



GOING for
**GROWTH and
DEVELOPMENT**



Unleashing our Full Potential



The Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, ON, MP

BUDGET Debate
2013 - 2014

April 30, 2013
Gordon House



**JAMAICA: GOING FOR GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT-
UNLEASHING OUR POTENTIAL
2013-14 Budget Presentation
By Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, O.N., M.P.
Tuesday, April 30, 2013**

Greetings

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, distinguished Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, Members of International Organisations, Fellow Jamaicans.

I thank the Almighty, for his love and kindness towards me.

I pray that he will continue to guide my path and bless our nation.

I pause at the beginning of this presentation to express my gratitude to my enabling team at home, my best friend and husband, Errald and the other members of my family, including Marva.

I also wish to thank members of my Cabinet as well as the members of the Public Service, Ministries and Agencies.

I must specially thank my Councillors for the support and the constituents of South West St. Andrew for allowing me the privilege to serve for these many years.

I am grateful for their loving support and understanding of the challenges that come with being the President of a Political Party, Member of Parliament and Head of Government.

Mr. Speaker, the children have been an enduring source of inspiration to me. They are our future leaders.

I am grateful to all Jamaicans, at home and abroad, who constantly pray for me and offer their encouragement and support.

Mr Speaker,

I pause to pay tribute to some outstanding Jamaicans have made their transition in the past year, among them - the Hon. Maurice Facey, OJ; Dr. the Hon. Olive Lewin, OJ, CD; Mr. Arthur H. Williams, OD; Mr George Kerr, OD; Hon. James deRoux CD; and Mr Tony Laing.

Permit me, Mr Speaker to single-out another outstanding Jamaican one from among us in this Parliament – former Senator, Minister of State, President of the Jamaica Teacher's Association, school principal, Minister of the Moravian Church, and community activist. I speak of the late Noel Monteith.

We honour their work and contribution.

Introduction

Mr. Speaker,

All of us in this House, if we are true representatives of the people must admit that there is a segment of our society, present and visible in each of our constituencies which is hurting.

Mr. Speaker, I speak of the rural poor or those in the inner cities who exist on the fringes of the society and are in desperate need of special attention and our support.

The strain on the economy and the pressure on the dollar caused by the persisting recession, have had a direct impact on food and commodity prices. To those members of the Jamaican family, I say to you this afternoon - 'I know it is hard and I know it is difficult but you have not been forgotten.'

The administration that I lead is ensuring that an appropriate mix of policies and programmes is designed to bring greater security to your lives and to ensure that your situation is improved.

As a nation we have come too far and worked too hard to see the steps towards progress reversed.

As we did with JEEP, a unique combination of projects will be developed to provide social and economic protection and security for you and your families.

Among the first to participate in the redesigned Rural Economic Development Initiatives (REDI) and the PATH Step to Work Programme will be those at greatest risk.

This strategy will ensure that those of our women who are most vulnerable and placed at greatest risk by rural and inner-city poverty, will have access to appropriate training and financing to participate as shareholders in cottage industries.

Mr. Speaker, in a year of such fiscal constraints – we have had to work with less resources than we did last year.

This administration is duty bound to exercise the greatest care that every dollar is wisely spent through better coordination and targeted intervention to protect the most vulnerable members of the Jamaican family.

Our women, persons with disabilities, the young and the elderly are particularly vulnerable to poverty in times like these.

It is they who give me the impetus each day to do all that I can to make their lives better.

Mr. Speaker, I am positive about Jamaica and our future.

It is with the knowledge that Jamaica has emerged with one of the strongest and most recognizable national brands that I wake up every day determined to put things right.

It is with the knowledge that, all over the world, companies are seeking to capitalize on 'Brand Jamaica', including our national symbols, our music, our language, our foods and our athletes – that I know that we have within us, that spirit and determination to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, as a country we have endured oil crises, frequent and severe natural disasters and continue to face the most serious recession in more than 60 years.

Yet, in this our fifty-first year as a politically independent nation, we stand strong and proud, resilient and focussed on creating the future we want for all Jamaicans.

It is therefore with confidence that we confront the current socio-economic pressures.

We are determined as a people to succeed, to achieve Developed Country Status and create a good quality of life for all our citizens.

Our journey as a nation has been characterized by many twists and turns. We have had our ups and downs. We have faced many challenges and have had many difficult periods but we have never surrendered.

I have an abiding faith in our people, confidence in our programmes and optimism about our future.

These considerations will guide us as we press forward – *Going for Growth and Development, Unleashing our Full Potential*.

Mr. Speaker,

The measures required to take our nation forward have made life difficult for many.

I understand the pain and pressures being faced by most of our people. We will however continue to do everything we can to mitigate the effect of the difficult measures we have had to take, in order to put right, an economy gone wrong.

The Minister of Finance has described the challenges facing our economy.

He has outlined the necessary measures which we are taking to address these challenges, restore macro-economic stability and reduce our debt.

It would have been more difficult to survive the last 16 months without the involvement and commitment of our stakeholders.

The business and financial sectors and depositors have been very important partners in this regard.

In a show of patriotic commitment they participated in the National Debt Exchange and helped stabilize the ailing economy that we inherited.

I salute them for their contribution.

Our public servants and the public sector Trade Unions have also made tremendous sacrifices.

They have partnered with us and have, once again, agreed to wage restraints.

Whether they are teachers, police or soldiers, health professionals, accountants or social workers, technical or executive professionals, administrators, clerical, ancillary workers or drivers; this country could not operate without our committed and dedicated public servants.

Time and time again, they have 'stepped up to the plate' to help Jamaica.

We owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

I want to assure them that we have not taken their sacrifices for granted.

This is the reason we will always choose dialogue and be respectful to our public servants.

Mr. Speaker, at my instruction, the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing has identified 250 acres of land at Ebony Park in St. Catherine, which will be used for the construction of houses for public sector workers.

This will reduce the cost of housing for this sector.

The government will also identify other suitable parcels of land for the same purpose, which will be announced at an appropriate time.

Establishing Context

Mr. Speaker,

I have listened intently to the presentations during this Budget Debate and taken note of the suggestions from the Opposition.

We welcome all suggestions.

These now form part of the public discussion, and are good for our democracy.

However, we need to put this discussion in context.

We need to remind the nation of some things said in the past by colleagues on the other side of this Honourable House.

In 2009, while the Opposition Leader was a Member of the Cabinet, the position taken by his administration on Jamaica's economic condition, was as follows: (and I quote)

"The global recession was not part of our manifesto but it has become part of the problem we must overcome, a huge hurdle over which we must stride.

It is a hard road to travel and it might be a mighty long way to go...

"

End quote

Mr. Speaker, it is still a mighty long way to go.

In this Honourable House another pronouncement on the economy was made by the Administration of which he was a part.

Again I quote: *"The actions that we must take, the adjustments that we must make are not all going to be easy or painless..."* End quote.

Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, we expected challenges.

What we found, however, was far worse than we could have imagined.

We inherited an economy that, by their own assessment, had been set on *"a hard road to travel and a mighty long way to go"*.

We found an economy that was set up for *"bitter medicine"* and *'hard, painful adjustments'*. That was not our doing. It was passed on to us.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we now seek to correct.

The stance now taken by the Opposition, is certainly not reflective of the position they expressed while in Government.

Perhaps sixteen months is enough time for them to become forgetful.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the comments about the delays in securing the Agreement with the IMF.

No one could tell from those comments that under the former administration, the relationship with the IMF had completely broken down, from as far back as September 2010.

I also listened in disbelief as they spoke about tax reform.

No one could tell from those comments that under their administration, for four years, they constantly postponed tax reform.

They spoke about doing it in 2008.

They spoke about doing it in 2009, in 2010 and again in 2011.

Thankfully, they were not given the opportunity to continue to talk from a position of authority in 2012, or they would still be talking about it.

Mr. Speaker,

The Leader of the Opposition in his presentation said we must roll back taxes.

In rescuing Jamaica, we cannot play to the gallery.

In rescuing Jamaica, those of us charged with the responsibility of leadership must first think before we speak, we must take seriously matters of national importance.

When we speak, our words circulate the globe at the speed of light.
A wide variety of audiences receive those messages.

The messages we send impact their decisions and their perceptions of us as a people.

As leaders, we must be clear about the signals we wish to send to the world.

Those words may have a negative impact on our country and adverse consequences for our people.

Mr. Speaker,

No government likes to increase taxes. However, my administration had no choice but to go that route.

We were compelled to design the economic programme in response to the dire state of the economy we inherited.

The tax package is one of the tools we had to use to reduce our debt.

If we do not reduce our debt from 1.7 trillion dollars, our children, their children, grand and great grandchildren will have that debt as a binding shackle.

Mr. Speaker,

If we were to follow the Opposition Leader's advice, there would be no IMF agreement.

The IMF agreement is necessary to facilitate the stability and growth of our economy.

If the country is to benefit from this agreement, we must ensure that we meet all our obligations; and we are committed to doing so.

However, we also know that an IMF agreement on its own will not be enough to solve our economic problems.

We have to grow our economy in order to accelerate national development. That is the direction in which the Administration I lead is going.

We invite all the stakeholders in the society including the Opposition to join us.

We must work together in unity.

Mr Speaker, despite prophecies of doom and gloom by some:

- It is in times like these that Jamaicans have been known to pull ourselves to full height and stand tall.
- It is in times like these that we have pull on those inner reserves, the reserves that make us run faster, sing sweeter, and work harder.

And so Mr Speaker,

In this time, in this place we say confidently and boldly:

Jamaica is going for growth and development.

We will unleash the full potential of a nation that produced great Jamaicans in sport, culture, business, hospitality, law, medicine, agriculture, academics, science and technology and many other areas.

I say 'we', Mr. Speaker, because it will take every single one of us, working in unity to bring about the growth and development we seek. We can do it.

After all, we are Jamaicans. We are sons of daughter of great men and women and we shall overcome.

The Growth and Development Agenda

Mr Speaker, I now turn my attention to what is perhaps the most pressing and critical task before us; that is, the challenge of achieving meaningful economic growth and sustainable development.

Mr Speaker, what do we mean when we speak of a “National Development and Growth Agenda”?

The Gross Domestic Product is an indicator of the wealth our economy.

It is the measurement used to quantify the total value of goods and services produced in a country annually.

However, GDP growth by itself is not a sufficient indicator of economic development.

We have had the experience in this country of high GDP growth rates, yet poverty worsened and joblessness increased.

The 1960’s was a classic period when the economy had fairly significant average annual growth rates, yet levels of poverty and unemployment were high.

My emphasis is on sustainable development which takes into account not only GDP growth but also employment, job creation and human development.

When I say that we are ‘balancing the books while balancing peoples lives’, I am placing equal emphasis on growth and human development.

‘Balancing the books while balancing people’s’ lives is a journey, not an event.

That balancing seeks to correct a history of inequality and a culture of inequity that has existed in our society for centuries.

We must make every effort to move all Jamaicans along a path – from *welfare to work, from work to well-being and from well-being to wealth creation.*

That, Mr. Speaker is what we mean by the ‘Growth and Development Agenda’.

My Government’s objectives are rooted in Vision 2030 and guided by the Progressive Agenda.

We have already begun to lay firm foundations for the next fifty years.

That is why it is not enough to seek ‘stop-gap’ fixes to our problems.

We have to seek enduring and sustainable solutions.

In order to achieve our objectives, we are focused on achieving economic growth, by accelerating Development Projects.

Achieving Meaningful Economic Growth and Development

Mr Speaker, it has been asked, how do we plan to achieve economic growth and national development?

The Finance Minister and the Minister of Energy have already spoken to some issues affecting the economic growth and development agenda.

Other Government Members will provide more details on programmes and initiatives within their respective portfolios during the upcoming Sectoral Debate.

Overcoming Constraints to Growth

Mr. Speaker, the World Bank has identified some of the main issues affecting Jamaica's economic growth prospects.

These are

- macro-economic instability,
 - the costs of doing business including transaction costs,
 - unfriendly business environment
 - inadequate labour productivity and crime and violence.
- They all hinder our ability to grow.

In response, my government is implementing a range of measures to tackle these constraints in order to unleash our full potential for growth and development.

Over the last 16 months, my Administration has formulated, and we are implementing a policy framework designed to:

Ensure macroeconomic stability through fiscal prudence

- Address the issues associated with energy;
- Develop our human capital;
- Strengthen our international relationships and optimize trade and investment;
- Advance justice and National Security;
- Resolve our social and environmental challenges, and

- Implement our transformation initiatives.

Growth and development can only exist where there is a comprehensive and integrated governance process that includes all of these elements.

In this Debate, speakers on this side have spoken extensively on many of these issues, including macroeconomic stability and energy.

Other speakers will provide further details on their respective portfolios in the Sectoral Debate.

There are, however, a few points I wish to highlight.

Energy

Mr. Speaker,

I will look first at the issue of energy.

Cheaper energy is an urgent imperative of our growth agenda.

We have to seek the best, most efficient and effective solutions to our energy problems.

Conservation is a critical element of this.

The Offices of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, in partnership with the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining, have undertaken an energy conservation programme which has resulted in electricity consumption levels being the lowest they have been in the last two years.

Similar energy-efficiency and energy cost-saving measures were also introduced at the National Housing Trust, Development Bank of Jamaica, King's House, Bureau of Standards, the Civil Aviation Authority, Jamaica Information Service and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, during the past six months.

On the supply side, my mandate to the Energy Minister is that *no viable energy option must be ruled out as we seek to diversify our fuel mix.*

Bold decisions have been and will continue to be taken as we go for growth and unleash our full potential.

Developing Human Capital

Mr Speaker, transforming lives and transforming the economy depend on the quality of our education and training systems.

In a year when fiscal discipline makes it absolutely necessary to constrain expenditure, we have given priority to Education and Training. This financial year, there will be a strong focus on technical and vocational education aimed at effective preparation for the workplace.

Every young person must leave school with a marketable skill.

The HEART Trust NTA launched two workforce colleges during last year specialising in ICT training and beauty services.

Another two workforce colleges are to be launched during this financial year which will specialise in construction services and hospitality.

Empowerment and facilitation will be the hallmark of the development of our human capital, as we go for growth and development and seek to unleash our full potential.

In respect to Labour Market Reform, I have instructed the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to undertake a comprehensive labour market reform study.

Consultations have already begun and training sessions will commence this year.

The Inter American Development Bank (IDB) is also collaborating with the Government through an Integrated Social Protection and Labour Market Project.

This will include baseline studies to support the development of a National Employment Strategy.

Our approach to development is evidence-based and data-driven in order to:

- Enhance work force training to facilitate job creation;
- Address our current 'mismatch' between training and employment;
- Determine the level of female involvement in the labour market;
- Re-train the unemployed in new skills;

- Diversify programme offerings in tertiary and training institutions toward high demand areas;
- Enhance our dispute prevention and settlement mechanisms; and
- Align labour market activities across the key Ministries of Labour, Education and Industry.

This is joined up government and planned development at work.

Strengthening international relationships and optimising investment

Mr. Speaker,

The Growth and Development Agenda is not confined locally.

The growth of our economy is directly related to developing positive relationships with the nearly three million members of our Diaspora, as well as bilateral and multilateral partners. Investment and international trade go hand in hand – another example of joined up government at work.

Jamaica, though small, vulnerable and highly indebted, is considered internationally, as a middle income country.

This makes it difficult for us to access concessionary financing.

This issue is a challenge unique to CARICOM and other Small Island Developing States.

Mr. Speaker, Jamaica continues to advocate for a reform of the thinking within the international financial community and for the recognition of CARICOM states as a special category among small, vulnerable, highly indebted middle income countries.

The high levels of debt in several Caribbean states do not allow us sufficient room to fully respond to our development needs.

External shocks, like natural disasters set us back economically.

It is estimated that the cost of damage from hurricanes and floods since the Portland floods of 1998 is much as \$118 billion dollars.

These are the realities we face.

They affect the rate of growth and development.

This is the reason, now more than ever, as a small and open economy, Jamaica must take advantage of all trade opportunities.

We continue to give priority attention to our economic diplomacy, in order to increase trade and investments.

This Government has always pursued a non-aligned, progressive and enlightened foreign policy.

We consider ourselves 'Good Neighbours' to all.

Mr. Speaker,

While we were still an infant nation and even while our voice was barely audible on the international stage, we were the first country to impose trade sanctions against Apartheid South Africa.

Mr. Speaker, when it was still risky and unpopular with even some Jamaicans, we recognized Cuba and China as members of the global family.

Jamaica remains totally committed to the One China Policy, which has resulted in a vibrant and mutually beneficial bilateral co-operation programme and led to significant Chinese investment in the Jamaican economy.

We have spent time and effort rebuilding our relationships, our image and our credibility within the international community.

Mr. Speaker,

We will continue to strengthen our cherished relations with traditional partners such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada and Japan.

We are working to deepen our relationships with strategic economic partners such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa as well as the Gulf States.

We retain strong, historical ties with Venezuela and other countries in Latin America and in Africa.

These partnerships will advance mutual economic benefits and further enhance the relationships between our respective peoples.

Mr. Speaker, we have a distinguished history of progressive internationalism.

At this point I congratulate the Most Honourable P.J. Patterson, Former Prime Minister who received South Africa's highest award presented to non-nationals,

The Order of the Companions of O.R. Tambo from President Jacob Zuma at the Annual Freedom Day ceremony in Pretoria, South Africa on Saturday.

The umbilical connection between the countries of Africa and the Caribbean is undeniable, as is the ancestral heritage so many of us share.

We are moving to develop mutually beneficial partnerships in the fields of trade, culture and human development.

I intend to be at the upcoming African Union Summit in Addis Abba, Ethiopia and will represent Jamaica's committed position towards our relationships with the nations of Africa.

Within the wider Caribbean Region, we will continue our thrust to make CARICOM work for our economic benefit as well as the benefit of all our Caribbean neighbours.

Countries of the region must work more closely together.

I am very sensitive to the concerns of the Jamaican manufacturers regarding trade with CARICOM Member States.

Mr. Speaker, our foreign policy will now be more focussed on capitalizing on all trade prospects, as we go for growth and development and seek to unleash our full potential.

Business Facilitation: Optimizing Local Investment

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to achieve growth, we must do everything possible to facilitate the growth process.

We have been so concerned about the unscrupulous among us that we have red-taped our economy into decline.

We cannot continue to stifle business because of a few unscrupulous individuals.

We have to free up the business sector for growth. We must activate the systems to catch and punish the corrupt, whoever they are and wherever they are.

We have to cut the red-tape.

There is much that needs to be addressed and supported by key stakeholders to make it easier to do business in Jamaica.

I am convinced, since returning to office, that getting the Public Service to address the matter of Doing Business, is the first order of Public Sector Reform.

I say this Mr Speaker, recognising that there are a lot of other important reform matters to be addressed such as mergers, sharing of corporate services and so on.

However, improving the climate of Doing Business has to be given the highest priority; and this we will do, this time round.

I know many will say 'we have heard this time and time again' and so have little faith that we mean business.

To be fair to our Public Servants some things have been achieved, perhaps not enough of them and fast enough, but achievements nevertheless.

The 'Legislation and Regulations Reform Project (LEGS and REGS)' during the previous PNP Administration in cooperation with USAID and the Jamaican Private Sector achieved some things.

A prominent project was the 'One-Stop Shop' which was eventually opened at Berth 11 in Kingston in April 2009.

Mr Speaker, based on reports I have seen, from the Public Sector Modernisation Division of the Cabinet Office, some interesting things are being undertaken.

So, all is not lost!

The Public Sector Modernisation Division has advanced work on a second 'One-Stop Shop' to be located in Montego Bay and to be opened during the latter part of the next Financial Year.

In regard to subdivision and building applications, the Application and Data Automation (AMANDA) system in the Portmore Municipality is nearly completed. This AMANDA system has been installed in eight Local Authorities and will be rolled out to all local authorities and other key referral agencies by April 2015.

The Public Sector Modernisation Division has also facilitated Help Desks in the Clarendon, Trelawny and St Elizabeth Parish Councils.

Mr. Speaker, entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of any successful economy.

This administration is committed to promoting and supporting entrepreneurship.

The Government will encourage and create an environment to empower and facilitate prospective entrepreneurs to get into the frame of mind for business.

We cannot grow our economy unless we get our people to expand existing businesses or to start up new businesses.

Business growth and development are our urgent priorities as we go for growth and development and unleash our full potential.

Advancing National Security and Justice

Mr. Speaker,

I now turn to the matter of National Security.

The National Security challenges we now face hinder our development and are direct impediments to growth.

The stakes are too high for us as a country to retreat.

For us to effectively battle the dragon of crime and violence, we must get the cooperation of the entire country.

The Minister of National Security has been working with various stakeholders in the public and private sectors to improve the capacity of the nation's security apparatus.

Mr. Speaker, more than 1.2 billion dollars was spent last year to improve the fleet of the JCF, JDF and correctional services; refurbish and construct police stations-including the state-of-the-art Falmouth Police Station; and upgrade the Police Academy at Twickenham Park.

Significant work has been done by the Ministry of National Security and the JCF as we move towards implementing the recommendations of the JCF Strategic Review.

This year, we have allocated over two-billion-dollars to bolster the operational capabilities of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF).

In order to strengthen our capacity to respond, the Government fast-tracked the passage of key legislation to make new provisions for offences related to lottery scams, and other fraudulent transactions.

There are four major pieces of security legislation that will be brought to Parliament this year to strengthen our capacity to fight the scourge of crime. Additionally, the Community Renewal Programme is being implemented in 100 volatile and vulnerable communities across Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, there is more to be done.

We must continue to increase the use of science and technology as part of our crime-fighting arsenal.

We must continue to improve the relationship between the people and the security forces, and we must continue to educate and train our people to be the best that they can be.

Resolving our Social Challenges

Mr. Speaker, we will never be able to build a quality economy if we cannot build a quality society.

Simply put, you cannot balance the Budget if you do not balance people's lives.

This is the practical macro-economics by which we on this side are guided.

No business can survive and thrive if there are not enough customers who can purchase its goods and services.

No bank can remain viable if there are not sufficient clients to make deposits and afford loans.

No economy can grow if the middle class is shrinking and the majority of the population cannot participate in expanding economic activities.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there will be no social or economic stability, and no Budget can be balanced if we do not balance people's lives.

Protecting the most vulnerable among us – the poor, our children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, is our central concern, as we go for growth and development and seek to unleash our full potential.

Despite the severe economic pressures, we have allocated real rather than nominal increases, in some important areas.

The Transformation Imperative

Mr. Speaker,

Having examined some of the policies, programmes and projects that form our platform for growth and development, I now turn to some necessary changes that we, as a people will have to consider, if we are serious about going for growth and development.

The economic conditions we face, require that we all make some drastic changes.

We cannot realize change if we plan to do things in the same way.

We must dramatically change many of the ways we think, behave, and approach our lives if we want to achieve growth and development.

Mr Speaker:

This administration is a transformative one!

We are starting in our own 'backyard'.

Achieving the objectives we have set for ourselves requires effective and efficient governance systems.

We have not ignored the Public Sector Transformation process.

In fact, in composing the Cabinet, I took into account some of the recommendations in the White Paper on Public Sector Modernization.

Now that the negotiations in relation to the IMF have been completed, the Ministry of Finance and Planning will be placing greater focus on the implementation of what has been agreed upon for the modernization of the public sector.

Public Sector Transformation Unit

Mr. Speaker,

The Government will continue to do everything possible to ensure that we have the most efficient public sector. One that is customer friendly, and which will make it easier for members of the public to do business.

In this regard, I will be naming, very soon, a top level public servant to assume the leadership of the Public sector Transformation Unit, which has the responsibility to bring our public sector into first world practices.

I have instructed the Ministry to work with the Trade Unions through the Public Sector Monitoring Committee to fast-track the necessary changes.

The public sector transformation that we are actively working towards, revolves around four essential focal points.

- *Our public sector must be people-friendly.*
- *Our public sector must become more business-friendly;*
- *Our public sector must be driven by a culture of productivity and the use of technology;*
- *Our public sector must become growth-oriented.*

Mr Speaker, permit me a moment to share an experience.

When I first entered the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as a young Minister, I found an environment which was not as people friendly as it ought to have been.

The elderly had to wait for long hours.

Prospective farm workers endured the indignity during the selection process. Many slept on the streets as they waited.

Mr Speaker, I bring these two examples to this Honourable House in order to demonstrate that it is possible to make change happen.

The systems at that time required transformation. They required leadership. Under my leadership, the Ministry set about changing the cultures of service.

Respect, honour and discipline became the hallmark of service delivery.

It required resources and facility.

From the 'big things', like a new building for the processing of prospective farm workers, to smaller things like tea and coffee for seniors, who had travelled from far and near to do business with government.

There were also the 'mega projects' of-the-time including the transformation of the National Insurance Fund that now stands at 65 billion dollars.

Most of all, that transformation required forward-thinking and the will to change the way we delivered services to our people.

It required keeping the people we serve, at the centre of all we did.

It required finding the right staff for the right jobs and training those who needed to improve their skills.

It required listening to the people we served and responding to their needs.

At the end of that exercise, service delivery significantly improved.

We have done it before. We are doing it now.

We will continue to transform public service delivery.

Transformation and Leadership

Mr Speaker, when I speak about modern governance, I speak not only of changing administrative systems, but also of transforming cultures and transforming lives.

The decades of transformative leadership provided on this side of the House began with the dream of moving this Jamaica from colony to independent nation – and getting it done!

The transformative leadership provided from this side of the house is being responsive to the cries of our people.

It is about transforming hearts, minds, spirits, souls and behaviours for the better.

Transformation is about unleashing the very fullest of the Jamaican potential.

Our transformational leadership puts the people at the centre, particularly the poor and the most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker,

Transformation was seen in the moment, one recipient at Longville in Clarendon, received his keys to an affordable housing unit, through the NHT.

He raised his hands and his eyes to the sky and said, "Bye-bye rent. Bye-bye Landlord".

That is transformation in action!

Transformation was felt when an elderly farmer collected the title for his farm land, in Duff House, Manchester on his 86th birthday.

He can now rest assured that his family's legacy is secure – and he has the documents to prove it.

That is transformation in action!

Transformation is strengthening the family-life of those who received homes in the Inner City Renewal Program.

Transformation is seen in the gleam of pride in the eyes of the home-owners at Caribbean Palm in my constituency of South West St. Andrew.

That is transformation in action!

Transformation is taking hundreds of hardworking sugar workers and their families from 30 communities across the island, out of the deplorable conditions in which they have lived in barracks for centuries; and providing them with individual housing lots under the Housing Development and Community Regularization Programme!

That is transformation in action!

Mr. Speaker, one of the most rewarding experiences in my entire political life has been breaking ground for the construction of housing for sugar workers in Hampton Court in St. Thomas, Springfield in Clarendon and other areas.

I am not sure which causes me greater emotion:

- the bittersweet, soul stirring charge, as I stand among sons and daughters of the strong men and women whose blood, sweat and tears watered acres of our nation's cane fields for centuries,
- the glory of the moment of redemption of those cane workers as they face the prospect of owning new homes,
- my disappointment in knowing that the relocation project started in 2006 but regrettably it had been terminated, or
- the pride I feel being able to work with Minister of Agriculture, Roger Clarke and the European Union to bring the programme back into being on resumption of office to make the dreams of these sugar worker come true.

What I do know, Mr. Speaker is that we, on this side are committed to transformation in action!

Transformation comes with each examination passed by a child assisted through school under the Path Programme.

This is transformation in action!

Breaking ground at Up Park Camp to begin the process of providing better living facilities to ensure that the men and women of the Jamaica Defence Force, who faithfully serve our nation, can live in dignity.

That is transformation in action!

With every single swipe of children fingers on the screens of the tablets provided to schools by the Universal Access Fund, exposing them to the latest tools of communication, that Mr. Speaker, translates to new knowledge and brighter futures.

That is transformation in action!

Transformation Mr. Speaker, occurs when every ill child is healed through love, care and advanced medical science.

Breaking ground at the Bustamante Hospital for Children to expand health facilities is one more step towards transforming our children's lives.

So, Mr. Speaker, this administration does not only talk transformation - we practice it.

We say what we mean and we do what we say.

That is transformation in action!

Transformation lies at the heart, of the notion of 'balancing the books while balancing people's lives'.

It is a call to action to change the very fabric of Jamaica.

I will not only keep repeating this refrain, but I will do all I can to achieve that balance.

We are the government of transformation!

New Political Order

Mr Speaker:

I now turn to a matter which has pre-occupied my mind for some time - our political culture.

The overly competitive nature of our Parliamentary democracy has contributed significantly to some of the tribalism and divisions within our society. This is a matter for which we must take collective responsibility.

I am committed to doing everything I can to change the tone of the political dialogue.

No government can effectively lead a divided nation.

No government can successfully advance the cause of a nation when the people have little respect for each other.

We campaign at election time, and we campaign vigorously, for that is the nature of our politics.

However, when the campaign is over, we must all focus on nation- building. As we begin the next 50 years as an Independent nation, we must rise to a new political plain.

Mr. Speaker, one way of facilitating this new political order, is to focus Parliament more closely on managing the challenges we face as a nation.

For this Parliamentary year, we will lead debates on the important issues of Energy, Economic Growth and Crime.

'Come let us reason together' and demonstrate to the nation that we can lift the quality of the dialogue and find practical and enduring solutions to these challenges.

All ideas must contend.
All practical solutions will be vigorously pursued.

We recognize that no one side has a monopoly on workable solutions.

The spirit of cooperation must always prevail.

TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Mr. Speaker,

I turn now to the implementation of transformative programmes and projects that are designed to accelerate Jamaica's growth and development.

Mega Projects

Mr. Speaker,

This government is in the process of establishing a number of significant projects designed to jump-start our economy, provide jobs, and investment opportunities for our people.

These are transformative projects.

They are projects that will allow us to unleash the fullness of our potential.

The first of these is the Logistics Hub.

Logistics Hub

The Logistics Hub is a central plank of our overall growth strategy and potentially represents Nine billion US-dollars of Foreign Direct Investment.

It has the prospect of generating tens-of-thousands of jobs in a variety of fields during the construction and operational phases.

Mr. Speaker, the Logistics Hub Initiative, like many of the mega projects I will outline today, are not projects that can be implemented overnight.

Work continues apace on the roll-out of the enabling systems to realize the successful implementation of this Initiative.

So far, we have issued Request for Proposals (RFP) and have received positive responses.

The Minister will speak to this in greater detail in the Sectoral Debate.

We have begun to mobilize investment prospects and we have been receiving serious interest from global port operators for the privatization of the port.

Multi-lateral funding has also been secured for the development of the Logistic Hub Master Plan and we have reached an agreement with Panama for the training of port operators.

We have established the team that will drive the process to ensure the speedy implementation of this landmark development project.

National Task Force

Mr. Speaker, putting in place all the factors needed to exploit the country's location is not a trivial job.

It requires co-ordination of several variables - availability of trained labour, infrastructure; reliable power and water services.

Mr Speaker, we need all hands on board to coordinate these developments.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the enormity and complexity of the task, Cabinet recently approved the establishment of a National Task Force, charged with coordinating the work needed to ensure that the country benefits from the significant interest being shown by investors.

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased announce that the Principal of the Mona Campus of the University of the West Indies, Prof., the Hon Gordon Shirley, has agreed to chair this National Task Force.

Mr. Speaker, this Task Force is not operating against some distant horizon. They are faced with urgent work, even as we speak. Let me give another specific example.

You will recall that nearly a year ago we announced that the Port Authority had signed an MOU with China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC), for that company to explore the feasibility of establishing a new trans-shipment port at Fort Augusta.

A few weeks ago, the principals of CHEC came back to the PAJ, indicating that after assessing the Fort Augusta location, they no longer had interest in the project.

The reason, Mr. Speaker, is not that they have lost interest in Jamaica; rather they have radically expanded the scope of their projected investment interest in Jamaica, based on their own plans, as well as the increased interests from

other potential users of the port and logistics facilities; Fort Augusta was simply not big enough to provide the space they need.

The project, the final location for which is still to be determined, will be a direct investment of CHEC and its parent company, China Construction and Communications Company (CCCC), a Fortune 500 company.

The preliminary estimates of this mega investment is between (US)\$1,200 million and (US)\$1,500 million.

It will consist of transshipment facilities, a logistic centre, industrial plants, a cement plant and possibly, a power plant.

The extension to the MOU, signed by CHEC and the Port Authority will run for another year to allow for all the relevant studies to be conducted, including environmental assessments.

Let me assure the country that no special concessions will be given in this regard.

The plan is to implement the project over a five year period.

During the construction phase, approximately 2000 workers will be employed.

When completed, the industrial park will employ approximately 10,000 workers.

Mr. Speaker, it will be a non-negotiable requirement that the majority of these workers will be Jamaican nationals.

Tourism

Mr. Speaker, our tourism sector remains a powerful engine for growing the Jamaican economy.

It continues to perform well, even in the current economic climate.

New hotel rooms are being built by Riu in Montego Bay and other major projects are under active consideration.

These will contribute to growth.

New international brands have joined us - Blue Diamond Resorts has acquired the Trelawny Beach Hotel; Melia Hotels has taken over the Braco Village, and Karisma Resorts has taken over the Poinciana in Negril.

Sagicor has become an aggressive player in the market by making a third acquisition to be operated under the Jewels brand.

They are showing confidence in Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Enhancement Fund has now shifted to a new level of performance that is consistent with its original role as outlined in the Tourism Master Plan.

Minister of Tourism and Entertainment will give more details when he speaks during the Sectoral Debate.

Cultural and Creative Industries: Technology, Performance, Innovation and Creativity

Mr. Speaker,

Cultural and Creative Industries are an important part of our growth and development agenda.

These create avenues for social expression, jobs and will help generate additional streams of revenue.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), estimated that world exports of creative industry goods and services had grown from US\$267 billion in 2002 to US\$592 billion dollars in 2008.

Mr. Speaker, We have been talking about the social, institutional and economic value of the Cultural and Creative Industries for many years.

We plan to provide the environment in which naturally talented, creative and industrious Jamaicans can develop.

The modern focus on the cultural and creative economy recognizes that it spans several sectors, industries, as well as ministries, agencies and departments of government.

In the past we have focused on ICT's, innovation, and the traditional cultural and creative sectors including design, music, broadcasting, performance arts and even sport.

As part of our transformative approach, these will be rationalized and developed into a dynamic and important economic sector.

The Minister with responsibility for Science and Technology spoke extensively about innovation and Information Communication Technology, (ICT's).

ICT's, creativity and innovation go hand-in hand.

I am pleased to note the support coming from the Leader of the Opposition regarding the Tablet project.

His suggestion that we utilize and support local software developers to provide applications is in keeping with our existing policy of encouraging innovation in ICTs.

Mr. Speaker,

We will be seeking to source all of the content for this programme from local businesses.

The proposal to establish a special support fund will be examined with a possible source being the Universal Service Fund.

We will also support software development – which also falls under the umbrella of cultural and creative industries development.

If we want to grow, we must innovate. Mr. Speaker, the talent already exists among our people.

I have no doubt about that.

Our people can invent and innovate and as Government we must empower, facilitate and expand that process.

The Government supports the call for a policy framework that places emphasis on:

- business development and incubation,
- supportive financing structures for the industries,
- research and development,
- marketing,
- institutional strengthening, and
- training, certification and standardization of skills.

Most cultural and creative enterprises are micro, small and medium sized enterprises and will benefit from the programmes previously announced during this debate.

Mr. Speaker this Administration has taken action.

A Cultural and Creative Industries Commission is being established to promote the growth and development of those industries in Jamaica.

The Commission will oversee the development of the Cultural and Creative Industries Policy and Master Plan, in consultation with key stakeholders.

Sport

Mr. Speaker, our country continues to excel in sport.

Our individual sportsmen and women and our outstanding sport administrators and support teams continue to demonstrate that given the right environment we can match, if not do better than anyone else in the world.

Since my last budget presentation, Jamaica gave a glorious golden performance at the Olympics that inspired the world.

Jamaica's dominance caused the organizers to reschedule the 4 x100 Metres Relay to be the last race for the very first time, so the Olympic Games could finish on a high.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we never disappointed.

We broke our own world record and caused the entire world to chant 'Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica'!

Mr. Speaker,

At the last Boys and Girls Champs, our young athletes set an unprecedented 30 new records.

We dominated the CARIFTA Games, winning the most medals and again come out on top.

Mr. Speaker,

In Cricket, I wish to congratulate Mr. Dave Cameron who was recently elected the President of the West Indies Cricket Board;

Mr. Michael Muirhead who was appointed the CEO of the West Indies Cricket Board and Mr. Wavel Hinds who is now the President of the West Indies Players Association.

On the field of play, Chris Gayle was at his merciless best when he scored 175 not out off 66 balls, breaking literally every batting record in T20 matches.

Marlon Samuels was recently named one of Wisdens player of the year.

In football, we also congratulate Captain Horace Burrell who was recently elected a Vice President of CONCACAF.

The Sunshine Girls continue to shine and we are proud of their achievements.

We see sport not only as a recreational activity but also as an essential tool in the drive to develop sustainable growth and development.

Sports is big business!

Very deliberate plans, processes, policies and programmes implemented over many years by government and by the private sector have caused us to be the sporting giants that we are.

The Sports Development Foundation, for example, spent \$44.14 million on sporting infrastructure projects and provided \$172.81 million in grant support to forty-two (42) National Sporting Associations.

An additional \$45.62 million was provided to Government Sporting Entities for the funding of sport programmes and operational support.

It is therefore my hope that despite the difficulties, the private sector will continue to play its part in the support of sport in Jamaica.

Planned Development

Mr Speaker,

I have always believed in Planned Development.

It is often said that politicians are only concerned about the next election and that they have no plans in place for economic growth and development.

That is why as Minister of Labour and Social Security, I took strategic decisions with respect to how we manage the National Insurance Fund.

That is why we established the Jamaica Productivity Centre.

That is why we developed the Tourism Master Plan for Sustainable Development which guides our tourism product until today.

That is why I piloted the legislation for the establishment of the Portmore Municipality.

Planned development is a central element of our Progressive Agenda.

It is directly linked to the principle of joined-up Government.

Mr. Speaker,

Today I share my vision for Strategic Urban Planning, and Rural Development.

I will first examine strategic urban planning.

Strategic Urban Planning

Mr. Speaker,

The Leader of the Opposition spoke of strategic urban planning, as the 'next frontier'.

I have a gift for the Leader of the Opposition.
It is the National Physical Plan, 1978 to 1998, Jamaica.

This document was tabled in this Honourable House in October 1978.

This plan researched, identified and proposed planning and development of villages, district centres, sub-regional centres, regional centres and rural areas with structured facilities and services over the entire island.

Consistent with this plan the following developments were undertaken by successive PNP administrations.

We constructed Highway 2000, the North Coast Highway, and the development of Portmore, Greater Portmore and Hellshire among others. Out of this plan a number of resort centres were also developed.

Former Prime Minister P. J. Patterson identified Clarendon and St. Catherine for growth, based on strategic development parameters.

Nine Thousand (9000) acres of land was bought at Inverness, 700 acres at Longville and Five hundred million dollars has been spent to take water to these areas.

Over forty thousand (40,000) houses have been built in the St Catherine/Clarendon area. These houses were funded by the National Housing Trust.

In this Plan, Falmouth was identified as a sub-regional centre and a resort expansion area.

700 acres of land were acquired at Dry Valley, the Greenfield Stadium, and the Cruise Ship Port were developed.

Over two-thousand houses have been constructed in recent times. This is an area that is ripe for growth and development.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with my approach to Planned Development:

- I have given instructions to revise the National Physical Plan.
- I have also instructed that four development plans for Portland, Trelawny, Manchester, and Negril/Green Island, which have been completed, be promulgated this year.
- The plans for St. Catherine, St. Thomas, Clarendon, Kingston and St. Andrew are in an advanced stage of preparation.
- At the appropriate time Cabinet will consider the draft Town and Country Planning Bill.
- This will complement the Manual for Development that I launched, as Prime Minister, in 2007.

We are committed to ensuring that Jamaica's continued development is guided by a comprehensive and integrated National Spatial Plan.

Mr Speaker, while we build new cities and towns, we will also maintain and diversify economic opportunities in existing areas.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the concerns of developers and other stakeholders regarding delays in the property development process.

I will consult with them prior to tabling a Ministry Paper on measures to speed up the process.

Rural Development Strategy

I now turn to the second critical pillar of our planned development agenda – Rural Development.

Mr. Speaker, Rural development is as important as Urban Development.

Some of the worst areas of poverty exist in deep rural Jamaica.

An integrated plan of rural development will arrest the trend of rural to urban migration which places pressure on urban centres.

Rural development is not just about the expansion of agricultural enterprises.

The main emphasis for rural development will be on the building of townships, establishment of business enterprises; provision of access to health care facilities, schools, water, roads, electricity, technology and the creation of opportunities for economic advancement.

Within the current financial constraints, over the next three years, my administration will focus on the following elements:

- Agro parks to boost agricultural productivity and expand employment.
- Agro-industries for new product development, including nutraceuticals and other value-added products.
- Drought mitigation.
- Improvement of farm roads.
- Community and Eco-tourism.
- The establishment of additional 'community access points', increased access to the internet and related services.
- Access to affordable housing solutions.
- Delivery of outstanding land titles, and
- Business development.

Mr. Speaker, I will be establishing a Task Force on Rural Development to coordinate these strategies.

The Urban Development Corporation

Mr Speaker,

In 2012, the new Board of the Urban Development Corporation became aware that the state of affairs at the Corporation was most unsatisfactory and that the UDC was in dire financial straits.

The new board discovered problems which have been clearly documented in the Auditor General's Performance Audit Report which reviewed the period ending March 2012.

The audit revealed several breaches related to governance, financial accounting and human resource management.

Sixteen recommendations were made by the Auditor General and the Board and Management have resolved to implement them in an effort to restore the viability and credibility of the organization.

Mr Speaker,

I am pleased to report that to date, several of these recommendations have been implemented. The Board expects to complete implementation of the other recommendations before the end of this year.

The Corporation is being repositioned to be able to effectively fulfil its mandate 'to make development happen'.

Over the next three years the Board and Management of the UDC will seek to:

1. Ensure sustained financial viability;
2. Plan and execute projects that support and encourage sustainable national development;
3. Utilize the assets owned by the Corporation to create transformational development opportunities; and
4. Redesign the corporate structure and staffing to deliver the desired objectives in the most efficient way.

The rationale of this approach is to reduce expenditure, increase revenue, optimize and refocus staff, and divest non-performing non-core assets.

To this end, the UDC has divested the Oceana Hotel to the National Health Fund which plans to convert it into a multipurpose building for office space, entertainment and apartments units.

The UDC also sold its shares in Grand Lido and a property at Mahogany Inn, Negril and is expected to realise approximately two billion dollars from these divestments.

It is important to note that 75% of the proceeds of sale will now be retained for the development of capital projects in the national interest, which is a departure from the previous basis of using divestment proceeds for recurrent expenses.

Mr Speaker, the UDC is working more closely with the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment and the Jamaica Tourist Board to enhance our tourism product in the main tourist centres of Ocho Rios and Montego Bay.

The Minister of Tourism and Entertainment will speak more about this example of joined-up government in his Sectoral Debate presentation.

Mr Speaker, the Government will commence construction of offices for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in this financial year in Downtown Kingston.

Mr Speaker, the UDC and the Jamaica National Heritage Trust are in meaningful dialogue regarding the restoration of heritage sites in Downtown Kingston.

Kingston must become a tourist centre again!

The private sector has signalled a real interest in becoming a part of this significant process and we welcome their participation.

Transformation has begun!

Mr Speaker, during the year not only will I provide to this Honourable House and the country with an update on the progress made, but there will be further announcements of specific projects to be undertaken or influenced by the UDC.

The National Housing Trust

Mr. Speaker,

I now turn to the issue of the National Housing Trust, which has been implementing projects in accordance with both the urban and the rural development mandates that I have given.

Housing Promises Made and Promises Kept

When I spoke in the Budget Debate on June 5 last year, I gave certain commitments as the Minister with portfolio responsibility for the NHT.

I have a duty to report to this House on the progress of those commitments.

I said then that new housing developments would go on the market for Longville Phase 3 in Clarendon, Perth in Manchester and Creighton Hall in St. Thomas.

We have completed 918 solutions at Longville, 258 serviced lots at Perth and 140 serviced lots at Creighton Hall.

Promise made, promise kept. That is transformation in action!

We made a commitment for special consideration to be given to young professionals in the delivery of new housing solutions.

At Longville Phase 3, Perth Phase 1 and Creighton Hall, 61 solutions were reserved for allocation to young professionals, ages 25-35 years.

Promise made, promise kept.

Starting this year we will be widening the age qualification for this category up to age 40.

We have delivered on our commitment to provide more home grants to contributors in the lowest income categories.

We have increased Home Grants from a total \$336 million to \$390 million.

Promise made, promise kept.

Our hotel workers provide valuable service to the economy. I promised that contributors in the hotel sector earning less than \$10,000 per week, would receive a onepercent rate reduction on mortgage loans for the life of the loan.

Promise made, promise kept.

The first 74 of the First Step Homes, which I announced last year, are being built at Hampden Trelawny.

This is a partnership between the NHT, Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing and Food for the Poor.

I am pleased to report that the demand by hotel and sugar workers have resulted in all 74 being sold with closing costs being paid even before completion of construction.

The price for each home is 2.7 million dollars and the NHT is awarding a grant of 1.2 million dollars to each contributor for home improvement.

I broke ground for these - *Promise made, promise kept.*

That is transformation in action!

Special subsidies were allocated to 229 contributors in the one percent and three percent income band.

Promise made, promise kept.

I said the NHT would introduce greater flexibility in qualification for a benefit.

The Agency has continued the Mortgage Partner Policy where one home owner with at least 7 years of unclaimed refunds and with no intention of acquiring an NHT loan can use these funds to assist another contributor to acquire a home.

Promise made, promise kept

Mr. Speaker,

Ground has been broken for the re-development of the JDF barracks, officers' quarters and administrative facilities at Up Park Camp. This will provide decent and more comfortable facilities for the dedicated men and women of the JDF.

Yet another promise made and kept.

I made a commitment to some other special groups such as hotel workers and public sector workers.

These groups have, since last year, received favourable consideration in the allotment of NHT benefits.

Since last year, 6,760 public sector workers have benefited from one per cent interest rate reduction on NHT loans.

Promise made, promise kept.

All of that, Mr Speaker, is transformation in action!

Mr. Speaker, I wish to share with you some new initiatives for the people of Jamaica, to be implemented by the National Housing Trust in this financial year. The government has tabled a tight budget in keeping with the macro-economic programme.

In this context, the NHT has committed to play its part, with new and improved incentives for contributors.

These include programmes such as:

(i) *Special Public Sector Worker Policy:*

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the country owes a great debt of gratitude to Public Sector workers.

This government, through the NHT is saluting these workers and expressing gratitude with added incentives for this category of contributors.

Public sector workers who received a 1% interest rate reduction up to March 31, 2013, will have this benefit extended for another two years, to March 31, 2015.

Mr. Speaker, there is more!

Effective January 1, 2014, public sector employees with NHT mortgages will be eligible for contribution refunds during the four year period 2014 to 2017.

Previously, it was the NHT's policy that contribution refunds due to mortgagors are automatically applied as payments to the mortgage in January of the year when the refund is to be paid.

This restriction will be removed for all public sector workers during the next four years.

Starting January 1, 2014, Public Sector workers can opt to apply for the contribution refunds due for the year 2006.

This initiative will benefit 31,000 public sector mortgagors and will give them access to approximately \$790 million dollars annually.

There is still more for public sector NHT contributors!

Starting September 1, this year, public sector workers will be given a 15% discount on peril insurance premiums.

They will also continue to benefit from a 15% discount below NHT standard insurance rates for the period through to March 31, 2017.

This will change the previous arrangement where there would be a rebate payment in December of each year.

We are front-loading this benefit so that public sector mortgagors will pay less starting in September.

(ii) The Trust will be giving special attention to the Police.

In fulfilment of its broad national development mandate, the NHT is also assisting with the development of physical infrastructure for the Police.

This includes work which will be accelerated on the re-development of the Central Kingston Police Station at East Queen Street.

We will also be proceeding with the relocation of the Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences (CISOCA) to new and better facilities at Surbiton Road.

This will free up the Ruthven Road property for housing development.

The valuable work being undertaken by these public sector workers requires that every effort is made to improve their working environment.

That is still not all!

Mr. Speaker, Non Public Sector NHT mortgagors, will have no increase in their peril insurance rates for the current year of coverage starting April 1, 2013 to March 31 2014.

Mr. Speaker, effective immediately the NHT will increase loan limits on serviced lots in NHT schemes from 1.5 million dollars to 2.5 million dollars. This will enable more NHT contributors to purchase land.

(iii) No one can disagree that the Inner City Housing project has positively transformed the lives of persons in some communities such as Monaltrie, Denham Town, Majesty Gardens and Trench Town.

This programme was suspended under the previous Government. It has been re-assessed and *the NHT will restart an Inner City Renewal Programme as of the 2014 financial year.*

(iv) This year NHT will contribute twenty five (25) million dollars to the "YUTE Build" initiative, which is training one hundred inner-city young people in construction-related disciplines.

This is up from the ten (10) million dollars last year. We are preparing the young people of Jamaica to get up off the corner and to "Arise and Build".

- (v) As part of its drive to stimulate and build the economy, the NHT will allocate 10.6 million dollars to be available as prize monies for a Special Small Business Entrepreneurship Award category in its Best Schemes Competition.

This will be available to micro-enterprises created within NHT communities.

The primary purpose of the award is to encourage the development and commercialization of promising ideas emerging from homeowners.

The competition will seek to highlight and encourage creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship originating at the community level.

Mr. Speaker,

The NHT is on the move!

This year, the NHT will introduce Mobile NHT. This is a new service delivery channel for reaching existing contributors and mortgagors and to sign up new contributors in rural and deep rural Jamaica.

The NHT is leading the way.

My Administration is committed to creating a revolution in how government does business and serve the people.

We are already taking Government to the people and we are committed to ensuring that public service reaches the people in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I could not complete my presentation on the NHT without commenting on the significant contribution that this organization has been called on the make to the national economic programme over the next four years.

There have been varying responses to the NHT's contribution.

However, Mr. Speaker, the Trust has recognized that it is contributing to the very survival of Jamaica in these difficult times.

Without a stable Jamaica there will be no NHT, and without a Jamaica in which our contributors can repay their mortgages there will be no viability for the NHT.

The Administration that I lead is conscious of our sacred and solemn obligation to ensure the survival and continued growth of the NHT.

Mr. Speaker, this government has taken bold decisions!

That is transformation in action.

We are going for growth and unleashing our full potential.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker,

We know we have not been able to solve all our problems.

It could not have been done in a single year, but we have made significant strides.

After one year and four months in Office, and despite the challenges, our record speaks for itself:

- We have passed twenty-five critical pieces of legislation.
- We have secured an IMF Staff Level Agreement to help stabilize our economy.
- We have secured critical foreign investments and bilateral economic agreements.
- We have rolled out the JEEP and produced 36,000 jobs.
- We have increased the minimum wage.
- We have expanded systems to protect the poor.
- We have continued to implement important social programmes.
- We have delivered on our road repair programme.
- We have delivered on our housing promises.
- We have expanded water supply systems.
- We have expanded electricity services.
- We have upgraded several health centres.
- We have reduced telephone rates, with more reduction to come.
- We have realized growth in the agricultural sector.
- We have re-established important local partnerships, and
- We have restored our international image, reputation and credibility.

Mr. Speaker, today the people know they have a Government that listens.

They know they have a Government that keeps its word.

They know they have a government that defends their rights, and

They know now they have a Government that has their best interest at heart.

Mr. Speaker, every Jamaican must have an opportunity to earn a decent living, make a home and raise their families in our beautiful land.

Equality of opportunities is the indisputable hallmark of this government.

We will remain a Government for all the people.

It is in times like these that innovative spirit of the Jamaican increases;

It is in times like these that Jamaican spirituality deepens;

It is in times like these that Jamaicans band together;

It is in times like these that the resilient spirit of our ancestors rise up in our souls.

Through the lives they lived and the sacrifices they made - our ancestors - our heroes and heroine:

- ...remind us – as Nanny did - that moving from slavery to freedom required strategy, effort, steely determination and strength – but that it was possible!
- They demonstrated - as Paul Bogle did - that a walk from Stony Gut to Spanish Town is a short journey in your mind, if it brings freedom a little closer!
- They instilled in us – as George William Gordon did – a sense of nationalism and patriotism - the notion that building Jamaica must be a paramount consideration for all.
- They showed us – as Sam Sharpe did - that our faith must be our central motivation for progress and that divine intervention is critical for any journey!
- They proved – as Marcus Mosiah Garvey did - that success and confidence lie within this mighty race and that we “...can accomplish what we will”.
- They believed - as Bustamante did – that the working men and women in our little island have large hearts and even larger spirits and their resilience makes them the backbone of this nation.

- They reminded us - as Norman Washington Manley did – that there is hope for every one of us when we work together.

He said, the "poor, the humble and the seeming weak...first began to blow on the living but small and hidden flame of freedom, and blew till it soared like a torch and all the land began to light up around us"

They demonstrated that the transformation of a people, from slaves to free men and women; from colonial to independent, from disempowered to empowered, from hopeless to hopeful, requires credible, inspirational leadership from a source that the people trust.

Most of all they showed us that transforming our society is entirely possible. Their spirits shout to us loudly and clearly – "if growth and development is what you now seek, at this phase of your journey, Jamaica; you can do it! Unleash the fullness of your potential! "

Take heart, my people. Together we can overcome any challenge that confronts us.

Together we will win this struggle and, by the grace of God, together, we will thrive.

May God bless all of our leaders.

May God bless all of our people.

May God bless Jamaica, Land we love.