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THEME: ENTERTAINMENT AS A TOOL FOR PROGRESS***Enroute to Progress******Salutations***

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour as I rise to make my contribution to the Sectoral Debate, which will be my first presentation in this Honourable House. Firstly, let me express my gratitude to the Most Honourable Prime Minister for displaying sufficient confidence in me by assigning me this important portfolio as State Minister of Tourism and Entertainment.

I also wish to acknowledge my family: my hero of a mother Mrs. Lena Braham-Crawford, my sisters, my uncle Ransford Braham and the other members of my family who have been very supportive of my move to enter representational politics and serve my country in this capacity. Their support is as certain as night follows day and for that I am grateful.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my appreciation to my lead Minister, Dr. Wykeham McNeill, who has taken the time to tutor me and to facilitate my, at times, exuberance, with a calm, reasoned fostering that has left me comfortable to think and act freely. I am also grateful to our Permanent Secretary Mrs. Jennifer Griffith, and Director General Ms. Carrole Guntley, for their support over the last few months.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Chairman of the newly appointed Entertainment Advisory Board, Kingsley Cooper, CEO of Pulse Investments and the ever willing board members many of whom are present today.

I also want to thank the many partners within the entertainment industry for their remarkable support over the last few months as we conducted broad-scale consultation on the way forward.

Mr. Speaker, following the General Election on the 29th of December I received a gift that has facilitated rubbing shoulders with princes, interacting with queens and more importantly, placed me in a position to influence the direction of a nation. At this time Mr. Speaker it is fittingly appropriate that I express special thanks to my constituents in East Rural St. Andrew, including my Councillors and management team. Mr. Speaker I have been given this opportunity through the will of God and the help of man and I will serve both to the best of my ability.

I would also like to acknowledge two former Parliamentarians and Government Ministers who currently reside in my constituency, Burchell Whiteman and Dean Peart, for their support thus far. In addition Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize two of my predecessors who represented the constituency in the past and laid the political foundation for the success I've inherited; Mr. Emerson "Ginnard" Barrett and Councillor for the Harbour View Division former MP, Mr. Oliver Clue, for their guidance and support.

Finally for my salutations Mr. Speaker, I recognize members of my campaign team present, as well as the Tuesday night support team that has contributed freely of their time and knowledge to the improvement of the lives of the people of East Rural St. Andrew.

The Concept of Progress

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make my presentation within the context of progress. Mr. Speaker, progress has been defined as “growth or development; continuous improvement; advancement in general”.

In my mind Mr. Speaker, progress is as natural as the sun lit morning and the moon lit night. Indeed Mr. Speaker there is ample evidence of the notion of continual progress with no discernible limit from an inferior to a superior condition.

The evidence of the progress to which I speak can be seen in technology, science, and the arts, to name a few. However, Mr. Speaker while this progress is natural and by extension Godly it is by no means automatic as it requires consistent effort and the application of creativity and technology. This is simply because there exists “unnatural” hindrances to progress.

As it relates to progress in the general human living standard, education, health, and access to infrastructure serve as facilitators of progress and by extension the lack thereof acts as a hindrance to progress.

Unfortunately Mr. Speaker, with limited resources coupled with an urban bias, rural constituencies are faced with countless limitations to progress, a reality Mr. Speaker, to which East Rural St. Andrew is no exception.

Mr. Speaker, data shows that of the five divisions, four are ranked in the lowest income quintile by STATIN. Mr. Speaker high levels of unemployment and crime are critical features of the constituency, strategies must therefore be developed to facilitate job creation and to improve the quality of life of constituents.

Mr. Speaker, over 50% of the constituency does not have a public water source piped into their household. Mr. Speaker, 45% of the constituency has no access to unshared toilet facilities. Even to this day 30% of our households use a pit as toilet facilities.

Mr. Speaker, East Rural St. Andrew is ranked by STATIN as the 2nd most impoverished constituency and also 2nd from last in literacy and numeracy.

3-2-1

Mr. Speaker the constituency is faced with many challenges all of which I must try to address. However, Mr. Speaker faced with lack of resources and understanding my own inability to achieve all that is necessary to facilitate progress, I have taken the decision to focus on education as an enabler of the progress to which I speak. Mr. Speaker, the notion "Every child CAN learn, every child MUST" innately refers to a partnership between God and man for which we must play our part. It is by the will of God that every child can learn. It is then by the efforts of man that they must.

Mr. Speaker, efforts within the constituency entitled the 3-2-1 program will seek to achieve the measurable results of having three (3) CXC subjects per household in five (5) years, two (2) CAPE subjects per household ten (10) years thereafter and finally one (1) degree per household five (5) years thereafter. So in twenty years Mr. Speaker each household will have at least one person to serve as the catalyst of change, the engine of improvement and the source of inspiration for his/her family. The name 3-2-1 therefore Mr. Speaker emerged out of the

measurable outcome of CXC, CAPE and degrees desired per household respectively.

To achieve the stated objectives Mr. Speaker, the program will be very comprehensive in its focus, simultaneously concentrating on literacy, GSAT performance, CXC achievements, adult education and skills attainment and certification.

Mr. Speaker, to address the issue of literacy we will embark on the HOPE Readers Club for third graders in preparation for the grade four test. Mr. Speaker, we will also embark on a Volunteer program where persons who are capable of reading take non-readers into their homes for extra assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I have developed a close working relationship with the principals of the 21 schools in the constituency through the Principals Forum that meets once per month. Mr. Speaker, we intend to extend this to our basic schools for the upcoming school year.

Mr. Speaker the 3-2-1 program also includes GSAT summer and study camps as well as GSAT Saturday classes for all five graders going into the sixth grade. It is our desire Mr. Speaker to have a homework environment facilitated at each of our 22 schools.

Mr. Speaker, for CXC we will focus on five (5) subjects namely Mathematics, English, Principles of Business, Office Procedures and Social Studies.

As noted earlier, it is our intention to have three CXC subjects per household in 5 years by hosting CXC Mathematics Camp, CXC Night Schools where out of school adults will be able to sit 1 free CXC subject that is rotated each year. Mr. Speaker, the night school also offers opportunities for HEART training and certification programs. We are also proposing to host monthly Study Marathons for Mathematics and Principles of Business for all Fifth formers.

We have embarked on this knowledge revolution Mr. Speaker with a 3 week residency camp at the University of the West Indies. Mr. Speaker with the help of the University of the West Indies we were able to secure dorm spaces for 412 students, 270 of whom are eleven year olds about to sit the GSAT and the others 16 year olds about to sit their CXCs.

Mr. Speaker at the camp we have hired the best GSAT teacher from one of the best performing primary schools as well as CXC mathematics teachers who were markers for CXC and thus know the usual mistakes and pitfalls that make the difference between success and failure.

Mr. Speaker the total budget for the camp is slated at \$5,900,000 a feat that could not have been achieved without the herculean assistance of one Ms. Sharon Burke who was instrumental in raising cash sponsorship of over JA\$2,000,000 from corporate Jamaica.

At this time Mr. Speaker I must express my gratitude to all the sponsors of this initiative.

Entertainment as a Tool for Progress

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to my portfolio responsibility, that of Entertainment. Minister McNeill in his contribution to the Sectoral Debate earlier this month underscored the significance of the addition of Entertainment to the portfolio of the Ministry of Tourism and plans to develop the sector. Mr. Speaker I will now expound on these and other matters pertaining to this portfolio.

Entertainment Defined

I believe it is important at this time that we speak a bit on what we consider entertainment to be. The definition given by the Webster Dictionary is that entertainment is "something affording pleasure or amusement, especially a performance of some kind."

The entertainment sector therefore Mr. Speaker, comprises activities related to the provision of pleasure or amusement especially in the form of performances. It must be emphasized that entertainment is more than just music and includes theatre, film, fine art, dance, literary publishing, television, and radio. These fields all share a common mission of selling or otherwise profiting from creative works or services.

My own belief Mr. Speaker is that entertainment is simply the business side of culture. It's the output from culture that has economic value that must be managed in a commercial way. That's why, Mr. Speaker, the entertainment portfolio has been strategically placed in a Ministry designed to drive the economy as opposed to a social Ministry.

Mr. Speaker entertainment is affected by and affects many Ministries including but not limited to Industry, Investment and Commerce, Culture, Information, Foreign Affairs and of course

Tourism. In light of this Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Entertainment and Tourism will be spearheading a “joined up” Government approach to develop the entertainment sector.

The Natural Synergy Between Tourism and Entertainment

Mr. Speaker, there is a natural synergy between Tourism and Entertainment first of all by their nature and second in how they operate. Mr. Speaker if we examine them closely we will see that by function they possess certain common traits, as the key characteristics that demand specific management approaches i.e. variability, inseparability, perishability, intangibility and seasonality.

Secondly Mr. Speaker Jamaica’s tourism and entertainment sectors are also interconnected in their operations. Mr. Speaker, recent research by our PR team at Draft FCB underscored that Jamaica is known internationally for our music and that music is among the top three things people associate with our destination. Mr. Speaker, the study further highlights that our music differentiates us from the competition as many other destinations also have sun, sea and sand. From the Caribbean, to North America, to Africa, to Europe and Asia, reggae and dancehall have the masses rocking; they associate the music with our country. The popularity of our reggae icons is as such that even over thirty years after his death anywhere in the world you go today people still ask if you know Bob Marley. And even though our sporting prowess, with our many great athletes is catching up, our music is still holding firm.

The music Mr. Speaker has served for decades as the initial introduction to the island and an expected visitor experience that we have sometimes failed to deliver, a point Mr. Speaker that I will expound upon a little later. We must move to fully leverage the many synergies between these two important sectors in order to capitalize on them and further boost brand Jamaica.

Entertainment Possibilities

Mr. Speaker, in the presentation made by my lead Minister he asked the question "Can tourism be the driver of economic activity?" to which his answer was yes. I now ask a similar question can entertainment be the tool for progress and similarly Mr. Speaker the answer is yes. Not yes it can, but yes it must.

You see Mr. Speaker; entertainment is the most egalitarian industry in the sense that it has relatively limited barriers to entry. An individual, once he believes he has the talent, can enter or exit if he wishes. Further Mr. Speaker, the returns on investment within the entertainment industry can be much greater than any other industry I can think of, equalled only by Sports.

Further Mr. Speaker, the industry is more dependent on human talent than it is on capital for success. It seems to me therefore, a situation impatient of debate that a cash-strapped country like ours should invest in an industry with high returns on investment, relatively limited demand for capital, relatively limited barriers to entry and the unusual combination of being both a comparative and competitive advantage.

Mr. Speaker, the reach of entertainment is often underestimated by the public who may perceive the promoter and the artiste as the only beneficiaries. Not only does entertainment extend much further than music but even within music a single event benefits the Government, beverage companies, product distributors, media houses, security firms, advertising agencies, the taxi man, the hairdresser, the dress maker, the peanut vendor, the jerk chicken vendor, the barber, the clothes vendor, the electrician, the venue owner, the sound system, the wholesale, and the nail technician.

So you see Mr. Speaker, with the capacity to provide jobs with relatively lower levels of investment it is imperative, a major priority, of utmost importance that entertainment be in the front seat of the JEEP.

In essence Mr. Speaker we must ensure that the entertainment industry becomes more productive as we seek to foster progress. Productivity Mr. Speaker comes simply from a combination of doing the right thing and secondly doing things right. It is the Entertainment Advisory Board Mr. Speaker that has been charged with the responsibility of giving guidance to the process of making the industry more productive for not only the practitioners but the nation.

Entertainment Advisory Board

Mr. Speaker, the outputs of culture, such as the visual and performing arts need to be effectively organized in order to reap the full economic benefits of our creativity, and ensure that entertainment becomes a tool for progress. We have already started this process through consultation with partners in the industry and the re-establishment of an Entertainment Advisory Board to guide and influence the policies and programmes aimed at developing the sector.

The Board, chaired by Mr. Kingsley Cooper, has been mandated to:

- A. Strengthen public-private partnership to maximize the contribution of the entertainment industry to economic and social development
- B. Provide advice to the Ministry regarding key issues and strategies and in particular the development of a policy for the entertainment industry
- C. Facilitate the engagement of entertainment industry stakeholders in the policy-making process

Mr. Speaker, the Board will meet regularly to discuss issues and review relevant policy documents to develop recommendations for a National Entertainment Policy. The Board has also been mandated to oversee the preparation of a "road map" for the entertainment industry, and identify key implementation

strategies, activities, and timelines. The Board has been mandated to develop this "Entertainment Sector Road Map" in short order.

Points for Discussion

At this time Mr. Speaker I'd like to place on the table for public discussion some strategies that we believe can be employed to make entertainment more productive. Mr. Speaker these topics of discussion include;

1. How we market entertainment
2. How we improve its competitiveness
3. How we regulate the industry
4. How we encourage the industry

Marketing

Mr. Speaker, at the height of reggae music's popularity our research has shown that reggae had great media presence because of its association with the fight against apartheid, for black equality and human rights, freedom movements, and general revolutionary thinking. The relationship between this additional public relations exposure and the music's popularity is not a story of the chicken or the egg. Because you see Mr. Speaker it is consciousness that leads to consumption. Mr. Speaker we will seek to replace what was then PR with ingenious forms of promotion in order to strengthen our music's Pride of Place in the global mainstream media.

While it is the general feeling among some practitioners of Jamaican popular music that everyone knows and loves reggae/dancehall, the reality is that this is not the case. Over

time we have been losing prime time slots on international mainstream radio to other genres.

Mr. Speaker, all this impacts negatively on bookings and record sales. It is imperative that we increase the consciousness of the genre so as to increase the demand for the genre. To this end, it is proposed that the *Arts in the Park* initiative be introduced to feature our artistes, and will be streamed live to other markets using social media platforms such as Youtube, Ustream and Facebook, thereby increasing its scope and the exposure provided to entertainers.

Arts in the Park Mr. Speaker, will include music, dance, drama, art displays and the spoken word; giving our performers the platform to expose and hone their talent through constant practice.

Mr. Speaker it would be ideal to have such events be held islandwide and while we do plan to take some of the events to our tourism centers; it is our intention from a tourism viewpoint to position Kingston as the entertainment capital of the world. To this end Mr. Speaker the vast majority of these events will be held in Kingston.

In addition to this we also propose to fly international booking agents, journalists, club promoters and organizers of major festivals into the island every quarter to interact with our artistes and increase the presence of the arts in the print and electronic media.

Our vision Mr. Speaker is for us to execute this so well, that at the end of three to four years the best DJs in Jamaica will hardly

be here, simply because they are frequently booked overseas. This Mr. Speaker will also provide a platform for the rise and development of new entertainers in Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of this cannot be over emphasized, as the work of the more established performers paves the way for the next generation of entertainers. For instance, I believe the rise of ace DJs Bounty Killer and Beenie Man was facilitated in part by the success of Shabba Ranks, which saw him touring extensively overseas, creating a void locally which they were able to fill. If promoters were booking the top entertainer for a show and Shabba Ranks was always available, then Beenie Man and Bounty would never have been booked. If more of our top entertainers are performing on the international stage then this will provide room for the growth and development of new ones.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to a sore point currently being faced by our industry as it relates to travel within CARICOM. Mr. Speaker I have no reservations in proclaiming my support for CARICOM and the broader one Caribbean movement. It is with this support in mind Mr. Speaker that I encourage this Parliament to stand firm on the across the board adherence to the Treaty of Chaguaramas. Mr. Speaker we must stand against the arbitrary banning of our entertainers from performing on shows in some of these countries on the basis of lyrical content. While this is in no way suggesting support for lewd and crude lyrics, I wonder when was the last time we reviewed the content of some of the products we import from these same countries banning our service export. We want to help to facilitate this process of free movement within CARICOM right across the board Mr. Speaker; for dancers, singers and artists alike.

Mr. Speaker over the years our treaties have been enforced almost solely for tangible goods. We police the blocking of

patties, beer and other manufactured items while seemingly ignoring the enforcement of these treaties for services. Mr. Speaker I encourage the continued efforts for our tangible goods but remind this honourable house that Jamaica is a net exporter of services and therefore increased effort must be placed in the protection of the service sectors. I also argue Mr. Speaker that one of the few ways Jamaica will benefit even from the Economic Partnership Agreement EPA, is through services in general and entertainment in particular.

Improving Competitiveness

Mr. Speaker the competition for the attention of those seeking entertainment in general and even for those seeking Jamaican influenced entertainment in particular has increased dramatically. So much so Mr. Speaker that headline acts for reggae festivals are now at times nationals from European, African, Asian and North American countries.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to remain competitive in our own art with the realities of globalization and the ease of comparison afforded by improved technology we must seek to optimize our output. Mr. Speaker Jamaica is the only geographical space where exceptional is average. I come to this conclusion Mr. Speaker because the average Jamaican is exceptional. Evidence of this is found in entertainment where due to the lack of adequate training and exposure artistes with above average talent deliver average output. I put it to you Mr. Speaker that as talented as Usain Bolt is he would never have become a world beater without the right training, without Mr. Speaker his exposure to sprinting mechanics, speed endurance, start reaction and drive phase execution. There is no doubt Mr. Speaker that he would still be fast but without the right training and exposure I posit that he would not be the fastest.

The same applies to the entertainment industry Mr. Speaker. Within music, a young talented artist must be exposed to the rudiments of tone, key, and sound etc. He or she must be effectively exposed to the use of a stage, or a microphone or even how to breathe properly, so that their output can be optimized to attain competitive superiority.

Mr. Speaker, our Ministry plans to implement an educational strategy to address this issue. I am convinced that we have to leverage technology to effectively deliver the type of education and training needed to persons within the sector. One approach being examined is broadcasting educational modules on free to air, web-based or cable television to allow persons the opportunity to watch, learn and then sit practical and even written exams at designated centres for certification.

Mr. Speaker, we have found that many of the practitioners in the industry would be ideal candidates for programmes offered by the HEART Trust NTA. In light of this Mr. Speaker, we believe the template created by HEART can be improved on by recording and televising course modules. This approach will make training more accessible and will ensure that more persons from various geographic locales benefit. So persons in Mandeville, St. Catherine, Negril, St. Elizabeth or in the hills of my constituency could all get the opportunity to participate. Mr. Speaker, we have already contacted a sponsor who has expressed an interest in supporting this initiative and we will be forging forward to introduce this groundbreaking programme.

Mr., Speaker we will also be collaborating with overseas training agencies and professional bodies to expose our artists to training of an international standard, such as the Screen Actors Guild and the GRAMMY Foundation to name a few.

Regulation

Mr. Speaker the ultimate return from any people-centric industry such as entertainment is based on organization and on achieving synergies through competitive co-operation.

Mr. Speaker for the Government to assist in this process, we must regulate the industry. Regulation will help us to identify the practitioners in the field. The reality is that in order to effectively provide benefits or incentives to encourage entertainers, we need to know who they are, and who qualifies. Hence we are moving to build on the regulatory framework to fast track professionalism and development within the sector. Regulation and by extension the establishment of an Artistes Registry will also help with the free movement of performing artists across the world.

Industry Encouragement

In addition to the Entertainment Encouragement Act that the Board will be working on for the medium term, the question of entertainment venues must also be discussed. Mr. Speaker for a country known for its entertainment there is a scarcity of entertainment venues. To this extent Mr. Speaker the Ministry will be examining the strategies required and the approach that needs to be taken to ensure this issue is properly addressed.

Further Mr. Speaker, the encouragement of the entertainment industry will demand sponsorship association and private contribution from corporate entities. To encourage this Mr. Speaker, efforts must be made to reduce the risk perceived by some corporate entities in associating their brand with the national entertainment industry.

A possible remedy Mr. Speaker comes from the rating of events. Mr. Speaker, in the same way a movie can be PG rated or X-rated so can entertainment events. Mr. Speaker the rating of entertainment events with adequate repercussions for violations would reduce the risk perceived by many corporate entities to associate their brand with live entertainment events. Ratings also help to shape the expectation of the audience and by extension the output of the artiste.

Strengthening Link between Entertainment and Tourism

Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that satisfaction is as a result of the actual meeting expectation. Mr. Speaker, due to the great popularity of Jamaican music, visitors arrive here expecting to experience our entertainment in all its glory. Unfortunately these expectations are not always realized. Mr. Speaker, my lead Minister spoke eloquently about extending and expanding the linkages between tourism and other industries. Tourism, Mr. Speaker can play a major role in exposing our visual and performing arts through engaging live bands and endorsing local events. What we would like to see Mr. Speaker is our hoteliers providing more opportunities for a greater number of our visitors to be exposed to our entertainment offerings.

Also Mr. Speaker, along with my Board we'll be taking steps to position Jamaica as the mecca of summer entertainment in the world by encouraging and promoting a multiplicity of festivals, events and other activities between the months June-September.

We must ensure that visitors to our island who want to experience true Jamaican entertainment are satisfied. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that if they expect it and don't get it, then they'll be disappointed. Hence to both sustain and grow our tourism industry and the entertainment sector we intend to

provide more opportunities through public-private sector partnership for entertainers to receive greater exposure.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker our Ministry remains committed to spearheading the ongoing development of the entertainment industry and we are treating this as a national priority.

Mr. Speaker, education and entertainment have a crucial role to play in propelling Jamaica on the path of progress. Likewise Mr. Speaker, enhancing the training and education of our entertainers will significantly boost the output and competitiveness of our entertainment industry. Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that this, along with better marketing, proper regulation and the strengthening of the link between entertainment and tourism will lead to the revitalization of the entertainment sector.

Mr. Speaker, this will require the unshakable partnership between the private and public sectors as we seek to foster the industry's growth and ensure greater benefits for members of the entertainment fraternity and the society at large.

As we embark on this journey we encourage all Jamaicans to work together to ensure the sector is placed on a solid foundation and becomes an effective tool for progress.

Thank You.