



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH & INFORMATION

SECTORAL PRESENTATION

BY

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MINISTER OF STATE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND INFORMATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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CHANGING THE GAME:

Energizing the Wave of Prosperity

Ministry of Education, Youth and Information

Vision Statement

A nation empowered by a dynamic system of care, education and training

Mission Statement

Providing quality care and education in an innovative, inclusive and enabling environment thereby creating socially conscious and productive Jamaicans.

Policy Priorities

Child and Youth Development

Child Care and Protection

Lifelong Learning

Governance and Accountability

Information and Communication

Quality Education and Training

Stakeholder Engagement

Priority Policies

Safety, Security and Uniformed Groups in all schools

Technology in Education and Administration

Differentiated Instruction for effective teaching and learning

Youth Development and Career Advancement

Efficiency in Public Information and Communication

INTRODUCTION

Acknowledgement

Mr. Speaker, as I rise to mark my name in the hallowed halls of this Parliament, halls that have heard the passion of Bustamante, the insight of Sangster, the vision of Manley, and the sheer nation-building brilliance of Seaga, I am humbled by such a great honour.

None of this would have been possible without the people of South West St. Elizabeth who have put their faith and confidence in me to come to this House to represent, above all, their interest in this drive to create prosperous communities which in turn will lead to a prosperous nation.

I thank all the workers, my executive, my divisional chair and my management team, Councillor Jeremy Palmer, Councillor Derrick Sangster, Miss Withney Smith and Dr. Adeyni Bamidele, my Vice Chairman Krishan James, Jennifer Mullings, Marcine Witter, Edward Muir, Jodian Jones and countless others whose names time does not permit me to mention.

The foundation, however, Mr. Speaker was set by my mother, an educator of over 36 years' service and my father, an agricultural officer, who has served the people of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands for almost 40 years. I thank them for their guidance and never ending encouragement.

I acknowledge the support of my family including Mrs. Trisha Williams-Singh, my partner Kerida and my son Nathaniel Marcus. They have borne the burden of the sacrifice in this life that we call politics and I am grateful for their patience.

I thank the team of young people, many of whom believed in me far beyond my own belief in self, the foundation set by **Generation 2000**, especially former president Warren Newby, my management team that went into the selection and my current team of advisors and executive assistants; Brittany Singh, Jonathan Reid and Gabrielle Hylton. Special thanks must also be extended to Adrian McDonald who allowed us to use his spectacular images to show the beauty of Jamaica's Youth.

Mr. Speaker, I also have had the honour of being shaped by some of Jamaica's finest institutions -Munro College and Chancellor Hall at the University of the West Indies Mona Campus. I have drawn my inspiration and mentorship from former Prime Ministers Edward Phillip George Seaga, and Bruce Golding -both of whom provided significant guidance during the campaign. However, of them all it is our current Prime Minister Andrew Michael Holness who constantly provides a platform for me to use my voice and talent to effect change. Thank you Prime Minister, you can be assured that the team and I will work assiduously to take our people on a path to prosperity.

This sectoral presentation could not have been possible if not for the hard working team at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and its agencies. I thank the Permanent Secretary and all the Officers who contributed directly to the putting together of this presentation.

South West St. Elizabeth

Mr. Speaker I am proud to represent the best part of Jamaica. It stretches from Jamaica's most productive plains such as Flagaman, through the quaint community resort towns of Treasure Beach and Billy's Bay along the coast to Parottee and the world famous Floyd's Pelican Bar, through the heartland of Barbary Hall and the home of our second Prime Minister, Donald Sangster in Mountainside.

Then it goes through Jamaica's foremost capital of the early 20th century, Black River, encompasses the hills of Prospect, the industry of our people at the border and ends with the best peppered shrimp location in the world, Middle Quarters.

I have the honour of representing some of the proudest and hardest working people all over the globe who despite their industry, are faced with significant challenges. Our road network is in shambles with a number of communities such as Slipeteetering on the edge of being cut off from the world.

With the lack of investment and opportunities a number of our young people remain unemployed and whether you are in the plains or in the hills the cry for water pierces the soul. Communities such as Stonefield and Vineyard have no water at all.

I am proud that our Government recognizes that water must be the number one priority. Already we have approved a contract for the expansion of Newell. In terms of irrigation the Hunslow System will be expanded this year to bring irrigation into parts of Williamsfield. We are in dialogue with Grace Kennedy and the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries to initiate the expansion of the processing facility there and the development of an agro park.

Already, I have written to the Minister of Transport and Mining regarding some road issues. Unfortunately, I must advise the House that most of our drains and our rivers have not been cleaned for the past four and a half years. I am happy that the discussions I have had with the Minister of Tourism have assured me that there will be a focus on making the South Coast the mecca of community tourism. In this regard, the Tourism Enhancement Fund has committed \$28 million to infrastructural support for the community of Treasure Beach and its environs.

Changing the Game: Energising the Wave of Prosperity

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to speak on behalf of the children and youth of Jamaica as the decisions that we make now and in the years ahead will have a profound impact on the country that they will inherit.

The vision of our country lies in the hands of our youth. They are filled with tremendous and towering ambitions. It will be a great waste of human resources if our children fail to be protected and our young people are not given the opportunity to exercise their talents. Jamaica needs the energy of youth to nourish the soil of this land we love.

The role of the youth is most important today. They have underplayed themselves in the field of politics but yet, around the world, youth are strong forces in social movements. Youth are problem solvers – they are the game changers. Young people must be utilized to energize every aspect of what we do as a government – we must give them a chance to prove themselves and become the influencers they are destined to be. If we are to be prosperous, the youth are that wave that will carry us to prosperity.

The mission of this Ministry, therefore, is to ensure that the educational foundation of our youth is strong, that structures are put in place to engage and empower our young people and that our society is so constructed to be information-driven with the appropriate frameworks to facilitate change. This is our mission; we must **change the game and in, so doing, energize the wave of prosperity.**

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Speaker, if the old adage is true that there is no educated country that is poor then our country will have to be willing to take the decisive action to ensure that our children are able to access education of the highest quality. It is an area, Mr. Speaker, which both the Government and the Opposition have long agreed on the critical steps to be taken as well as on the shape of the reform. However, both of us must also now agree that the pace of the reform has taken much too long. Our Administration will have to be one of action.

Early Childhood

Mr Speaker, the Ministry continues to place emphasis at the Early Childhood level. The Early Childhood Commission coordinates all activities, development plans and programmes within the early childhood sector. A World Bank Implementation Support team recently concluded a week-long mid-term mission to the Commission and the parent ministry. The team lauded Jamaica's Early Childhood Development (ECD) Programme noting that we are ahead of many other countries at a similar level in providing ECD services for the age group birth to six years. The team also recommended greater coordination among the Ministries and Government agencies to ensure quality ECD services for Jamaica's children.

This Administration recognises the need to intervene in the lives of children even before they enter the formal early childhood education system. In this regard, our Ministry has budgeted \$30 million to partner with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to reactivate an Early Stimulation Programme for mother and child from birth to age three.

Primary

The signal achievement at the primary level last year was the surpassing of the target of 85 per cent mastery of literacy among the grade-four age cohort. The actual outcome was 86 per cent, which represented approximately 100 per cent of the cohort when we account for students with learning challenges. In the area of numeracy 67 per cent of the cohort attained mastery in 2015 up from 54 per cent in 2013. Plans are far advanced for even better results from the examinations to be held at the end of June this year.

Secondary

- **Tuition-Free Policy**

Mr. Speaker, as a country, we have made great strides in ensuring access to education up to the secondary level of approximately 213,000 students. We, however, must take steps to vigorously protect that access. No child should be unable to get a secondary education because his parents cannot afford the fees. No parent should be forced into choosing which child to send to school because they fear being turned back because fees are not paid.

This is why during the 2016/2017 academic year this Administration will:

- Increase the budgetary allocation for tuition fee from \$2.6 billion to \$3.9 billion at the secondary level. We will change the funding formula for payment of tuition fees to provide more funding to schools with the greatest needs.
- In addition, we will remove auxiliary fees by differentiating what is charged to parents from what parents are expected to contribute, as agreed on by the School Board, PTA and the Ministry.
- The aim of developing an equitable funding formula is to provide the highest level of funding to schools that teach students with the lowest levels of

attainment on entry, who have the greatest difficulty in learning and who are from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds. Through more equitable funding, schools will be able to allocate the staffing and resources required to meet the needs of the students they serve.

- Importantly, the Ministry has re-organized the payment tranches for schools so they receive funds on time. This, along with the increase in tuition subvention amounts, will allow for institutions to better manage operational expenses.
- Arising from the Ministry's proposal to increase tuition fees, it has become necessary for changes to be made to the current approach that is being used as well as to the way auxiliary fees are defined. I have tabled a Ministry Paper which primarily outlines the changes in the funding formula and the approach that will be used.
- **National Standards Curriculum (NSC)**

Mr. Speaker, it was Malcolm X who said that education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for today." We know that in another 10 years, 35 per cent of the skills and jobs we consider important would have paled in significance. The employers of today are looking for students not necessarily based on the number of subjects they pass but on whether they can think creatively and analyse deeply. We are preparing for the future today.

This year the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information will begin a phased implementation of the National Standards Curriculum (NSC) over two years

commencing in September 2016. This new curriculum focuses on a new methodology that ensures that priority is given to our students developing those higher order thinking skills. It focuses on greater accountability and more student-centred engagement.

- **Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education - APSE**

This new curriculum will operate in tandem with programmes based on the significant body of work that has taught us that in order for our education system to be effective we have to cater to the multiple intelligences of our children and their diverse needs in order to fully maximize their capabilities. Hence, we have created alternative pathways to receiving an education at the secondary level.

Providing alternative pathways will be far-reaching in carrying out the Ministry's mantra, "Every child can learn....every child must learn".

Learning pathways will allow for an inclusive approach in which instruction is based on tailored curricula, enabling each learner to perform to his/her fullest potential based on aptitude, interest and ability.

Alternative Pathways represent a new approach to secondary education. Secondary education in Jamaica is being reframed and re-positioned as customised, diverse, relevant, equitable, outcomes-based, and inclusive. Significantly, this approach will signal the introduction of a maximum seven-year period (Grades 7-13) of instruction for students on all secondary pathways.

This is a game changer.

- **Additional Years of Schooling**

Mr Speaker, this Ministry believes that no child should be left behind in our education system. The children who do well in our system now naturally progress to Sixth form, or Community Colleges, teachers' college or universities. But those who don't do well, some 20,000 of the school leaving population often fall out of the school system and onto the road corner, into that band of unattached youth that we are constantly trying to reattach.

Let us as a country bond together to reduce the level of detachment. It is for that reason that the Ministry has taken the position that those students who finished five years but are unable to move on will be subject to an additional two years in our secondary school system. This will raise their level of competence and provide them with skills and competencies so that they may go on to be part of the wave of prosperity.

This will be implemented under the framework of the Career Advancement Programme (CAP).

Career Advancement Programme (CAP)

The CAP is focused on providing opportunities for all students (ages 16-18) to identify, understand, choose, and prepare for careers and occupations of their choices and will also serve to bring others of the Youth programmes together in the various entities. We are changing the game with CAP.

The CAP is currently being offered in 53 institutions, and starting September 2016 will be rolled out in all 63 plus secondary level institutions. The programme will also be offered in HEART Institutions, NYS Centres, through JFLL and other such entities such as Community Colleges, Teachers Colleges and Private Training Institutions.

The level of young people will be assessed and all agencies will be on board to raise the competencies of our young people and to put them on a career path to prosperity.

A central national data base will be established and all enrolled students will apply through this medium. Applications will be processed, and applicants will go through a diagnostic assessment as well as a career interest inventory to determine their placement.

CAP this year is funded to the tune of \$800,000,000, an increase of more than \$190,000,000 over the allocation for last year: that could energize a wave of prosperity. The CAP has already received a subvention from the HEART Trust/NTA.

More detailed information on the implementation of CAP is provided in a ministry paper to be tabled in this House.

Teacher Development

The Ministry has been focusing on the professional development of mathematics teachers through the deployment of coaches, with 56 currently deployed to approximately 80 primary and secondary schools.

The Ministry is currently offering a total of 500 scholarships for persons to be trained as teachers of Mathematics, Science and Technical and Vocational Education. These scholarships are tenable in September this year.

In addition, some 300 teachers of various subjects will be exposed to a programme of in-service training to upgrade their qualifications starting this year.

Safety and Security

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry, through the School Security and Safety Unit continues to implement measures to ensure that teaching and learning take place in a violence-free environment.

We will provide renewed focus on our uniformed groups as it is shown that these help to instil discipline and order in our educational institutions. The Ministry has cemented a special partnership with the Caribbean Maritime Institute (CMI) and the programme will see CMI Cadets introduced in 10 additional schools in September 2016. In addition, some 50 Police Youth Clubs are to be introduced in 50 high schools in September 2016. Discussions have already taken place with members of the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force for the expansion of its programme in high schools starting this September, 2016. The Ministry has allocated \$10 million to support uniformed groups.

However, no matter how much we spend on Safety and Security, unless we change the behaviour and attitudes of our children, our schools will continue to be disrupted by anti-social tendencies of students. That is why the Ministry has been implementing a suite of behaviour management programmes under the School Wide Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (SWPBIS) framework in several schools across the island.

Sanitation Programme

The Ministry of Education, Youth & Information is advanced in its efforts to remove pit latrines from all schools under its purview. During the 2014/2015 Financial Year, one hundred and thirty (130) schools that utilized pit latrines were targeted for action. As such, the Ministry and its partners - Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF); Culture, Health, Arts, Science and Education (CHASE) Fund; and Food for the Poor (FFP), have been constructing modern flush systems in these schools over the past year.

At present, 69 schools utilize pit latrines, down from more than 200 in 2012. A total allocation of Seventy-six Million Dollars (\$76,000,000.00) has been made in the 2016/2017 Budget for the Ministry's Sanitation Programme. The existing partnership with the aforementioned entities will be strengthened as we seek to do away with pit latrines in our schools.

Infrastructural Development

For the 2016/2017 Fiscal Year, the Infrastructure Development Programme is expected to amount to approximately **J\$706.4M** using both Capital A and Capital B funding. The Ministry will continue with the renovations and extensions to existing primary and secondary schools and construction of a Diagnostic and Early Childhood Centre at Sam Sharpe Teacher's College.

A full list of the schools to benefit from infrastructural works during this fiscal period will be tabled in a ministry paper.

Additionally, the Japanese Government will provide approximately \$88 million to effect improvements to a number of schools.

Mr. Speaker, last year 24 schools were removed from the shift system. Fifty seven schools remain on shift. Based on the works to be undertaken under the Capital A budget and our collaboration with the schools and region, 10 additional schools are expected to be removed in 2016.

Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP)

The Education System Transformation Programme (ESTP) has been a shining example of bipartisan support for reforming our education system.

The programme, which was established in 2010 within the Ministry of Education, Youth & Information, has responsibility for the transformation of the education sector, and has been guided by the recommendations of the *Task Force Report on Education Reform 2004*.

This marks the final year of the programme which has given birth to game changing entities such as the National College for Educational Leadership, the National Parenting Support Commission and the National Education Trust.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with this Honourable House the evaluation of the ESTP implementation by funding agencies.

EVALUATION: The ESTP, since 2010, has been subject to annual audits by the Auditor General. All have been accepted by the IDB and World Bank. The independent evaluation has rated the execution as good - *“Project Administration has been strong. The Change Management Unit has been adequately staffed and has worked effectively to advance the ESTP. All of the loan conditions have been met*”

The World Bank report stated “The Change Management Unit was driven and pro-active. Its leadership understood the importance of change management beyond project administration. It embraced a participatory, learning-by-doing approach, with a vision and drive for results. The team was supplemented with key staff, hired to undertake the required fiduciary functions. The Change Management Unit supported monitoring and evaluation activities and used the data for decision-making and improvement, notably through the process evaluations undertaken for the new agencies. The unit orchestrated communications and outreach activities to inform and involve both MOE staff and other stakeholders in the country. It was effective in communicating and coordinating with partners on ESTP support. Its performance was acknowledged by multiple stakeholders.

CHILDREN SERVICES

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the Children Services portfolio. There will never be a wave of prosperity unless we protect the most vulnerable among us. All children deserve to grow up in a caring and loving environment -- yet, across Jamaica thousands of children are neglected or abused each year, often causing lasting consequences. Although effectively intervening in the lives of these children and their families is an important responsibility at all levels of government, preventing abuse and neglect is a shared obligation.

I have personally been able to meet and speak with many members of staff from children agencies, residential care facilities and NGOs, including our international partners, who are doing extremely good work in helping to address a broad range of issues facing our children. I want to commend their work ethic that is rooted in a passion for our children.

Residential Care

Since assuming responsibility as Minister of State I have sat with some members of the Private Children's Home Association [PCHA] and discussed some of the critical issues faced by our children in state care. I have also been able to commence my familiarisation tour of our facilities. I thank the group for their frank discussions. I have heard their cries in relation to the insufficiency of funding and I am committed to addressing their issues.

In the short term I have asked the team at the Child Development Agency (CDA) to explore areas in which we can provide immediate assistance to help our private homes alleviate some of the financial burden. It has been agreed that the Disaster Management Grant that is normally provided to the Government homes will be extended to our Private Homes as well this year.

We also will be standardising the payment of the medical expenses of all our children in state care whether government or privately-run homes.

Additionally, coming from the last audit, there are some infrastructural issues that have been identified in our private homes. We will be sitting with the homes to resolve these.

However, the change that is needed is systemic; we have to examine the entire residential care sector, and see if we have been allocating resources in the most efficient manner.

A number of our homes are faced with children with special needs. We should change our allocation model to ensure that from the outset special consideration is given to these entities. Also our placement models should change to develop homes that specialise in specific competencies. It is with the aim of answering questions of this nature that we will be conducting a strategic review of the sector.

We are looking at the whole pie, the disparity between financial support of the government homes and private homes and see how we can ensure that our children are able to access the best possible service.

The review when completed will provide an outline of the gaps and other factors affecting the sector and the resources needed to ensure that we have an effective, efficient and modernized residential sector. These inputs will inform a strategic response framework and implementation plan directed at modernizing the sector and improving the outcomes for all children served on a consistent basis. It is expected that the review will be finished by December 2016, in time to influence our discussions regarding allocations for the 2017/2018 budget. In short order I will meet with the PCHA to continue the conversation.

While we review, however, steps will be taken by the CDA to enhance its efficiency and to do more in working with organs of the state such as the Jamaica Constabulary Force[JCF] to ensure that guidelines are followed especially in relation to treating with matters relating to the abuse of our children.

The Living in Family Environment programme

Research shows that children do better when they live in loving families that can help to support their growth and development. We intend to strengthen the Living in Family Environment (L.I.F.E.) Programme.

Foster Care Services

Having completed the comprehensive review of the foster care programme, the CDA will focus this year on implementing the Foster Care Standards of care through the sensitization of staff and foster care families. Steps will also be taken to strengthen the monitoring framework for children being served within the Foster Care Services programme. We will also be examining the monetary support provided to our foster families with a view to having Cabinet approve an upward revision.

Adoption Services

It has, frankly, been too difficult for families to adopt in Jamaica. We have taken steps to appoint a new Adoption Board, which is chaired by a medical practitioner who brings with her the experience of having adopted three children through our system. The Board and the CDA have been tasked with streamlining and increasing the efficiency of identifying the children fit for adoption and placing them with families who are suitable. The Act will also have to be reframed and modernised to ensure that at the end of the day it is the interest of the child that is foremost.

Child Care and Protection Act

The proposed revision to the Childcare and Protection Act is long overdue. Some of these areas require less talk and more action.

I have already started discussion with the Attorney General Chambers and the Head of the Legislative Committee to have these amendments which have already been through a joint select committee of Parliament fast tracked.

Transitional Living Programme for Children in State Care

While partnership is critical in every area of government, I must say there are aspects of the operation of this Ministry that we could not achieve were it not for strong support from our private sector and international partners.

I must pause to make special mention of the work of Denise Herbol, the outgoing head of the local mission of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Ms. Herbol's service and passion for Jamaica have been exceptional. With her team at USAID she has significantly impacted our educational system, especially in the area of raising our literacy rate. Additionally, her commitment to help us deal with some of the issues affecting our children in state care is extraordinary. We salute you Ms. Herbol and wish you well as you journey on.

As she journeys to another place one of the legacies which she will leave behind is helping us as a country to deal with our children who transition from state care.

The University of the West Indies [UWI], through the Caribbean Child Development Centre, in partnership with the CDA and with support from USAID will be implementing a comprehensive Transitional Living Programme for children in state care.

The transitional living programme is geared towards improving the living conditions for youth leaving residential care at 18 years and reducing the risk factors associated with low education or job skills, inadequate life skills and poor self-image. This is being accomplished through the development of an exit readiness programme involving life skills and job skills training.

The project will also facilitate the creation of a safe and appropriate transitional living facility for 40 females right here in Kingston who, upon leaving state care havenowhere to go. The initial scope of the programme has been expanded to build a transitional home for boys in Southfield St. Elizabeth. On Friday we will sign the Memorandum of Understanding with all the partners as we change the game and ensure that our children in state care are part of the wave of prosperity.

Addressing Mental Health of our Children and Youth

The mental health of our children, especially those in our care, continues to be a source of concern.

The Smiles Mobile, which is a mobile counselling centre continues to make inroads into this issue. Presently the Smiles Mobile team, comprising two psychologists, one social worker and a part-time psychiatrist provides psychosocial intervention for 673 children across 10 facilities in the South East Region, the Metcalfe Street Remand Centre and the Rio Cobre Correctional facility last year.

For the review period, the Clinical Psychologist team has provided psychological assessment and treatment to 1,302 children in care. Officers assigned to the CDA Intake Services Desk and those stationed in government-run Residential Child Care Facilities conducted 6,805 individual counselling sessions and 1,173 group sessions.

There is a need to expand this service and that we will do. This year, with the help of USAID, we will be procuring another Smile Mobile so that intervention can come to children in the western region. We are changing the game.

Our short term goal is to develop a therapeutic centre to ensure we can increase the frequencies of the interventions. More will be said on this Mr. Speaker at a later date.

Street Children

Preliminary discussions have been held with the Children's Affairs Division within the MoEYI, Child Labour Unit within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the CDA regarding the approach to be taken in addressing the issues of children living and working on the street. The network of partners is to be expanded to include the wider MoEYI, Ministries of Health; Justice; and National Security through the JCF. We will also include the Possibilities Programme.

There is no easy fix, but I believe as a society we must determine that we cannot continue this way. Consequently, we are developing a concept paper to guide programme initiation and plan to embark on a pilot project during this year.

Break-the-Silence Campaign

Mr. Speaker, an island-wide survey found alarmingly that for every 10 adults who admitted that they knew about cases of child abuse, only one was willing to come forward to make a report. Based on this finding the Office of the Children's Registry [OCR] with support of partner agencies launched the Break-the-Silence campaign to change this culture.

When I met with the team, I indicated that we must continue to rivet in the minds of Jamaicans that it is not acceptable to know about child abuse and not report it; in fact it is a criminal offence.

With the help of the Jamaica Social Investment Fund and the Caribbean Development Bank, the campaign has been strengthened by the injection of over \$11 million. This will allow us to sustain and strengthen the media campaign, but importantly will see the development of a book and CD to help children to identify and report abuse. We are empowering our children to say enough is enough. We will be starting with six schools and 12000 books. This is how we change the game.

OurChildrenJa

During the recently concluded Child's Month celebration, this Ministry took the opportunity to launch the OURCHILDRENJA public awareness campaign, which seeks to emphasise that we are all responsible for the care and protection of our children.

I pause to express appreciation to all the stakeholders who contributed to the success of the month-long celebration.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Speaker, our youth are the future leaders of this nation. So, in addition to affording them a good education, this Ministry is also providing them with opportunities to impact the decision making process.

We are re-examining the decision made by the previous administration to merge the National Youth Service (NYS) with the National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD). As a sector, we see merit in the establishment of a strong youth development arm focused not only on policy but on operations which should be separated to focus on:

1. Youth Development and
2. Entrepreneurship and Job Placement.

We believe that an organizational review of the youth sector will support our efforts to streamline all youth activities supported by Government to ensure they are effectively functioning according to youth best practices. In order to achieve this we will be focussing on the following:

National Youth Policy

Our young people are impatient for the completion of a renewed youth policy. This is understandable. The policy is expected to guide all we do and as such its completion is a priority.

A Green paper was tabled during the last administration and the process of public consultations has already been conducted with responses garnered from over 240 youth representatives. I have already approached the Commonwealth Youth Division to provide technical assistance to ensure that we can complete the policy in the shortest possible time and expect that next year the completed policy will form the basis of this presentation in the House.

Streamlining Youth Work

Mr. Speaker, the issue of empowering and reintegrating our Youth has to be a primary focus of this Ministry. We note that a number of Ministries have been implementing various programmes that target unattached youth. While I am heartened that there is such focus on our young people, we must ensure that we are not duplicating effort, touching the same young people while leaving the neediest in the cold. Importantly we must ensure that we are not wasting resources. It is time for significant streamlining.

The Youth Ministry must lead this charge. Unattached youth programmes such as those run by HEART Trust, CSJP and even our own Ministry must be integrated to extend reach and provide maximum impact.

Steps will be taken to reconvene the inter-ministerial committee on youth and to strengthen the capacity of our ministry to monitor and evaluate all youth programs.

Additionally, with the help of the Commonwealth we will be taking steps to further formalise and place emphasis on the training and recognition of our youth workers. Just as our teachers are critical to any reform of our education system, our youth workers are equally as important in executing their jobs.

Youth Information Centres (YICs)

I move now to the revamping of the Youth Information Centres (YICs).

Currently, existing YIC operations (including services and programmes) are being reviewed towards determining, and ensuring relevance to contemporary youth needs. The team is in the process of defining a set of core competencies, services and programmes which are to be implemented in all YICs. Additionally, a YIC business model will be implemented to ensure sustainability of operations.

YICs will be restructured and rebranded as Youth Innovation Centres, bringing alienated and marginalized youth back into the economic mainstream and giving them a sense of meaning and belonging. The YICs will assist youth in developing new skills and experiences, while promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and resilience.

YICS will:

1. Promote a culture of entrepreneurship through information dissemination and the rollout of the Creativity for Employment and Business Opportunity (CEBO) Programme.
 - The CEBO programme will facilitate:
 1. Training in Business start-up and Entrepreneurship; and
 2. Provide access to business support services including (but not limited to) finance and business coaching and mentorship.

2. Provide training in social entrepreneurship for Community-Based Youth Organisations (CYBOs).
3. Provide an Entrepreneurship Help Desk accessible to all youth.

Establishment of the Youth Advisory Council

We are convinced that if Jamaican youth are properly engaged then they can be the engine that drives economic growth –the wave of prosperity. This engagement, however, cannot be merely symbolic in nature but must allow our young people to truly contribute to the direction of their country.

It is for this reason that we are establishing the Youth Advisory Council of Jamaica. It is intended to facilitate continuous engagement of young people in youth development policy and programming actions of the Government. The Council will operate as an engine to coordinate and drive the National Youth Parliament.

We are seeking to attract youth who have shown a clear passion for community development, have excelled in leadership and are committed to serving their country. They will be selected by their peers. We are intent on their being representative of a wide cross section of the youth population.

These advisors will:

- Provide support to the Government in mainstreaming youth issues into national policies and development strategies in order to create spaces and opportunities for empowering young people and giving recognition, visibility and credibility to the contributions of youth.

-Develop partnerships between the Government and young people, to solicit and integrate youth views and priorities, and collaborate with youth in setting up projects and programmes to address their needs, concerns and requirements of youth.

-Monitor and evaluate projects targeting and involving young people and promote research on youth development.

-Advocate for the presence of youth on Government Boards, as well as in workshops, meetings and conferences organised by the Government and its partners.

-Act as a clearing house for information concerning youth, towards updating member organisations on opportunities and initiatives in various sectors of government for youth development.

This is a game changer!

National Youth Parliament

Our Ministry has initiated discussion with the Houses of Parliament to re-institute the National Youth Parliament.

There was a time when Jamaica led the Caribbean and Commonwealth in the area of youth development and in best practices in empowering and engaging our youth. We must reclaim that legacy. We will reintroduce a revamped National Youth Parliament come this November.

The Youth Parliament seeks to strengthen the democratic process in Jamaica by deepening understanding of parliamentary democracy among young people. It will build self-awareness and inspire them to understand and engage with social issues, towards initiating citizenship action and promoting positive social change.

We have heard the cries of the young people: the Youth Parliament should NOT be a platitude. It is for this reason that our Youth Parliament initiative will be designed to include leadership development and training in public speaking, parliamentary procedures as well as policy development and analysis. This intervention will begin well in advance of the scheduled sitting in November.

Our Youth Parliamentarians who will serve on pre-established committees will deliberate on some of the most difficult issues facing our country.

The communiqué prepared by the youth parliamentarians will be laid by this Minister in the House of Parliament. In this way, the National Youth Parliament, will not be a 'mock parliament', but will be focussed on bringing forward the analyses and proposals of Jamaica's youth.

Mr. Speaker, this is game changing.

Youth Leadership

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry continues to place focus on effective youth leadership at every level. Through our governance programme and framework, we trained over 700 secondary school students' councillors. The Jamaica Union of Tertiary Students was revamped and we are finalizing a new constitution. A new National Secondary Student Council [NSSC] was chosen in elections that were held in May 2016. Parliament will join me in congratulating the new president.

Going forward Mr. Speaker, we will launch a Students' Council Handbook and resource material. Surveys will be done to determine the extent of student council representation on school boards in accordance with the Education Regulations.

We take this opportunity to remind all schools that they must have a functional Students' Council and that each Board especially at the secondary level must have a student representative. We will move to give the National Youth Council the appropriate legal standing.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Speaker, the National Youth Service continues to assist youth through several programmes and initiatives that directly addresses youth unemployment and youth employability.

National Youth Service (NYS)

We are expanding the initiatives of the NYS. Last year the NYS placed 5205, this year we have increased the budget to the NYS to engage 6,000 youth. The Graduate Work Experience Programme has also been strengthened. Last year we placed 312 graduates; this year we have made provision to place 500 graduates. Through our empowerment programme we have been preparing youth with mild intellectual disabilities for the work place. Last year we helped 81 youth; this year we aim to assist 160 youth.

Jamaica Values and Attitude Programme (JAMVAT)

We have allocated \$233 million to the JAMVAT programme, an increase of \$100 million over the previous year. The JAMVAT programme plays a vital role in the development of various areas of society. Approved students selected for participation in the programme are placed in different sectors of the workforce to conduct their 200 hours of voluntary service.

Students attending 23 tertiary institutions participated in the programme during the last financial year. To date some 33 institutions are currently participating.

New Employment Opportunities for Youth in Jamaica (NEO-Jamaica)

Mr. Speaker, this Ministry welcomes the \$1.6 billion (US\$9.3 million) New Employment Opportunities for Youth in Jamaica (NEO-Jamaica) project, which is being spearheaded under the Youth Upliftment Through Employment (YUTE) initiative of the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica (PSOJ). It is being jointly financed by the Inter-American Development Bank and local stakeholder partners.

This initiative is a game changer as approximately 10,000 unattached young people, aged 17 and 29, are expected to benefit from it over a three-year period. Participants will receive vocational training, and job placement opportunities that are to be provided by approximately 100 partner companies that will also offer internships.

INFORMATION DIVISION

Mr. Speaker, the successful implementation of the policies and programmes of the entire government depends to a large degree on the flow of information across the state sector as well as from it to the wider public. The National Values and Attitude Campaign that this Ministry is reviving will depend significantly on the messages that will be disseminated via the various media platforms.

As part of modernising the Information Communication Technology (ICT) framework, the Information Division of this Ministry is embarking on several initiatives.

We are aiming at amending the Broadcasting and Radio Re-Diffusion Act and the Television and Sound Broadcasting Regulations.

We are aiming to amend the legislative framework for the electronic media, as an interim measure pending promulgation of an ICT Act, which takes into account current and emerging advances in broadcasting regulation. We propose to present a submission to the Cabinet for issuing of drafting instructions by September 2016. The Bill and Regulations are to be submitted to Legislation Committee by end of fourth quarter of the financial year.

Introduction of new ICT legislation

The Ministry has embarked on the enactment of legislation to provide the ICT sector with an adequate legislative, regulatory and institutional framework which takes account of current trends; emerging technologies; and promotes and supports competitiveness in the ICT sector.

Information Policy

The Ministry is also introducing an overarching Information Policy to provide for the access, dissemination and preservation of Government Information. This will include the development of a PSB Funding Model for sustainable Public Broadcasting Corporation PBCJ operations (TV and Radio) as a component of the overarching information policy.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, I believe that throughout this presentation I have demonstrated through our approaches that as a Ministry, we are well positioned to support the Government in achieving economic prosperity through the strengths of the demographic we have been mandated to serve. As a Government on the drive for economic growth and prosperity we are acutely aware that education and youth development are the engines that drive economic growth. It will require partnership.

I applaud the efforts of our international partners but urge them to help us do more. I applaud the Private Sector but beseech them to deepen the partnership; look at our child care facilities and partner with them, they are all our children. The journey to changing the game has begun, we the youth are taking control of our own destiny. We are the wave that will bring the prosperity we seek. We know that we are world beaters, that we are great beyond measure, and that there is no problem in Jamaica that we are unable to solve through our collective efforts.

We will create a Jamaica where there is equity and meritocracy in our education system, where our young people are empowered, engaged and attached and where our people can live in shared prosperity. We will do it; we shall do it; we must do it.

God Bless you all and God Bless Jamaica Land we love.