaker in only two years we have completed approximately 8,200 housing starts at the NHT which is 30% more than the PNP did in four years.

There is more, Mr. Speaker. Having done 8,200 housing starts already, **we are already executing plans to do a total of approximately 22,000 housing starts for the four-year period to 2020 which would TRIPLE what the PNP administration did in their tenure.**

That, Mr. Speaker is **action** that will transform lives.

I make it a point of duty to attend all the ground breaking and handing over ceremonies. It is the most rewarding feeling to see the joy when homeowners receive the keys to their own home. One recipient said that I placed prosperity in

her hands. I want them to know that this Government celebrates with them the accomplishment of owning a home, that we celebrate people who want to build their homes, that we are committed to providing affordable, structured and orderly pathways to owning a home.

Mr. Speaker these 22,000 housing starts will be spread across Jamaica and we are innovating to achieve these higher levels of housing output. While the private sector participates in the middle, upper-middle and upper ends of the housing market they have largely been absent from the affordable housing market, which we deem to be a market failure.

Mr. Speaker, we have therefore instituted a developers programme at the NHT whereby the private sector is invited, through a competitive process, to bid on producing affordable housing on lands owned by the NHT, according to specifications provided by the NHT. Once the developers are competitively selected and confirmed, they will be responsible for all stages of the process from planning and approvals, through to construction and completion, according to criteria laid out by the NHT.

The developers will bear the financing, construction and completion risks and to induce their participation in this end of the market, the NHT will assume the market risk, provided that the established criteria are satisfied. That is, the NHT will purchase the units if they are not sold in a timely fashion.

This programme, Mr Speaker will allow the NHT to bring to market over 4,000 affordable housing solutions in the first instance, that it would otherwise be unable to do on its own. The NHT will continue to develop housing solutions on its own but this partnership allows the NHT to produce more solutions in the same period of time. In this way we can provide a steady flow of affordable housing solutions to the market and remove the need for informal settlements.

NHT Review

Mr Speaker, seeing the many and varied demands being placed on the NHT over the years to finance considerations outside of its mandate and seeing the wide gap in housing supply which still existed after forty years of operation and the

increasing incidence of informal settlements, particularly around tourist areas, in late 2016 I commissioned a review of the NHT to be led by Ambassador Dr. Nigel Clarke.

This commission, which consisted of members associated with the private sector, the unions, the Opposition and the Government met with stakeholders including NHT contributors, NHT scheme owners, NHT Staff, Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government, Private Sector, Contractors and Developers, Former Chairmen of the NHT, multilaterals, financial institutions, among other stakeholders and submitted their report to me in November 2017.

I have the pleasure of tabling the report in the House.

Mr. Speaker, a central recommendation of the NHT Review is to use funds from the NHT to address the problems of irregular settlements also known as Squatter Communities.

The Government is in agreement with this central recommendation of the NHT Review Commission to use the NHT to address the problem of irregular settlements.

This will require amendments to the NHT Act, which this Government is prepared to do. It will also create a mission overlap with Housing Agency of Jamaica and is in keeping with our Public Sector Rationalization Plan. There is also a recommendation to merge the HAJ with the NHT.

There are other recommendations in the NHT Review, which will be ventilated in this Parliament and in the public. The Government now has a well prepared road map on which to take informed decisions on the future of such an important institution.

Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ)

Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the HAJ is to develop housing solutions, provide infrastructure to upgrade informal settlements, and assist with securing titles for

homeowners. The HAJ is the Agency of the Government tasked to regularize squatter settlements. It is ironic to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about using NHT contributor resources to upgrade squatter settlements, because the Housing Agency of Jamaica, is one of those agencies that drifted from the path of good management under the PNP administration. When we took over the Government, the HAJ was operating at a loss of JA\$885m. It had housing developments unfinished for five years and the cost for units skyrocketed to well above the units could fetch on the open market.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that under this Administration the HAJ, for the last financial year turned a profit of JA\$183m and will turn a profit this year of over JA\$800m. The Agency will continue to pursue its strategic objectives - to stabilize its financial position and strengthen its technical capacity. In this regard the Agency will focus on the following:

- i. Improving its financial position thereby capitalizing on loans, grants and value-added service opportunities, toward increased delivery of housing solutions;
- ii. Use profits earned to regularize informal communities by expanding its capability to provide affordable housing through innovative housing solution design and effective project execution;

The HAJ under this Administration has already completed scope of work of necessary infrastructure, upgrading more than 60 informal settlements right across Jamaica. If it is the wish of Parliament to amend the NHT Act to allow its resources to fund the upgrading of informal settlements, the HAJ would be ready to start the tender process for contractors to execute the upgrading projects.

Mr. Speaker, during 2018/19, the HAJ intends to start the construction of one thousand, eight hundred and sixty-six (1,866) solutions.

The locations where construction will commence, and the number of solutions to be provided are as follows:

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| i. Green Pond, St. James | 224 solutions |
| ii. Grange Pen (Brownfield), St. James | 530 solutions |
| iii. Grange Pen (Greenfield), St. James | 300 solutions |

iv. Bernard Lodge, St. Catherine	300 solutions
v. Shooters Hill, St. Catherine	200 solutions
vi. Reid's Pen, St. Catherine	80 solutions
vii. Belle Air 2 (Houses) St. Ann	132 solutions
viii. Whitehall 4 (Townhouse), Westmoreland	100 solutions

HAI will deliver three hundred and nineteen (319) solutions comprising service lots, housing starts and/or completed houses in FY2018/19:

- i. Reid's Pen, St Catherine – Eighty (80) Solutions are projected to be delivered. The terms have been agreed with the Joint Venture (JV) partner, and the JV has been sent to the Attorney General's Chambers for review.
- ii. Belle Air, St Ann – Twenty-one (21) Three-Bedroom solutions are projected for delivery. Commencement have already begun on the constructions of these units.
- iii. Belle Air, St Ann – Fifty (50) houses are projected for delivery. Commencement is slated to begin in 2018/19.
- iv. Luana 4, St Elizabeth – One Hundred & Sixty-Eight (168) solutions are projected for delivery; and the Agreement with the partner has already been finalized.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is serious about taking action to improve access, ownership and security of land and housing for every citizen of Jamaica. We want every Jamaican to enjoy the feeling of prosperity and have a comfortable home in an orderly fashion. We are not just paying lip service to this. In two years we have taken more action to have the widest impact and effect on the prosperity of the people. By the completion of this term of my administration we would have built more homes and given more titles to Jamaicans than in the last 22 years of the PNP government. **I am the builder!**

Revised Residential Densities, Zoning (and Heights) for Jamaica (emphasis on Kingston/St Andrew and Urban Towns)

Mr. Speaker, sustainable physical development is a national imperative for this Government. Development must however protect the environment and be orderly to safeguard the future of our people. In response to the need to increase the housing stock, provide wider options for housing solutions, increase efficiency of use of urban lands, reduce commuting costs and protect environmentally sensitive areas, there will be rationalizing of densities island-wide.

Mr. Speaker, there is pressing need to develop and improve the physical infrastructure in our cities and urban centres. Presently, the development trend is towards dormitory communities and suburbs for housing and then a massive commute back and forth to the city for work. A more efficient use of our urban space and expensive infrastructure is creating well planned residential options. Presently, the Government is engaged in an extensive programme of road widening, intersection improvements, and introducing smart traffic management technologies.

We ask that the public bear with us while we make these improvements to traffic infrastructure. However, these improvements have a limit to the relief they bring. Ultimately, we have to make some decisions about what we are going to do with the valuable real estate that is lying underutilized in Downtown Kingston, in close proximity to centres of employment and production, while workers have to commute many miles wasting time, fuel, and enduring the stress of travel. As an island, land availability is a more binding constraint, no-one can argue that we have not utilized our lands in the most strategic ways. As the demand for housing and urban facilities increases against a finite land resource, a compelling case is made to review existing residential densities and heights as an integral part of Jamaica's spatial development strategy.

Mr Speaker, the Government has taken a policy decision to look at increasing densities especially in the urban areas, to maximize the use of scarce land resources and to take advantage of economies of scale in respect of infrastructural investments such as central sewerage systems and mass transit. Mr Speaker, there are **criteria** and justification for increasing residential densities. Density is a planning concept used to regulate the magnitude of developments in a particular area and can be calculated using habitable rooms per hectare or a combination of plot area ratio/lot coverage/height.

Mr Speaker, the maximum allowable residential density is a function of a number of factors such as:

- The population trends/growth versus size of country.
- The need to provide housing for the various social groups based on demand at each level.
- Social issues such as squatting and the Government's response.
- The need to encourage the "greening" "of buildings by using increased density as an incentive
- Availability of water supply, electricity and other utilities.
- The means of sewage disposal/proximity to central sewage system.
- The provision of amenity space such as green areas/open spaces, other recreational facilities and parking to meet the requirements of the proposed development.
- The size and shape of the lot.
- Proximity to social infrastructure, services and shopping conveniences.
- Proximity to public transportation routes.
- The physical and geological characteristics of the site (including the slope of the land and susceptibility to slope movements)
- The ecological sensitivity of the area.

A number of areas in Kingston and St. Andrew are slated for increased densities. However, there will be no compromising environmental and aesthetic standards nor any devaluation of areas that are of residential character.

Mr Speaker, the height of buildings will depend on the constraints placed on the Planning Authorities (TCPA/NEPA/Municipal Corporations) by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). I am advised that the TCPA/NEPA along with selected professionals are having discussions with the CAA in coming to a final determination as to the zones in the City where greater heights can be attained without compromising aircraft safety. The prescribed zones will be named when the NEPA and the TCPA completes the consultation with stakeholders.

Other urban and sub-urban areas in Jamaica, including Montego Bay and Ocho Rios, will also be included based on the criteria/factors listed above as agreed on by the TCPA/NEPA, the local planning authorities and other relevant central Government agencies.

Mr Speaker, this development focus and strategy will also provide for the renewal of older neighbourhoods and housing stocks and begin to stem suburban sprawl.

Reductions in time, money, energy and air pollution associated with longer trips are also realized from the reduction of urban sprawl.

It is imperative that densities, especially on the plains, be increased in order to:

- Further enhance sustainable development opportunities;
- Reduce the carbon footprint;
- Maximize the use of scarce urban land and protect our agricultural and more ecologically sensitive areas;
- Reduce the cost of repair and maintenance of roads and provision of other infrastructure, especially in the hilly areas;
- Allow for increased investments and innovation in the provision of housing stock on the private and public market for rent and sale;
- Allow for smart growth of our towns and produce more liveable and resilient urban centres.

Mr Speaker, the decision to allow greater densities and heights, will be dependent on whether the intended development proposals satisfy ALL the relevant planning and other criteria governing such developments.

Mr Speaker, in general the areas will be selected on the following main factors:

- Central location,
- Access to major bus routes and arterial roads,
- Relatively flat well drained terrain,
- Ability for connection to present or planned sewer mains,
- Relatively larger lot sizes and potential for amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, Kingston City is entering into a new phase of its existence. I would like to think of it as a period of renewal. I am sure you cannot recall seeing so many construction cranes in the City all at once. Government cannot build all the new residential and housing infrastructure required. The private sector must take the lead. We want developers to be assured that Government is making the right policy decisions to incentive their investments, as long as they abide by the rules and respect environmental and aesthetic standards. Now is the time for developers to consider investing inside the City and urban areas. Let's make

Kingston the cleanest, smartest, greenest, friendliest, safest and most modern city in the Caribbean.

Bernard Lodge Lands

Mr Speaker, I am pleased to announce that last week the Cabinet approved the Bernard Lodge Land Use Master plan for the development of an urban community in the area. Over the years, a piecemeal approach has been taken to development on those lands. In response to many applications by developers to purchase this land for housing, the Government decided that a master plan for the entire area should be done before any sale of land was approved and that the developers would be tied to the development plan and be required to pay an impact fee towards infrastructure development such as roads and sewerage. The master plan benefitted from extensive research and data gathering, the completion of studies inclusive of a rapid environmental impact assessment, regional and spatial analysis, transportation and traffic assessments, a comprehensive drainage study and social and economic analyses.

Mr Speaker, the plan allows for sustainable and orderly development of an integrated urban centre with the provision of shared infrastructure services; integrating residential housing, commercial offices, light industrial operations, and agriculture into a symbiotic relationship and follows green development concepts and principles. The plan includes supporting services such as police stations, health facilities, schools and community green spaces.

Mr Speaker, the planned community will benefit from greater densities ranging from 50 to 100 HRA (habitable room per acre) and will see heights ranging from four to six storeys. It is expected that on completion of the housing developments, some 17,000 housing solutions will materialize for the benefit of our people.

Part III: Security

Mr. Speaker, by now it would be clear to the public that the Government is sparing no effort to address the security situation in the country. Last Sunday on the advice of the security forces, I advised the Governor General to declare a State of Public

Emergency in a section of St. Catherine approximating the St. Catherine North Police Division.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue our commitment to Enhanced Security Measures through Zones of Special Operations and States of Public Emergency, as well as a suite of other intelligence driven and targeted responses. It has significantly reduced violence in the areas in which the enhanced measures have been implemented and has given confidence to the residents that their safety and security is being taken seriously. These and other strategies will continue to be rolled out as resources become available. At an appropriate time, the Minister of National Security will update Parliament in more detail on the operational and strategic results of the both SOEs.

In conjunction with the acquisition of technology to support cyber security, border security, intelligence gathering and analysis and surveillance, the Administration is investing in the human resources and technical expertise to properly secure Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, the two main threats to our national security are guns and gangs. There is a legitimate call for a plan of action around which the Nation can rally. We have developed elements of such a plan, however a key element is political consensus on the elements developed. I have started the process of reaching out to the Opposition to build this consensus and I have seen reciprocal signs.

The Vale Royal talks are scheduled to begin soon and I am hopeful that an understanding can be reached. I have invited the Opposition Spokesman on Security to attend the next sitting of the National Security Council to discuss elements of the crime plan and to share the ideas the Opposition would like to be incorporated in the plan.

The political consensus is necessary, as we would have learned from the passage of the Zone of Special Operations. The National Security Plan, the Plan to Secure Jamaica calls for new Legislation and amendments to existing Legislation. That process could yield less effective results if there is no common understanding. I am confident we can reach an understanding to put National Security above politics in the same way that Government and Opposition have rallied around to pass legislation relating to IMF targets.

[Firearm Act Amendments](#)

Mr. Speaker, the Government will be bringing a series of amendments to the Firearms Act to Parliament, in order to discourage the possession of and/or dealing in illegal firearms and ammunition. There will be a number of new offences

such as trafficking, dealing and distributing, which will better define the various illicit activities within the illegal firearm trade.

It is wholly unacceptable that so many lives are being lost to persons with illegal firearms and this Administration resolves to treat with this problem with the seriousness it deserves.

The amendments will also streamline the regulation of the legal arms trade and the functions and activities of the Firearm Licensing Authority. In this regard, I must emphasize that the ownership of a private firearm is not a right and therefore a clear need must be demonstrated and fit and proper standards and detailed due diligence must be applied to the granting of licences.

Watchlist

Mr. Speaker, for too long, persons with gang associations and those who are a part of criminal organisations have been proceeding with impunity. Currently, the research is being undertaken to guide the establishment of a watchlist. Persons placed on the watchlist by the courts, will be subject to enhanced surveillance and other measures.

Mr. Speaker, for too long we have accepted the concept of a 'Don', as almost legitimate leaders of our society. They are able to move freely and conduct their illicit activities as they like. This freedom also allows them to have association and influence over key functionaries in the community and broader society, including law enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, in other countries, the equivalent of their dons, who plan and execute mass gruesome killings, challenge the authority of state, and drive fear into citizens, are placed on watch lists. This allows the State to limit and better collect information on their activities. It is now time to deal decisively with gang leaders and Dons.

Enhanced Security Measures

Mr. Speaker, we will continue our commitment to Enhanced Security Measures through Zones of Special Operations and States of Public Emergency as well as a suite of other intelligence driven and targeted responses. It has significantly reduced violence in the areas that the enhanced measures have been implemented and has given confidence to the residents, that their safety and security is being taken seriously. These and other strategies will continue to be rolled out as resources become available.

In conjunction with the acquisition of technology to support cyber security, border security, intelligence gathering and analysis and surveillance, the Administration is investing in the human resources and the technical capacity to properly secure Jamaica.

Fiscal Irresponsibility and the Origins of the National Debt Crisis

I listened to the Opposition presentations last week and they seem intent on having the Jamaican people forget how we really got to where we are. It is therefore necessary that I spend some time to correct the false narratives and deliberate inaccuracies.

Insert 1

The Jamaican people will not forget that during a period when the world economy grew at unprecedented rates in the 1990s and early 2000s, the PNP government of that time presided over the largest growth in national debt of any administration in the history of Jamaica.

In Jamaican dollars our national debt under the PNP soared from approximately \$45 billion in 1990/91 to almost \$1 trillion by 2007, an increase of approximately **2,000 percent** !!! and this was accompanied by horrendous experiences of personal ruin.

The PNP government liberalized the financial system without adequate controls, rules, and regulations and coupled this sorry state of affairs with an ill-advised high interest rate monetary policy, that precipitated a spectacularly massive financial sector crisis....one of the largest such crises in the world measured as a percentage of GDP.

They created FINSAC and in so doing issued \$140 billion worth of debt, to recapitalize financial institutions.

\$140 billion of debt, Mr. Speaker, at a time when it took less than 40 Jamaican dollars to purchase one US\$,

They socialized private debt.

And added it to the national debt stock for the taxpayer to repay.

We can debate the soundness of that policy choice in the face of a large financial sector crisis, but the cause of the crisis is beyond doubt – the crisis was caused by the failed policies of the PNP administration of the day.

With the stroke of a pen, by the single executive decision, the national debt ballooned to unsustainable levels with the debt/GDP ratio growing from 70% in 1996 to just under 125% by 2002/03 and falling to just under 115% by 2006/7.

By policy choice, the financial sector crisis therefore became a National Debt Crisis and both were attributable to the PNP's negligent handling of the Jamaican economy. Jamaica is still haunted by the irresponsible economic decisions of that period.

The tragedy is that 20 years later we still find ourselves in the grip of that national debt crisis. It has taken an entire generation to right the economic wrongs of the PNP government of the 1990's and we are still mired in the economic problem they created.

The national debt crisis was worsened by the reckless management of state enterprises that borrowed at high interest rates, pursued questionable strategies, incurred large losses that were then brought on to the books for the taxpayer to repay.

So as the national debt dynamics began to overwhelm and dominate the economy, the PNP government high-handedly pursued a combination of high interest rate and high inflation policy to keep itself afloat.

High inflation policy was used in attempt to inflate the debt away

High interest rate policy was applied to ensure that the government remained funded, to prevent capital flight and to project some measure of external viability, fooling only themselves.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Central Bank was hijacked to keep the government afloat with grave consequences for the people of Jamaica.

Over various years in this period a PNP government that claims that it is for poor people, ran inflation rates of 17%, 25%, 30% , 40% and even 80% Mr. Speaker. What nerve of the Leader of the Opposition speak of price rices in the past two years and worse, with inaccurate data.

Now anyone who knows anything about economics knows that inflation rates of those absurd levels are like weapons of mass destruction directed against the poor.

Under the PNP government for several years (e.g. 2003/4, 2004/5 and 2005/6) interest costs plus public sector compensation costs EXCEEDED or APPROXIMATED the entire tax revenues of the country.

So... they collect tax revenues and after they spent on paying the cost on the debt, that they accumulated, and paying public sector employees, that's it; the tax revenues are done! They don't yet account for medicine, hospitals, school books or schools, police stations or even national security.

As a result there was chronic underinvestment in Jamaica's social and physical infrastructure during this time, and we are still feeling the effects of this to this day.

Now it is not that the PNP government never got advice. Dem ignore the advice.

Everyone should read the various IMF reports on Jamaica during this period of the PNP government as well as the World Bank's 2005 Review on Jamaica's Public

Expenditure performance. It is an independent but shocking account of the PNP's recklessness.

The economy was characterized by grave macroeconomic instability, structural disincentives to produce, high levels of uncertainty and a huge premium for parking cash in the vaults of government, earning ridiculous real returns.

The PNP government of the 1990's and early 2000's therefore represented the greatest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in the history of Jamaica.

Those with assets were shielded from the ravages of the PNP's hyper- inflationary policy. Those with cash had unimaginable levels of income from the government's high interest rate policy.

The poor and the vulnerable were left to suffer.

And the struggling entrepreneurs, the then emerging black entrepreneurial class with no family cash to rely on were wiped out.

That is PNP government for you.

As a result of the economic incentives skewed against production, manufacturing and other companies left Jamaica in droves during this PNP reign, relocating to Trinidad, Dominican Republic and various Central American countries. In the process Jamaica lost employment, skills, technological transfer and confidence.

The Origins of Fiscal Responsibility

It was Man a Yaad Audley Shaw who tell them: "*Go talk to the multilaterals where you can borrow at 2% instead of 20%*"

They laughed at him and mocked him.

It was Prime Minister Bruce Golding who pointed out how unsustainable our debt was and who first made debt reduction a national priority with the debt exchange.

Today there is bipartisan consensus around the goal of national debt reduction and that is something to celebrate.

But don't come in here and try to fool people that it started with the PNP in 2013.

Fiscal indiscipline was the hallmark of the 18 –year-PNP government and the data, statistics and results from that period speak for themselves.

Just because they had a few years of fiscal straitjacketing, under heavy international supervision, don't expect the Jamaican people to believe that the foundational instincts of the PNP have changed.

So while the world was booming in the 1990's and early 2000's; under the PNP, Jamaica was suffocating in high debt unable to take advantage of favourable global conditions.

The global environment then changed due to factors in Jamaica. There was a global recession that floored countries around the world with a long chain domino effect.

By the time of the global recession in 2008, Jamaica was heavily exposed with high levels of public debt, ramshackle fiscal accounts, weak public financial management and a distorted economic incentive structure.

Overnight, bauxite companies that were part of complex international commercial organisations found that it did not make sense for them to continue producing in Jamaica for varied reasons.

Jobs were lost and export revenues shrank.

Due to job losses from the global crisis in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, remittances to Jamaica shriveled and our balance of payments was imperiled.

Corresponding banks reeling from the financial compression that accompanied the global recession, cut their correspondent banking lines to Jamaica which sucked liquidity and in turn affected Jamaican businesses.

Tax revenues in Jamaica collapsed as the compounded effect of these forces meant reduced consumption in Jamaica, reduced income for Jamaicans and reduced economic activity in Jamaica.

This is what the JLP government of 2007 inherited: a chronically weak, highly indebted and vulnerable domestic economic environment facing the full onslaught of the worst global recession in 70 years.

We then approached the IMF for Stand-By facilities to help Jamaica navigate these unprecedented global conditions.

We approached the IDB, as we advocated in Opposition, to support us with development loans which were much, much more affordable than those obtained during Omar Davies's adventure.

- It was therefore the JLP government of 2007 that for the first time pursued policies that considered the national debt as unsustainable;

- It was the JLP Government of 2007 that rescued Jamaica from an unimaginably high interest rate and high inflation rate policy;
- It was the JLP Government of 2007 that first expressed and codified in law debt/GDP targets in the Financial Administration and Audit Act of 2010 as part of Jamaica's Fiscal Rule Framework.
- It was the JLP Government of 2007 that first expressed wage/GDP targets into law recognizing from 2010 the unsustainability of borrowing to compensate public sector employees.
- It was the JLP Government of 2007 that embraced fiscal responsibility and by so doing it became a part of the political vernacular.
- It was the JLP Government of 2007 that in pursuit of greater fiscal certainty divested state agencies, such as the Sugar Company of Jamaica and Air Jamaica that lost tens of billions under the PNP 18 year government. These losses were added to the national debt.

The point is that fiscal responsibility did not exist for 18.5 years of PNP government and the PNP's fiscal irresponsibility left the economy on its knees.

The fresh shoots of a new fiscal responsibility paradigm first appeared in the Bruce Golding administration of 2007.

The Opposition would have us believe that one man just wave a magic wand and boops! Things changed.

The facts are more inconvenient than that.

When I was sworn in as Prime Minister in October 2011, I devoted a substantial portion of my first speech as Prime Minister to the necessity of addressing the challenge posed by our national debt with sustained fiscal discipline. Go and check it.

As Prime Minister, towards the end of 2011, I went to the people of Jamaica in a public mass meeting, with tens of thousands in attendance, and with full media saturation, and told the people the truth: that fiscal consolidation had to be pursued and it would only gain momentum. I think I termed it *bitter medicine*.

I found myself as Opposition Leader within weeks, but the people of Jamaica later learned that **I had told them the truth.**

The truth of bitter medicine therefore prepared the minds of the Jamaican people for what was to come.

So by 2012 you had a government that had no practical choice but to pursue a path of national debt reduction centered around fiscal consolidation, and an Opposition that had just campaigned on a platform that included the critical need for debt reduction and sustainability through fiscal discipline.

The table was set and these conditions made for great receptivity.

By 2013 there was therefore a societal consensus and deep resolve to address the problem of unsustainable national debt. The government, the opposition, the unions, academia and private sector were all of the view that this was a necessity and stakeholders contributed to the success in their own way.

And you want to come here and talk as if one hand can clap?

It is the arrogance of the PNP that leads them to ignore the role played by the civil servants in the Ministries of Finance, Justice and other ministries who worked tirelessly into the night to ensure that drafts of bills were ready and targets were achieved.

It is the arrogance of the PNP that would, in their narrative, ignore the work of Government and Opposition parliamentarians in the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament who worked on weekends, on holidays, over Christmas itself to ensure that Bills went through Committee on time when required and were debated and passed on time.

Speaking for the then Opposition we played a constructive role supporting the passage of bills as well as the reforms that accompanied them as we saw ourselves aligned with the outcomes of national debt reduction.

The seamless continuation of fiscal consolidation under a change in administration, and the early transfer from the Extended Fund Facility to the Precautionary Standby Agreement within eight months of my government, only occurred as we were already aligned with fiscal consolidation as an Opposition and vested in its success.

One cannot deny that the PNP government of 2013 negotiated an agreement with the IMF, as did we in 2010 and 2016. However, to present the period that ensued with scant regard to context and history, is to present a deceptive account.

The PNP is the party that created this national debt crisis due to misguided and negligent policy and it was only poetic justice that they had to be part of the solution.

However, I am not here to claim any ownership. We leave that kind of arrogance to you. I just want to do what is in the best interest of the country but also to set the record straight.

I would have preferred to not spend time on this, but as Prime Minister of Jamaica I could not stand by and have the electorate receive a false and incomplete narrative. It is important that the electorate have the full picture.

Fiscal Responsibility and Wages

It is good for Jamaica that fiscal discipline is a part of the political economy. It is good that the recognition and understanding of how unsustainable national debt can retard development, stifle national ambitions and compromise sovereignty, is now widespread.

Though this is the case, Mr. Speaker, the connection between a high wage bill, national debt and growth still escapes some of us.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time under a previous administration, when Omar Davies was Minister of Finance in 2003/4, when interest costs and compensation exceeded tax revenues.

There have been improvements in interests cost since then, moving from approximately 17% of GDP in 2003/4 to approximately 7% of GDP in 2018/19.

However, compensation costs, including employers contribution to health and pension schemes, which was 11% of GDP in 2003/4 remained in a similar range of approximately 10% in 2018/19

With tax revenues at approximately 26% of GDP in 2017/18, wages as defined, and interest still represent a substantial majority, (approximately 65%) of tax revenues.

Mr. Speaker let me be among the first to say in this House that this is unsustainable.

This is not to blame the public sector employee.

Let me repeat, no one is blaming the hard working, patriotic public sector employee. This mismanagement of the economy over the long years of the PNP,

which resulted in the financial sector crisis and the national debt crisis, is **NOT the people's fault.**

However, the debt overhang is our inheritance and we have to deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, if Jamaica is to grow and develop and we are to have the inclusive, nurturing and caring society we want, government spending is going to have to be re-prioritized towards critical growth areas, infrastructure spending and poverty alleviation.

When 70% of our budget is consumed by the fixed costs of wages and interests even prior to the start of the financial year, this is a recipe to stay where we are economically, or to reverse the fragile gains we have collectively and painstakingly made.

Public sector workers are among the hardest working people. I know that as I have been fortunate to work with some of the most dedicated public sector employees and civil servants.

In this House we all have parents, siblings, cousins and friends who work in some area of the public sector. Speaking for myself, my mother was a civil servant.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am Prime Minister for all Jamaicans and I have to lead Jamaica for all Jamaicans. All Jamaican workers in the public AND private sectors. I am Prime Minister for Cane cutters, and taxi-men, domestic workers and farmers, the unemployed and those hoping to one day be employed. Our Young people whose future resides with us. Everyone is at risk.

There are There are children and the elderly, the disabled, the sick and the otherwise vulnerable.

There are the poor and the meek.

I have to stand for them too and be their defender.

This requires a gradual rebalancing of expenditure so government services can be extended to meet their needs.

When I take 70% of tax revenues and spend on compensation and interest for one grouping, these other Jamaicans, whose numbers far outstrip the numbers of public sector employees, ultimately get left behind.

This Prime Minister believes in justice and so we will not do that.

When we seek to rationalize compensation expenditure we don't do that to put the money in a vault. We do this so we can, in the medium term, rebalance expenditure towards critical areas such as national security, infrastructure spending and poverty alleviation.

We need our public sector workers to understand this. We respect and value each and every one, and the contribution they make.

Approximately three million people live here and the country's finances have to be planned in way that takes all of their interests into account. That is what we are doing. We hope that as discussions continue, the groupings that still have not reached agreement, will come to understand that ALL Jamaicans have a stake in ensuring that we manage our finances in a prudent way. Ultimately, it will benefit all of us.

[Economic Growth Council](#)

We on this side believed that it was essential that the need for economic expansion takes centre stage and that economic growth should also be a central part of the political economy.

The IMF provides policy advice on best practice fiscal management and architecture as well as guidance on monetary policy and the associated framework. However, there is really no analogous multilateral institution for growth.

We therefore, in Jamaica, have to be our own advisors on growth.

When we conceived of the Economic Growth Council there was more than one goal. First, was to help in the transition of economic growth from the periphery of the political economy to its centre.

The first objective of the EGC has therefore been met.

The second objective behind the formation of the EGC was to help forge broad consensus around policies that the government ought to pursue in the quest for sustained economic growth.

This objective has also been met.

The EGC is comprised of persons with experience in the private sector, the public sector and trade unions. The mandate of the EGC was to consult widely and distill a set of recommendations for which there would be broad support.

Through more than 100 consultations, including with the Opposition under its current and former Leader, that is exactly what the EGC did. They then distilled hundreds of hours of broad-based consultations into a Call To Action manifesto grouped into eight initiatives met with wide acceptance and praise as a collection of policies worth pursuing.

The reason for the embrace the EGC recommendations received, was that these were not the recommendations of the EGC members per se, but they rather reflected the diverse views of broad-based stakeholder groups.

It is therefore grossly deceptive of you to portray the EGC in divisive language. The PNP always resorts to stoking cheap class antagonism and resentment, not realizing that Jamaicans see beyond it.

Not realizing that it is seen as a symbol of their bankruptcy of practical ideas.

It is significant that the IMF took notice of our efforts as a society to forge consensus among diverse stakeholders and across the political divide around growth policy.

This led them to include the consensus EGC recommendations that the government agreed to within the policy matrix attached to the Letter of Intent providing transparency and underscoring the quality of the policy recommendations.

Many of these recommendations have been and are being implemented. They are exhaustive and so it will take time. They will provide an update in due course.

However, I can say without fear of contradiction that the EGC holds the distinction of being one of the few government commissions whose recommendations have actually not sat on a shelf and one of the few where implementation has started so quickly.

The fact that a year after publishing their recommendations growth in the economy has not attained the levels we all want is no reason to politicize the EGC nor to disparage the mission.

Economic Growth is our collective responsibility.

The EGC was appointed to be a conduit that promoted the necessity for economic growth in the public domain and that helped to forge consensus around policy that can eventually lead to growth. They have definitely done that.

We should applaud them for their public spirit and their willingness to volunteer.

Mr. Speaker, I will say further that Michael Lee-Chin's five-in-four is not to be scoffed at.

As he tells it, he first announced this audacious goal as a means of focusing minds on what is possible. It generated, and continues to generate, much publicity and commentary and has played a central role in moving the topic of economic growth to the centre of the political economy.

But you don't just go from low growth to high growth after 40 years averaging less than 1% growth.

The Government's growth projections, however, have always been a matter of public record and included in the various documents produced by the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the Bank of Jamaica and the Ministry of Finance.

Michael Lee-Chin's aspirational target has however co-existed with official government forecasts as a reminder that if we could somehow implement all the reforms we can think of, in the shortest timeframe possible, then economic growth, above the official forecasts is possible.

His aspirations for Jamaica, which we on this side share, are not meant to replace official government forecasts produced by institutions tasked with that purpose.

The reaction of the Opposition however is telling.

Instead of supporting ambition and aspiration, which cost them nothing, they ridicule and scoff.

Let me say this. The Opposition Peoples National Party is on the wrong side of history to mock aspiration and ridicule ambition.

Aspiration and ambition are ingrained in the consciousness of the Jamaican people.

We are an ambitious people and our aspirations are sometimes unmatched by proven capabilities as viewed by others. There is everything right, and nothing wrong with that.

That what it means to be "*likkle but tallawah*"

Two years ago them grudge you for your house,
two weeks ago them grudge you for education
and now them grudge you for growth aspiration.

There is only one Jamaican phrase for that attitude: bad mind.

A bad mind, them bad mind.

It is probably because the front bench of the PNP is increasingly being filled with elites born in privilege who do not know what it is to NEED to aspire beyond what seems possible.

For generations, Mr Speaker, the PNP have felt **entitled** to lead Jamaica.

They have felt that they are the natural national political party and they believe that there is no alternative to authentic national vision for Jamaica other than their own.

They have this belief to the point that they take umbrage if something good is happening and they are not the ones doing it. The success of the country is secondary to them being in power.

So you hear this ruckus, with them badgering the government about spending \$2.5 billion to deal with electoral lists.

We have urgent national security priorities that directly and literally affect the lives of people in the here and now. We say to them we need to spend on security as a priority and you hear and see their response:

"Ready to take to the streets."

No going to the streets for security or health or education.

That is the PNP for you.

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Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I have shown that the Government is taking positive action in securing the prosperity of our people.

Our stewardship of the Government has been effective, in delivering jobs, housing, and infrastructure development.

Mr. Speaker Jamaicans are ambitious people, we want to see our country grow, we want to be able to enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of our country, free of crime and violence.

This Government has not shirked from the difficult challenges of crime and low economic growth. Any fair observer would agree that the Government is working hard and smart in this regard.

Achieving economic growth and conquering the crime monster is a national goal. Let us elevate these goals above politics and work together to achieve them. This is a relay, the opposition PNP has handed over the baton at the penultimate leg. It shouldn't be that they are hoping that we will drop the baton or pull up in such a critical race or celebrate when our growth time looks slow. Let us be like our winning Olympic relay team in these matters, doing our best and hoping for the best for Team Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, prosperity is the destiny for all Jamaicans, let us maintain a positive outlook and hopeful minds.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Action your Prosperity!