

## **Visionary Leadership... That We Cherish**

We must applaud the thousands of healthcare and public sector workers for their dedication to service and selfless professionalism in these trying times.

I also laud the Most Honourable Prime Minister for his steady hand in leading Jamaica through this pandemic. I believe all Jamaicans would agree that The Most Honourable Prime Minister Andrew Holness has been steering Jamaica in the right direction through this pandemic. Under his leadership and the commitment and selfless efforts of Jamaicans across the Country, Including our own staff at the KSAMC and local government functionaries islandwide, we will flatten the curve of the CoViD19 pandemic and Jamaica land we love; will recover on the path to resilience, progress and prosperity.

The Government has been ahead of the debt servicing payments as a result of creativity and fiscal responsibility led by the Minister of Finance, Dr. Nigel Clarke.

It was this foresight and vision, Councillors that enabled the Jamaican Government to immediately release \$2 Billion Dollars of funds in response to the pandemic. Even before our first COVID-19 case, the Ministry of Health and Wellness had developed a comprehensive plan, looking at various infection outbreak scenarios and mitigating actions. This was presented to and approved by the National Disaster Risk Management Council. The \$2Billion Dollars is being used to:

- Procure 400,000 N95 masks and other personal protective equipment for our health workers.  
This will improve the capacity of our health workers to respond with confidence during this pandemic.
- Develop new quarantine sites to house an additional 150 persons
- Retrofit various hospitals and health facilities to create surge capacity to be able to accommodate patients during the peak of the epidemic
- Purchase equipment like ventilators for the High Dependency Units in various hospitals.
- Procure drugs specifically for the treatment of COVID-19

This was mobilized before we had our first confirmed CoViD19 case in Jamaica. This is not just Leadership. Jamaica has suffered for many generations as a result of settling for just leadership. This is visionary leadership. The Type of leadership that ensures that the people do not perish. The type of leadership that the young and the old, the orange and the green, the locals and the diaspora cherish. This is the Leadership that our anthem speaks of.

## **Fiscal Leadership**

Visionary leadership does not stop there. In the Appropriations Bill the Minister of Finance reduced GCT by 1.5 percentage points. It was the first time in Jamaica's history, a government has reduced GCT without adding new taxes. This is not as a result of luck, this is not as a result of chance.

This was deliberate and this is the product of visionary leadership. For that I must laud the Minister of Finance and the Public Service and his team for masterfully crafting what is undoubtedly a responsible budget.

The fiscal response to the CoViD19 virus is expansive and includes a \$10 Billion stimulus package in anticipation of the economic fallout that will take place as a result. This contingency is the largest in the history of Jamaica and the fact that we were able to facilitate this at the same time as putting forth a \$14 Billion Tax Cut; speaks to visionary leadership over the finances of the people of Jamaica.

The Minister of Finance has outlined several measures being implemented to accommodate cash transfers for the Jamaican people. This was announced in the closing of his Budget Presentation. This program, dubbed the CoviD Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE) program will see the government offering support to those who are most affected by the economic impact of the pandemic.

Councillors, visionary leadership can cause the crew to be steady on the ship in the midst of the storm; and while many Jamaicans are anxious about the magnitude of the impact that this pandemic will cause on a local and international level; you get the impression that they have confidence in the ability of their government to see them through.

The CARE program is one layer of that visionary leadership. Cash Transfers will be made to the thousands of waiters, waitresses, bartenders, gardeners, room attendants, drivers, caregivers, security guards, office attendants and clerks among other categories of workers who are the backbone of our hotel, attraction, tour and restaurant industry.

Councillors, as Mayor of Kingston, I was most pleased to hear that included in this, will be barbers, hairdressers, craft and market vendors who have been properly registered and compliant. Our priority is ensuring that the people who are the backbone of the Jamaican economy get some support during this time.

## **Strategic Leadership**

It was in 2019, Councillors, that the Minister of Health Dr Christopher Tufton launched the 30-year strategic plan for the Ministry of Health in response to the growing demands on the Health Sector and the Inadequacies therein. Councillors, the 5 year capital investment plan in the health sector, long

before Covid has played an important part in our resilience. We have been able to respond sufficiently as a result of radical changes and plans put forward by the Ministry of Health in the last year. This includes the procurement of needed equipment and upgrades to several facilities across the island. The Head of the World Health Organization has thanked many countries for their support but they singled out our Minister of Health and lauded the response of this ***little but tallawah*** island in the sun, Councillors, this is a Government that we can easily say has been inspiring confidence both locally and internationally.

The 5-year plan presented last year by Minister Tufton has undoubtedly been accelerated in response to this crisis and we have seen the procurement of 30 new ventilators. Three (3) of these are already in the island, seven (7) to arrive in another three (3) weeks and twenty (20) to arrive in the month of May.

Councillors, Jamaica has been doing good but we must never be afraid to give up the good for the great. As such there will always be higher heights to attain and more nights to toil upwards while others sleep. It is this determination that separates leadership from visionary leadership.

### **Local Leadership**

As a nation, our national leadership is strongly supported by equally visionary local leadership. I must commend the Minister of Local Government and the Staff of the Ministry and its agencies for the role they are playing in this trying time. The use of the local government apparatus during this period is commendable and the government must be given commendation for this.

Councillors, I take this opportunity to laud the harmony and cohesiveness between Central Government and Local Government.

Historically, we have never had consistent increases in the Capital Expenditure budget. We have seen one or two years of increase followed by a decline and then another year of increase followed by declines.

Between 2011 and 2016 Capital Expenditure fell from \$60 Billion Dollars to \$30 Billion Dollars. This was a 50% decline in the CapEx Budget.

Since February 2016, however CapEx budget has consistently increased year after year after year because the Government has seen it fit to improve and invest in the infrastructure of Jamaica.

Councillor, since 2016 the CapEx Budget has risen from \$30 Billion to \$43 Billion, then from \$43 Billion to \$49 Billion, then from \$49 Billion to \$61 Billion, then from \$61 Billion to \$72 Billion and from \$72 Billion to \$74 Billion in this fiscal year. This is important Councillors because these increases play a significant role in the building of our municipal infrastructure and our public health resilience.

It's difficult to mention these increases in the Capital budget without speaking to the Government's success in addressing the debt to GDP ratio. This has fallen significantly. It is the lowest level in 20 years and the first time below 100 percent over that period. Minister of Finance Dr. Nigel Clarke said it's the world's only example, in recent times, of a small country that has reduced its public debt by the equivalent of half its GDP in a short time frame, without handouts, debt relief or bilateral debt support. This demonstrates our capacity to achieve our greatest dreams and aspirations for our country. The goal is to go below 60 percent by 2025/2026. Councillors, what I am saying is that our debt to GDP ratio has fallen significantly, which has allowed the government to increase capital spending to 74 billion. This spin off has inured to the benefit of the city of Kingston and municipalities across Jamaica. So, although these projects do not directly emanate and are not financed by the municipalities, it is a poignant example of how the municipalities benefit.

We are doing more roads, building more bridges, transforming Port Royal, providing water and housing to more communities than ever before, but significantly it is making available the funding for resilient health infrastructure.

Let us get back for the 5 Year Plan – The MOHW total planned CapEx is between 27.2 – 31.2 billion Jamaican dollars over the period 2019/2024. This strategic expenditure will among other things upgrade, expand, improve and modernize the public health infrastructure. This is to make the public health infrastructure responsive to the changing public health needs of the country.

The Capital initiatives over the 5 year period includes

Infrastructural improvements and equipment upgrade at the KPH

The construction of a 20 bed wing at Bustamante Hospital for Children

**CONSTRUCTION OF THE WESTERN CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL IN MONTEGO BAY, SPANNING 220 BEDS AND 7 FLOORS.** pediatric and adolescent hospital. The hospital will provide clinical specializations in a) pediatric medicine, b) pediatric surgery, c) adolescent medicine, and d) adolescent surgery.

It has made it possible to make the investment in building infirmaries.

On page 18 of the budget speech the Most Honourable Prime Minister Andrew Holness speaks to socio cultural infrastructure , the built and the natural environment. The municipalities share these ideals (Projects across Kingston...Improvements to poor Relief homes, the Minister of Local Government announced the construction of the Transitional facility along King Street...

The Most Honorable Prime Minister spoke to Urban regeneration and renewal. The redevelopment of the City of Kingston and improving the quality of housing for our citizens. We are pleased to know that this is being targeted through the NHT's community renewal program. Urban regeneration and renewal is critical to the public health security of the municipality of Kingston and St Andrew. Let us Create A resilient, Liveable, sustainable, progressive and prosperous municipality. All this speaks to a robust public health infrastructure. This is made possible through lowering Debt to GDP ratio and thereby making funds available for meaningful capital projects.