

## RESPONSES BY THE PRIME MINISTER TO QUESTIONS IN PARLIAMENT

DECEMBER 2, 2014

### Question 1

Will the Prime Minister state whether she received correspondence or information from a Mr. Lennie Little-White or any party, within or external to the Government offering for sale or advising of the acquisition of lands and/or other assets related to the Outameni Experience, and if so when did she receive such correspondence or information?

### Answer

Upon review of all the files presented to me, I can inform this Honourable House that:

1. I received no correspondence from Mr. Lennie Little-White. However, on January 10, 2012 I received a letter from his late sister, Dr. Heather Little-White. She said in her letter that former Prime Minister Hon. Bruce Golding before he demitted office, had instructed the then Minister of Tourism Hon. Edmund Bartlett to spearhead a team to save the attraction.

She pointed out that Mr. Golding's letter to Mr. Bartlett said, "it would be a terrible loss to see this attraction fold being one of the few that portray Jamaica's history and indigenous culture." She also said in her letter to me that she had raised the matter with the former Minister of Culture, Hon. Olivia Grange but nothing had been done and that she had later appealed to former Prime Minister Hon. Andrew Holness and did not get a reply. Dr. Little-White appealed to me to see how the attraction could be refinanced such as a mortgage for 15 years or more and repackaged because of its national importance to education and culture.

2. On February 10, 2012 I was copied on a letter from the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing Dr. the Hon. Omar Davies addressed to the Minister of Tourism and Entertainment, Hon. Dr. Wykeham McNeill. The letter from Dr. Davies brought to the attention of the Tourism Minister, a letter written by former Prime Minister Hon. Bruce Golding to the former Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett suggesting that Mr. Bartlett spearhead a move to find a solution to the problem being encountered by the "Outameni Experience" attraction.
3. On March 13, 2012 I wrote to the Minister of Tourism and Entertainment referencing the letter from Dr. Davies. Like former Prime Minister Golding before me had done in respect of his Tourism Minister, I asked the Minister of Tourism to intervene to see what can be done to save the property, which even though privately owned, was set up as a heritage attraction.
4. The matter never again came to my attention until it was reported in the media that the property had been purchased by the National Housing Trust.

### Question 2

Will the Prime Minister submit all correspondence related to the transactions; whether they be letters, notes, recordings, contracts or any other information in relation to the discussions on Outameni from all Ministries, Ministers and Government officials including the Minister and the Ministry of Tourism and all correspondence to the Office of the Prime Minister and to the Prime Minister.

### Answer

Yes. All correspondence and documentation requested by the Auditor General and the Contractor General, which are the appropriate bodies to receive such submissions, will be provided to them.

**Question 3**

Will the Prime Minister advise the House of the full expenditure both expected and already expended in the purchase of any assets related to the Outameni Experience by the NHT?

**Answer**

I want to correct a misleading impression created by the Leader of the Opposition on the previous occasion when I answered questions on this matter.

The National Housing Trust has informed me that the full expenditure for the purchase of the buildings including a 300 year-old Great House and land, chattels and associated costs in relation to the Orange Grove property is a total of Two Hundred and Eight Million Two Hundred and Fifty Six Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirteen Dollars (\$208,256,713).

This includes the March 15, 2013, purchase by the NHT from Capital and Credit Merchant Bank for \$180 Million, Orange Grove in Trelawny, comprising 9.12 acres of land and at least 16 buildings - including the 300 year-old Great House - where the Outameni Experience operated. The cost for the land was Twelve Point Seven Four Million Dollars. Capital and Credit Merchant Bank was the vendor acting under its powers of sale.

I am aware that the Board of the National Housing Trust has made public through the media, the Sale Agreement for the purchase of the property.

The total sum also includes the July 2014 purchase by the National Housing Trust of chattels and equipment from Mr. Lennie Little-White for the sum of Two Million One Hundred and Twelve Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Five Dollars (\$2, 112, 885).

I am advised that the Sale Agreement for the purchase of the chattels has also been made public by the Board of the NHT.

In addition to the purchase price indicated before, the NHT has spent Twenty Five Million Two Hundred and Fifty Nine Thousand, Nine Hundred and Fifty Eight Dollars (\$25,259,958) for the maintenance and administration of the property, costs associated with the purchase of the land - such as the valuation report, legal fees, and stamp duty-insurance, and property tax.

**Question 4**

Will the Prime Minister advise the House of any debt written off by any Government Agency in relation to the Outameni Experience and state the value of such debt?

**Answer**

It is now a matter of public record, and was the subject of a detailed press release by the Development Bank of Jamaica on November 17, 2014, that the DBJ has written off US Five Hundred Thousand Dollars plus accruals which it invested in preference shares, not debt, issued by Orange Valley Holdings Limited.

In March 2011, while the Jamaica Labour Party formed the Government, the DBJ Board decided to make full provision for this loss of the National Investment Bank of Jamaica's equity investment in Orange Valley Holdings Limited which was in the form of preference shares. The equity investment by the NIBJ was to assist with the construction of a heritage tourism attraction/theme park at Orange Grove in Trelawny, later known as "Outameni Theme Park".

It has also come to my attention that in 2008, while the Jamaica Labour Party formed the Government, Orange Valley Holdings Limited was the beneficiary of a Three Million Dollar loan facility which the Tourism Enhancement Fund made available to tourism entities. The Minister of Tourism and Entertainment will address this matter.

**Question 5**

Will the Prime Minister advise the House as to whether Mr. Lennie Little-White or any business with which he is involved or has been involved has undertaken political work or campaign related activities for the governing political party whether through campaign contributions of cash or kind, or contracted work.

**Answer**

Under the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, I am not obliged to answer this question as it does not relate to the business of Government. However in the interest of full disclosure, I will answer it.

The professional creative production and reputable filming company, Media Mix Limited, with which Mr. Lennie Little-White is associated, is among many creative and audio-visual service providers who have in the past been contracted at market rates to provide services to the governing political party.

**Question 6**

Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether she has had any meetings or correspondence with the members of the board or executive of the NHT or interested parties in relation to the acquisition pertaining to Orange Grove/Outameni Experience and if so:

- (a) Provide details of such meetings and conversations.
- (b) Provide to the House any document that was presented before, during or after these meetings, conversations, or consultations?

**Answer**

I had no meetings or correspondence with the members of the board or executive of the NHT or interested parties in relation to the acquisition pertaining to Orange Grove/Outameni Experience before October 30, 2014.

Since October 30, I have met with the Chairman of the Board and some members of the Board to ascertain the facts in this matter. There are no documents.

**Question 7**

Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether the legal entity that operated the business known as the Outameni Experience fulfilled all its statutory obligations in terms of, but not limited to, NHT contributors, PAYE Taxes, NIS, obligations or any other legally required obligations up to the time of the sale.

**Answer**

I have been advised that the applicable laws of Jamaica do not allow for the public disclosure of documents, information and records related to the income or affairs of any person otherwise than for the purposes of the Tax Administration Jamaica Act or any revenue law.

**Question 8**

Will the Prime Minister indicate whether she has had any briefing from, or meeting with the NHT Board on matters related to the acquisition of lands at Orange Grove since becoming aware of the acquisition?

**Answer**

Yes.

**Question 9**

Can the Prime Minister state the cost incurred by the NHT to date to manage the property/facility at Orange Grove since its acquisition, including the salary paid to any property manager or project manager?

**Answer**

The NHT has advised that the sum of Nineteen Million Nine Hundred and Forty One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Seven Dollars (\$19,941,777) has been spent since the acquisition of the property in March 2013.

This expenditure by the NHT covers costs for security, salaries, and allowances for seven persons (five employed since 2013 and two persons employed since June 2014), maintenance, utilities, valuation and consultancy fees, stationery and materials, office supplies, travelling and subsistence.