

Significant Number of Teacher Vacancies Filled

A significant number of the teacher vacancies in schools islandwide, resulting from the resignation of approximately 248 educators, have now been filled, Minister of Education and Youth, Hon. Fayval Williams, has said.

Addressing a virtual back to school press briefing on September 1, she advised that institutions have been identifying and recruiting qualified teachers to replace those who have exited the classrooms.

Mrs. Williams cited Region Two, which comprises, St. Thomas, Portland, and St.



Minister of Education and Youth, Hon. Fayval Williams

Mary, where she said 80 per cent of the schools reported that they have replaced

teachers who have resigned. The Minister further indicated that one Corporate Area school which lost 16 teachers “[has] replaced all except one of those.”

She said that in Region Four, which comprises St. James, Westmoreland, and Hanover, approximately 75 per cent of vacancies have been filled, while interviews for additional teachers are ongoing.

Mrs. Williams informed that the Ministry has provided principals with several strategies they can use in recruiting teachers. These, she said, were conveyed in a

bulletin to board chairpersons and principals.

“We put out 15 different strategies, and just recently we added to that, the approval that we would have gotten from the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service for teachers who are on their long leave, whether it is four months or eight months... if they are so willing, to come back and be their own replacement. That is a facility that is now available to our schools,” she outlined.

The 2022/23 academic year begins today, September 5.

Governments of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago Commit to Greater Collaboration on Violence Prevention

THE GOVERNMENTS of Jamaica and the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago will be intensifying their collaborative efforts in crime fighting, violence prevention and other initiatives that seek to advance regional integration. Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness disclosed details of the bilateral discussions held with his counterpart, Dr. the Hon. Keith Rowley, during a press briefing held on August 29, in Port of Spain.

The press conference followed the signing of a Trade Complaints Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between both countries to improve trade relations.

Noting the similarities Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago share concerning the threat of violence, Prime Minister Holness said “we really need to take a public health approach in looking at why is it that violence features so heavily in our social transactions and how we resolve conflict”.



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness (second right) holds bilateral discussions with his counterpart, Dr. the Hon. Keith Rowley (second left), on August 29, in Port of Spain, Trinidad. Also, present is Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Senator the Hon. Kamia Johnson Smith (third right).

Additionally, issues relating to CARICOM, the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the structured movement of labour, goods, services, and capital within the Caribbean, were also discussed.

Mr. Holness added that sports, culture, and business development were other key areas for collaboration.

“I want to commend and say thanks to Prime Minister Rowley for backing up the expressions of fulfilling with

actual action in legislation and implementation,” he stated.

Prime Minister Holness was in the twin island republic for its 60th independence celebrations. He returned to Jamaica on September 1.

Gov’t Invests \$200 Million in Irish Potato and Onion Production Project

THE GOVERNMENT is investing \$200 million in the national Irish potato and onion programme, to increase the hectares under production and to improve yields of these crops.

The sum of \$150 million has been allocated for the Irish potato programme, while \$50 million will be invested in onion production.

Agriculture and Fisheries Minister, Hon. Pearnel Charles Jr., said for the upcoming planting season, the intention is to target expansion of the programme in the traditional growing areas of Clarendon, St. Catherine, St. Elizabeth, Trelawny and St. Thomas.

“Our goal is to see if we can get 50 per cent more production in onion. We doubled our target last year and we want to get 50 per cent more this year, and for potato we are on our way to exceeding the 70 per cent



Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Hon. Pearnel Charles Jr., speaking at the launch of the 2022 National Irish Potato and Onion Programme in St. Catherine, on August 31.

that we achieved last year,” he noted.

The Minister was addressing farmers and other stakeholders at the launch of the 2022 National Irish Potato and Onion Programme in Guy’s Hill, St. Catherine, on August 31.

Our goal is to see if we can get 50 per cent more production in onion.

Seeds will be made available to the farmers by mid-October for the planting season.

“We are targeting 1,500 acres of land which is going to be a 20 per cent increase over the last year’s planting season,” Minister Charles Jr. informed.

Monkeypox Vaccines Expected to Arrive This Month

THE FIRST set of vaccines to treat the Monkeypox disease is expected to arrive this month, says Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton.

“We have a priority group that will be targeted, similarly to what we [did] with the COVID-19 [vaccine distribution], and once they arrive, we will offer it to that group,” he told JIS News.

This comes as the island confirms seven cases of the disease, just before the beginning of the 2022/23 school year.

Speaking at the Open House and Exhibition ceremony for the rehabilitation of public health facilities in St. Catherine, held at the Church of the Open Bible in Twickenham Park on August 31, Dr. Tufton called on parents to be vigilant.

“If there is any problem at all, go to your parish health office or report to your school nurse,” he added.

Dr. Tufton advised that the same health and safety protocols that were in place to manage the spread of the COVID-19 virus within schools will also be maintained throughout the new school year.

These include abiding by social-distancing protocols, wearing masks, frequent



Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, speaks at the Open House & Exhibition ceremony for the rehabilitation of public health facilities in St. Catherine, at the Church of the Open Bible in Twickenham Park, on August 31.

handwashing, and designated areas for sanitisation on school grounds, among others.

“The Ministry [Health] and the Ministry of Education and Youth work closely together. There are briefing sessions, we work with the school nurses, guidance counsellors and the schools are aware of what to look for,” he noted.

Government to Legislate Deposit Refund Scheme for Plastic Bottles

THE GOVERNMENT is to put laws in place to support the Deposit Refund Scheme for plastic bottles by the end of this financial year.

This will boost the effort to improve the country’s environmental and waste management thrust.

Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, gave details during a Plastic Forum, held virtually on August 30.

To date, the scheme, which is voluntary, provides a cash refund to consumers who return their plastic bottles after use.

“The issue [of proper recycling] is so big that we cannot leave it to those who ‘feel’ like being good citizens. We will legislate it [and hopefully will] have the votes of the Opposition to support it,” the Minister said.

He emphasised that this would require collaboration among the Jamaica Customs Agency, National Compliance and Regulatory Authority

(NCRA), Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ), the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA), and the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce.

This, he said, will “ensure the way we implement it is done seamlessly, causes no disruption to supply and production, and... does not trigger further inflation”.

This will boost the effort to improve the country’s environmental and waste management thrust.

Senator Samuda argued that although it has been a “good effort” between the private sector and citizens who use the scheme, there is a need to intensify and expand the management of plastic waste across the island.



Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda

New Public Defender Sworn In



Governor-General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen (right), presents Public Defender, Queen’s Counsel, Carolyn Reid-Cameron, with the instrument of appointment, during a swearing-in ceremony at King’s House on September 1.