

Gov't Launches Low-Cost Housing Design Competition

THE GOVERNMENT is encouraging Jamaican architects to submit creative, original, resilient and low-cost housing designs, through the Low-Cost Housing Design Competition, which can be used as a model for the nation's social housing programme.

The competition was launched virtually on May 7, by Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness.

It forms part of the social housing aspect of the Housing, Opportunity, Production and Employment (HOPE) programme.

"The genesis of this project was indeed the success of the competition that was launched for the design of our [new] Parliament [building]," the Prime Minister said.

"What we are trying to do, is to get the architectural community, the planning community, and the environmental community to take the vast knowledge that exists, both globally and of local circumstance, and infuse it into practice to solve real-world problems," he added.

Submissions may be done individually, or in teams with a maximum of five persons. Competitors are encouraged to conceive new and original design concepts that are low-cost and sustainable.

Designs should accommodate persons with disabilities, should demonstrate climate resilience and be adaptable to the various terrains to be found islandwide.

Entries will be accepted in four categories: one, two and



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness speaks at the launch of the Low-Cost Housing Design Competition, which was held virtually, on May 7.

three-bedroom units and multi-family unit.

The Government will offer a prize of \$1 million for the

winner; \$500,000 for the second place; and \$250,000 for the third place in each of the four categories.

\$321 Million Allocated to Purchase Digital Devices for Needy Students

A TOTAL of \$321 million has been earmarked under the Government's Social and Economic Recovery and Vaccine Programme for Jamaica (SERVE), to purchase digital devices for students in need.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke

The devices to be procured by e-Learning Jamaica Limited, are being acquired for youngsters who have not benefited from similar provisions under other State-funded initiatives.

The engagement, dubbed the 'SERVE Jamaica Digital Device Programme', is the first component being embarked on under the \$60-billion SERVE Jamaica Programme, which was announced by Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, during the 2021/22 Budget Debate in the House of Representatives in March.

The Minister outlined details of the SERVE

Jamaica Digital Programme during the House's sitting on May 5.

It is a collaboration involving the Ministries of Finance and the Public Service; Education, Youth and Information; Science, Energy and Technology; and Local Government and Rural Development, as well as Members of Parliament (MPs), through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), and Councillors of Municipal Corporations islandwide.

Dr. Clarke said the Government will provide \$189 million to purchase devices for students identified by MPs. This will see \$3 million being programmed for each of the 63 constituencies.

He said while a maximum of 100 students per constituency is being targeted, if possible, consideration would be given to facilitating more youngsters where needed.

The CDF will be utilised to facilitate the requisite administrative procedures in constituencies, including providing students' names, schools, registration numbers, instructions regarding deployment and collection of the devices.

The Ministry of Education will cross-reference the lists of proposed beneficiaries with the database for its various similar engagements to avoid duplication.

COVID-19 Measures Extended to June 2

THE GOVERNMENT has extended COVID-19 prevention measures, under the Disaster Risk Management Act, until June 2.

Speaking in the House of Representatives on May 4, Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness said that the data show that the tighter measures implemented in the past weeks from February 2021 to now, have been very successful in slowing the spread of the virus.

Curfew Hours

- The curfew hours for weekdays, Monday to Friday, will remain at 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. and end on June 3, 2021, at 5:00 a.m.
- The curfew hours for the weekend will begin at 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays, at 2:00 p.m. on Sundays and end at 5:00 a.m. on Sundays and Mondays respectively.
- For Labour Day, which will be observed on May 24, 2021, there will be an all-day curfew.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness speaks in the House of Representatives on May 4.

Other Measures

- The travel ban for South American countries (Brazil, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Argentina and Paraguay) remains in place. However, the travel ban has been extended to include India and Trinidad & Tobago.
- All travellers are required to present a negative COVID-19 test conducted within three days of travel, and self-quarantine for 14 days after arrival.
- Public entities may now hold events limited to handing-overs, launches, ground-breakings, opening ceremonies or similar events, but there should be no more than 15 persons physically present and the requirements to wear masks and maintain physical distance continue to apply.

Improved Water Supply for Customers

MINISTER WITHOUT Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Everaldo Warmington, says work is advanced to deliver improved water supply to more than 150,000 residents at a cost of \$8.8 billion.

Under the project, being pursued through a Water Purchase Agreement (WPA) among the National Water Commission (NWC), Vinci Construction Grands Projets (VCGP), Eppley Limited (Eppley) and Jamaica Producers Group Limited (JP), a water treatment plant will be established in Content, St. Catherine, which will deliver an additional 15 million gallons of water per day for customers in the Corporate Area, and Portmore and Spanish Town in St. Catherine.



Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Everaldo Warmington

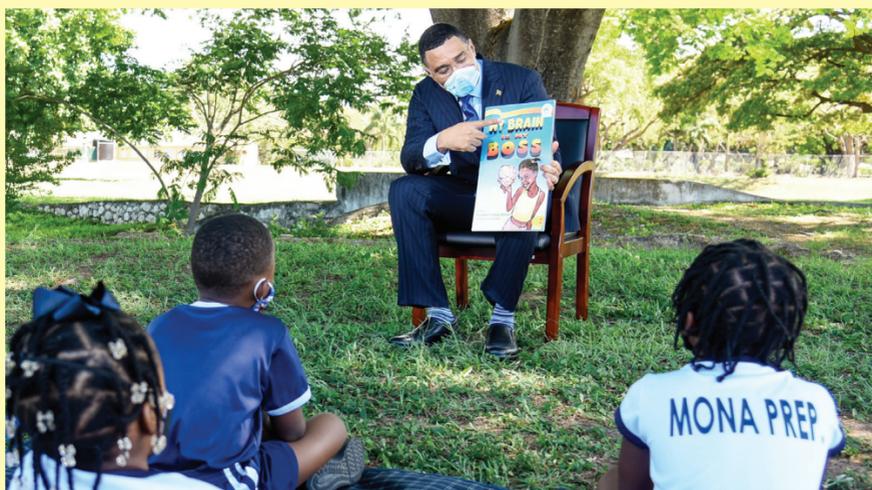
Minister Warmington, while outlining details of the plan during his contribution to the 2021/2022 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives on May 5,

said it will bring, "improved delivery of high quality, reliable and continuous water supply... and reduced need for trucking and water restrictions to affected areas during drought."

He said there is potential for additional revenue by negotiation of contracts for supply to existing and new committed or planned developments, where currently there is no NWC supply available; for example, the proposed Caymanas Economic Zone.

The Minister said the project is awaiting approval for its financing structure from the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, and the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR). Work for the project is expected to be completed in two years.

PM Reads to Children at Jamaica House



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness reads to children from Mona Preparatory School on the lawns of Jamaica House on May 4, to mark Read Across Jamaica Day.

Face-to-Face Classes Resume Today for Students Sitting Exams

CABINET HAS given approval for the resumption of face-to-face instruction on May 10 for those students sitting exit examinations.

This includes students doing the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) Ability Test, the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Examination, the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), City & Guilds and the National Vocational Qualification - Jamaica (NVQ-J).

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness made the announcement during the sitting of the House of Representatives on May 4.

"We want to emphasise that the COVID-19 infection prevention and control protocols will be established, enforced and strictly adhered to at the schools. Provisions have been made through the regional offices [Ministry of Education, Youth and Information] for disbursement of grants for basic equipment and materials needed for sanitisation purpose," he said.

Mr. Holness noted that a whole-day/rotation approach, based on resources available, will facilitate the inclusion of face-to-face engagement for students sitting the 2021 exit examinations.

"This means that only a subset of each cohort of students will be at school each day while others work remotely," he noted.

The Prime Minister said, further, that systems are in place for the teachers involved in face-to-face instruction to be vaccinated as part of the infection prevention and control measures.

So far, 7,500 teachers have been vaccinated and plans are in place for others to be inoculated commencing May 6.



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FOREIGN TRADE

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