

NHT Policy Change to Enable Increased Attention to Poor and Low-Income-Earning Jamaicans

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the National Housing Trust's (NHT) decision to target middle, low-income earners, and persons with disabilities to benefit from reduced interest rates is in keeping with the Government's mandate to make home ownership possible for every Jamaican.

Under the new policy, income is the sole determinant of the interest rate subsidy applied to mortgagors.

The policy is aimed at ensuring equity and allocation of subsidies where it is most needed, that is, to the lowest income groups and the most vulnerable. The policy applies to new loans.

Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness, in his address at the ceremony to hand over 32 duplex units in Majesty Gardens Phase 1A in St. Andrew on August 24, said the policy change is a fairer and more effective approach, as the Trust continues to provide greater assistance to those contributors who need it the most.

"The subsidy is that if you fall within a certain category your interest rates are reduced. If you are disabled,



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (left) hands over the keys to a unit of the newly constructed Majesty Gardens Phase 1A, in St. Andrew to Cedrick Anderson (centre) and his son, Ricardo Anderson, during a ceremony held on August 24.

and you are in the category \$30,000 to \$40,000, you get a one per cent reduction in your interest rate but remember, that category only pays two per cent. If you are in the \$42,000 and over, you get a one per cent reduction, so you pay three per cent," he said.

The organisation has been evaluating the manner in which it allocates subsidies. Under the prior approach, additional interest rate subsidies were applied to special groups. This resulted in persons who fell within those

groups automatically attaining subsidies - whether or not they were needed in order to access or afford a loan.

Conversely, potential beneficiaries who had similar or lower incomes when compared to persons within those special groups could not benefit from these subsidies.

Therefore, subsidies were not being effectively applied based on financial need.

This new approach will allow the NHT to focus its subsidy programme on the most vulnerable contributors,

specifically, low-income earners of all ages and persons with disabilities. It also allows more resources to be directed to those in need.

"What we are going to do is... more equitable and much more advantageous to the disabled community," Prime Minister Holness emphasised.

Under the new policy, Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities (no cost to the beneficiary) has doubled to \$300,000. In addition, a maximum of two NHT mortgagors with disabilities, residing in the same household (or caregiver of a person(s) living with disabilities), can now access a grant of up to \$600,000.

Ground Broken for Expansion Project at Carib Cement



PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness broke ground on August 24, for the \$6 billion (US\$40 million) Kiln-5 expansion project at Caribbean Cement Company Limited, in Kingston.

The Mexico/Jamaica Friendship Mural project was also unveiled during the ceremony as part of efforts to celebrate Jamaica's 60th year of Independence.

In his remarks, the Prime Minister said he is pleased that as part of its growth strategy, CEMEX took the decision to upgrade and increase the production capacity of its subsidiary, Caribbean Cement Company Limited.

"This expansion project will increase Carib Cement's production capacity by approximately 30 per cent,

that is by 300,000 metric tonnes. The expansion will use state-of-the-art technology and will introduce novel grinding additives to the man-

ufacturing process, which would further enhance the production of low clinker products in the region," Mr. Holness said.

Government Investing \$800M into Falmouth to Springvale Road Rehabilitation



MINISTER WITHOUT Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Hon. Everalde Warmington, officially broke ground for the Falmouth to Springvale road rehabilitation project in Trelawny, on August 24.

The project is being implemented by the National Works Agency (NWA), under its Maintenance of Secondary Roads Programme, at a cost of more than \$800 million.

Phase one of the project, the rehabilitation of the Wakefield to Deeside roadway, is currently being done at a cost of some \$200 million.

Work on the four-kilometre section of road is slated to be completed in November of this year.

Mr. Warmington, in his address at the ceremony, held in Deeside, noted that he was pleased about the commencement of the project.

He pointed out that the Wakefield to Deeside roadway plays a vital role in socio-economic activities of

the surrounding communities, as it provides access to farms, schools, health centres and the parish capital.

The scope of work on the road includes de-bushing and trimming of banks, earthworks, cleaning of drains, construction of catch drains, concrete U and V drains, the

installation of pipe culverts, and pavement works.

Mr. Warmington added that work on the Martha Brae to Bounty Hall roadway, is slated to begin early next financial year, and this will be done at an additional \$200 million.

Major Infrastructural Upgrade for Schools Islandwide

THE MINISTRY of Education and Youth has allocated \$210 million for critical repairs to schools across the island.

In making the disclosure, portfolio Minister, Hon Fayval Williams, informed that each of the seven regions within the Ministry has received \$30 million for the infrastructural upgrades.

The Minister was speaking at the 58th annual conference of the Jamaica Teachers' Association at the Hilton Rose Hall Resort and Spa Montego Bay, St James, on August 24.

Mrs. Williams stated that, so far, 97 schools have been identified for critical repairs.

Of that number, tenders have been issued for 35 projects, estimates have been prepared for another 34, assessments are to be conducted for an additional 13, while contracts have been awarded for work to commence on 15 schools.

To date, the value of work that has been assessed amounts to some \$196 million.

Minister Williams stated that the goal of the Ministry in the long term is to trans-



Minister of Education and Youth, Hon. Fayval Williams

form the infrastructure of schools to 21st century readiness.

Meanwhile, some 964 specialist teachers are available for employment in public education institutions for the 2022/23 academic year.

Of that number, 121 completed their studies through the Ministry's special scholarship programme. They are expected to take up positions in the upcoming school year.

Principals have also been given pre-approval for the replacement of teachers in clear vacancies and temporary posts funded by the Ministry.

Private Company to Contribute Housing Units to NSHP

A MEMORANDUM of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation and Arc Properties Limited, for the contribution of units to the New Social Housing Programme (NSHP).

This follows an appeal to the private sector to partner with the Government in building more houses for vulnerable Jamaicans.

Signatories to the document included Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness; Permanent Secretary in both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Audrey Sewell; Managing Director, Kinetic Engineering Services, Keon Hinds; Managing Director, Arc Properties Limited, Ashley-Ann Horne, and Director of Arc Properties and Deputy Chair of Arc Manufacturing, Charlotte Horne Hayles.

In his remarks at the signing ceremony, held at Jamaica House on August 23, Prime Minister Holness said he was pleased to see Arc Properties Limited coming on board the Programme.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (4th left), Managing Director, Arc Properties Limited, Ashley-Ann Horne (2nd left) and Director of Arc Properties and Deputy Chair of Arc Manufacturing, Charlotte Horne Hayles (3rd right), display the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on August 23 to build more houses for Jamaicans. Others (from left) are: Managing Director, Kinetic Engineering Services, Keon Hinds; President, Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica, Keith Duncan; Permanent Secretary in both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Audrey Sewell; Minister without Portfolio in the Office of the Prime Minister, Hon. Floyd Green, and Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda.

Once the private sector realises that the project is integrous, meaning that the reputational risk of association is very limited or non-existent, then it's easy for the private sector to say, 'I would associate my brand with this proj-

ect'. It is transparent and you can only get a positive gain from it," Mr. Holness stated.

He noted that the NSHP targets beneficiaries or households earning minimum wage or less, or which earn no income.

RADA Gets Backhoes to Assist Farmers



Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Pernel Charles Jr. (left), is shown features in one of two backhoes that were handed over to the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) on August 24. At right is Sales Representative, IMCA Jamaica Limited, Duart Reid. The backhoes, are to support farming communities in St. Thomas and Westmoreland which cost \$38.76 million.

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