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INVESTMENT AND COMMERCE
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SECTORAL PRESENTATION
2008-2009

**"FACILITATING ENTERPRISE FOR EMPLOYMENT
AND GROWTH"**

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1.0 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Prime Minister, Ministers, fellow Parliamentarians, it is with a great sense of history that I stand here in this Honourable House to deliver my very first Sectoral Debate presentation as the Member of Parliament for North Western Clarendon.

It is only appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that I should publicly express gratitude to the constituents for having elected me as their Member of Parliament. I wish to express gratitude to my management team, councillors, caretaker, other executive members, constituency secretary, area leaders and PD workers, residents and voters of North West Clarendon.

I must express special gratitude to my wife and family who sacrificed a lot by permitting me to enter representational politics. Mr. Speaker, members of my family are in the gallery today. I hope that their sacrifice will not be in vain and that it will lead to the advancement of the individuals in my constituency.

I would also like to recognise members of the Kilsyth Primary School, from the area where my family roots originate and all the people from North West Clarendon who are here in the gallery, as well as my friends who have supported me over the years.

Minister Karl Samuda has been like a father to me and I would like to express special thanks to him for his guidance and support.

Mr. Speaker, I was never a person who thought of myself as a politician. I always thought of myself as a businessman. But some thirteen years ago, I was approached and asked to get involved. I am not here for any personal gain, Mr. Speaker. I am here to make a meaningful contribution to my country.

Since my short journey into representational politics, I must say that many of the Bills being brought to Parliament and Parliamentary changes give me a sense of hope. Some of these include the shift in power initiated by the PM such as:

- Charter of Rights
- Prosecutor General
- Implementation of Constituency Development Fund
- Opposition members chairing most committees of the House
- Committees of the House functioning actively.

I want to thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity to serve my country. I have great respect for you Prime Minister and I will endeavour to make you proud of my contribution.

Mr. Speaker, my greatest desire is to see Jamaica really progressing towards sustainable social and economic development, in as short a time as possible. I want to see Jamaica genuinely moving forward and I am proud to be a part of that process.

I thank the Lord for guiding me on this journey and trust that He will hear our prayers as we travel along the way to a better day – a better life for all Jamaicans.

Mr. Speaker, my contribution today in this Sectoral Debate is organized into two parts. I will first deal with aspects of the portfolio responsibilities of the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce of which I am Minister of State and then I will deal with the developments in my constituency.

2.0 SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT CREATION

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to aspects of the portfolio responsibilities of the Ministry. The primary focus of the Ministry at this time is to facilitate businesses in order to achieve growth and development.

Government, through the provision of an enabling environment plays a key role in the development of enterprises. My focus will therefore be on selected matters which serve to foster that enabling environment, among other things.

While the role of Government is to facilitate the creation of an enabling environment, as a businessman with businesses in ten countries, I would like to suggest to this honourable House that businesses also have an important role to play in creating an enabling environment.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that today the most important concern regarding that enabling environment is crime. Much of that crime is due to lack of income, which is earned through employment. In a market economy, it is the role of the private sector to create employment so that people can get legitimate income.

As a businessman, Mr. Speaker, I am here to tell this Honourable House that I contribute to the creation of that enabling environment by investing in some labour intensive projects that create employment in the vicinity of my business. If not, the devil will find work for the idle hands around my business establishment. This is a trade-off that as business people we must make and so I invite my business colleagues who are listening to me to reflect seriously on this point.

Use your creativity and see how you can facilitate the creation of some jobs in the vicinity of your business. I will even go further and say, see how you can facilitate the creation of a few jobs for youths likely to become bad men. You do not have to employ them directly. You can fund certain types of businesses either individually or as a group that create employment for the youths on the corner who could be tomorrow's bad men.

Let me hurry to say I fully recognize that when you employ a certain quality of labour that is perhaps less efficient, it could affect your competitiveness. However, in the same way that a company makes a social investment in potential bad men by employing them, the society needs to make a social investment in them by purchasing the goods and services they produce. Over time, as you pump them with training and development, they will become more efficient. Unit cost will fall and quality of products will rise. I believe that the investment that your company makes in employing these persons and the investment that the society makes in purchasing the goods and services they produce is far less than the cost of instability they would

create. Mr. Speaker, I provide this insight to my business colleagues against the background of my extensive business experience in several countries.

Mr. Speaker, the business textbooks call it social responsibility and being a good corporate citizen. We learn that in business school and believe me the professor is right!

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn next to the need for Jamaicans to invest in their country. Entrepreneurs, be they micro, small, medium or large, ultimately they will have to be creative and innovative in identifying business opportunities and organizing themselves to take advantage of those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, have you ever wondered how Jamaican business people complain about the business environment and yet others from elsewhere are able to come and find investment opportunities here? It is because of the differences in vision, creativity and innovativeness.

Here I speak from personal experience and therefore can challenge every Jamaican business person to try and see their country through the eyes of others and invest in their country. We need more local direct investment. While foreign direct investment is good, I do not believe that we will grow and develop the economy without significant local direct investment.

While the country has considerable capital in the banking system, too much of it is going into consumption. Too much money is going into cars and fancy houses and while I am not against ownership of fine things, I am simply saying that the mix is wrong. We need to invest more in productive assets that will create additional employment and so distribute income and thereby contribute to social stability. It makes no sense owning a fancy car and a sprawling mansion while your children have to migrate to other countries where they may become second class citizens. Therefore, to me, investment is at two levels. One level benefits me directly through the enhancement of my personal wealth. At a higher level, I invest in the social environment in which I live to make it a better place in the long run to do business, live and rear my family.

It is therefore fundamental, Mr. Speaker, that we facilitate the emergence of a new generation of enlightened entrepreneurs who have a broader view of life. The old ways of thinking have no place in the new and rigorous business environment underpinned by globalization.

3.0 STRENGTHENING AGENCIES

I wish to now turn my attention to business facilitation with respect to the Ministry. Mr. Speaker, one of the mechanisms through which we facilitate business is our network of implementing agencies.

3.1 Companies Office of Jamaica

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off with the Companies Office of Jamaica. The Companies Office of Jamaica is responsible for the registration and regulation of companies, business names, and industrial and provident societies. Through the **Companies (Amendment) Bill**, we are now seeking to improve transitional arrangements for companies registered under the Companies Act 1965 (repealed); and to amend the Act to allow de-registration of companies that fail to file Articles of Continuation.

I must also say that at one time the Companies Office was one of the “stars” among the executive agencies. Unfortunately however, we are currently receiving adverse reports regarding the high rejection rate for registering new companies. This high rejection rate can be attributed to the prescribed forms in the new Companies Act. We are very conscious of this problem and are moving as quickly as possible to eliminate the causes of the frustration being experienced by many businesses that have to interface with this agency.

3.2 Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO)

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that an effective patent and trademark system plays an important role in fostering the entrepreneurial spirit, innovation, and commerce, and we intend to modernize the legislative regime for patents and trademarks.

The Jamaica Intellectual Property Office (JIPO) is charged with administering the intellectual property or IP laws now in force and to be enforced in the future. This agency seeks to ensure that the IP laws and system contribute to national economic growth and development and to realizing the potential benefits of rights holders in Jamaica.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, we are amending the Copyright Act to incorporate provisions of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Copyright Treaty for the protection of our authors, composers, and creators of literature, as well as to ensure Jamaica's accession to the WIPO Copyright Treaty.

A Patent and Industrial Designs Act, will replace and repeal the Patent Act and the Design Act in order to fulfill provisions of the TRIP Agreement and the USA/Jamaica Bilateral Treaty on Intellectual Property. We are also seeking to improve the efficiency of the Trade Marks Act through the Trade Marks (Amendment) Bill and Trade Marks Amendment Rules.

3.3 Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC)

I now turn to the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC). Further amendments are to be made to the Consumer Protection Act. This will (a) provide greater protection to the consumer by widening the scope of the Act; and (b) allow the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) greater powers of litigation.

We are considering providing the CAC with the power to:

1. Independently institute legal proceedings against a provider in its own name for any breach of the Act.
2. Institute court action upon the request of a disadvantaged complainant. Currently, the CAC may only institute legal proceedings on behalf of complainants who are minors, dead, or infirm
3. We are planning to empower the CAC to investigate on its own initiative, a breach by a provider of goods or services, of any provision of the Act. Currently, the CAC is empowered to investigate breaches only after a complaint has been made and the complainant has been disadvantaged or adversely affected
4. For purposes of resolving disputes, the establishment of a Hearings Commission, which would be a quasi-judicial body independent of the CAC is being proposed. Alternatively, the possibility of setting up a Mediation Commission, which would be a mediation/arbitration body, is being looked at. Currently, the CAC resolves disputes primarily out of moral suasion. Outside of agreements reached between the parties or the institution of court action, it has no power with which to compel providers to comply.
5. It is also being considered, Mr. Speaker, that the Act be amended to require that conditions set out in advertisements of goods or services be conspicuous, legible and in simple easy-to-understand language so that the consumer is aware of the material terms and conditions which apply to the proposed contract.
6. Finally, we are recommending the inclusion of a general provision giving the power of the court to order, as it may deem fit, a convicted provider to compensate a consumer for damage, loss or cost incurred by the consumer as a result of a provider's breach. Currently, section 35 of the Act makes provisions for this, but is confined to offences involving misleading and deceptive conduct, false representations and unfair practices.

Mr. Speaker, we are focusing on the creation of a legal framework which offers the best possible protection for consumers, while facilitating free trade and global competitiveness.

3.4 Fair Trading Commission (FTC)

Another agency, we wish to highlight is the Fair Trading Commission, which operates under the Fair Competition Act. Mr. Speaker, while the Act contains many defects, in terms of its various provisions; and how they coalesce, the Commission's greatest challenge relates to its very structure, as set up under the Act. This is now hampering the proper functioning of the organisation.

(a) Structure

The structural defects came to light with the 2001 Court of Appeal ruling in the case of *The Jamaica Stock Exchange (JSE) v The Fair Trading Commission (FTC)*. The Court ruled that, *inter alia*:

- the Act does not recognize a staff;
- it speaks only of the Commission, which is identified in paragraph (1) of the Schedule to the Act, as the Commissioners;
- The Act does not contain any powers of delegation which would enable it to delegate investigative functions to the staff;
- the structure of the Commission therefore contributes to a breach of the Principles of Natural Justice.

The effect of the ruling is that the Commission has not been able to hear and adjudicate upon any allegation of anti-competitive practice. Investigations are carried out, but where breaches are identified, enforcement has had to be by way of moral suasion. Voluntary compliance is encouraged through sector meetings and other public education efforts, and several matters have been settled by agreement. In such instances the terms are set out in Consent Agreements and the staff monitors the compliance by the parties involved.

(b) Remedial Initiatives

The Commission has made a number of proposals, including the view that the current structure can and should be retained, provided that the Act is amended to:

- establish appropriate “firewalls”, to insulate the Commissioners vis-à-vis their adjudicative functions from the staff vis-à-vis its investigative functions
- provide for powers of delegation of said investigative functions to the Staff.

The Ministry has opted for establishing a separate tribunal to hear and adjudicate upon allegations of anti-competitive practices and this approach is being actively pursued.

In the meantime, the Commission is continuing to have discussions with experts, as it seeks to thrash out and clarify not only the issue of the optimal structure for the Commission but also the several issues associated with the substantive provisions of the Act. We will be working to amend the Act so that this entity can discharge its functions effectively.

3.5 Anti-Dumping & Subsidies Commission

Mr. Speaker, the Anti-Dumping and Subsidies Commission (ADSC) is charged with assisting stakeholders to appropriate international trade remedy disciplines to their specific needs. The Commission’s strategy is to develop expertise in trade remedies and to make this expertise available to all potential stakeholders.

Jamaica’s legislation must strictly comply with the terms of the World Trade Organisation Agreements governing trade remedies. As the Commission has gained experience using the Agreements and with the domestic legislation governing trade remedies, it has become clear that revision of the legislation is needed to optimise the usability of the Act and the enforcement mechanisms for trade remedies. This is also a natural and ongoing consequence of the negotiations at the WTO, dispute settlement resolution, and even domestic court decisions.

Revision of the Customs Duties (Dumping and Subsidies) Act, 1999 has been underway for some time. New legal counsel joined the Commission on June 9, 2008

and, together with a consultant, is expected to complete the Commission's writing of the current legislation review by the end of the third quarter of FY 2008-2009. The process thereafter includes further review, comments and possible revision by others, such as the Attorney General's Chambers and the Chief Parliamentary Counsel.

3.6 Registrar of Cooperatives & Friendly Societies

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Cooperative and Friendly Societies regulates and supervises credit unions, agricultural societies and 14 other types of producer and service societies, plus benevolent, specially authorized and friendly societies.

Activities of the Department during the 2007/2008 period included consultations with stakeholders to address areas of concern regarding the proposed revision of the Cooperative Societies Act and Regulations. This also includes concerns and challenges regarding the proposed regulations of the credit unions by the Bank of Jamaica.

Against this background, the Cooperative Societies Act is to be amended to (a) provide for the supervision of credit unions by the Bank of Jamaica (BOJ); (b) development of a youth credit union; and (c) registration of deposit taking businesses, amalgamation, conversion and acquisition, among other things.

These amendments will serve to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Cooperatives so that it can discharge its functions effectively.

3.7 National Certification Body of Jamaica (NCBJ)

Mr. Speaker, we are coming up with a new certification body – the National Certification Body of Jamaica (NCBJ).

This new body, Mr. Speaker, will offer affordable certification services to individuals and organizations and offer the following advantages:

- Much more accessible certification
- More competitive rates
- Competent auditors and technical experts, who meet the requirements of international standards, and
- Very importantly, you will be dealing with a certification body that understands the Jamaican business environment.

Further details of this new body are included in a Ministry Paper that I have distributed.

3.8 Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have the Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC) which has been established to allow Jamaica to trade successfully in a global marketplace by not only satisfying the technical regulations of third country markets e.g. EU food directives, but also to satisfy trade agreements such as the WTO/Technical Barriers to Trade (WTO/TBT) and the WTO/ Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures Agreements.

The establishment of this internationally recognized accreditation body will help our Jamaican products gain the confidence of international consumers and their regulatory agencies and prevent them from being held in port while they are retested.

Initial work for the establishment of JANAAC has been done through the National Quality Infrastructure Project - funded by the Governments of Sweden and Jamaica. The Ministry is now finalizing the setting up of this body, which has already commenced the process of gaining international recognition.

3.9 National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) Project

Mr. Speaker, as we strive to develop international competitiveness and to succeed in our export-led development strategy, our national quality infrastructure must be upgraded to bring it in line with international best practice.

Against this background, the National Quality Infrastructure Project (NQI) project came into being with co-operation from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC).

The purpose of this project, Mr. Speaker, is to assist in bringing the NQI in line with the requirements of WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), the WTO Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary (SPS) Measures Agreements and international best practices.

Within the framework of the WTO, food and agricultural products are covered not only by the WTO/Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement, but also by the Agreement on Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary measures (the WTO/SPS Agreement). Member countries are encouraged to use international standards, guidelines and recommendations wherever these exist.

These two agreements, Mr. Speaker, form the framework within which Jamaican food and agricultural produce will have to trade. In addition, such producers will have to meet the special regulatory requirements of their particular target market(s), as increasingly, countries are implementing food safety and security regulations that affect the entire food chain "From Farm to Fork".

3.10 Accreditation of Laboratories

Mr. Speaker, it should be the goal of every laboratory in Jamaica to be accredited as only evidence generated from accredited laboratories will be acceptable in international courts of justice or dispute settlement fora. International accreditation, therefore, is the means of ensuring that results from Jamaican laboratories are acceptable worldwide.

The NQI Project provides for technical assistance to be given to laboratories, thereby enabling them to meet international accreditation standards. So far, twenty-five laboratories have received over 700 man-hours of consultancy to help them prepare

for accreditation to International Standard ISO 17025 “General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories”.

3.11 Standards Compliance Programme

The Bureau of Standards also continues its Standards Compliance/Import Monitoring Programme to ensure that locally produced and imported goods meet the requirements of compulsory product standards (technical regulations) and labelling regulations. This involves inspections, examinations and investigations at the ports of entry and establishments in the domestic market.

During the period April 2007 to March 2008, for example, 5,753 establishments were examined and 132,666 individual items withdrawn from sale. These included food products, clothing and footwear which were withdrawn from the marketplace for being offered for sale after their expiration dates, or some other breach of labelling regulations.

Initially, the targeted product categories were appliances, electronics, food, clothing, footwear, and paper products but since January 2008, the programme has been expanded to include building materials, medical devices and furniture.

3.12 Jamaica-Made Mark Programme

In support of locally-made products, Mr. Speaker, we have also established through the BSJ, the Jamaica-Made Mark programme, which is designed to provide a mark that readily distinguishes authentic Jamaican products of quality. This mark is conferred on products which conform to the relevant established standards and contain at least 45% Jamaican raw material. There are three categories:

- Gold Mark – a total Jamaican input within the range of 91% up to and including 100%;
- Silver Mark – a total Jamaican input within the range of 76% up to and including 90%;

- Bronze Mark – a total Jamaican input within the range of 45% up to and including 75%.

3.13 Food Storage and Prevention of Infestation Division “One-Stop Shop”

In the area of food safety, Mr. Speaker, we have introduced the concept of a “One Stop Shop” in order to streamline and coordinate activities in respect of food safety in Jamaica. This one-stop shop is aimed at providing common office space for the three state regulators of imported food, namely the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce through the Food Storage and Prevention of Infestation Division (FSPID). These three agencies will be linked electronically with the Customs Department.

Our objective, Mr. Speaker, is to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources, especially human resources, at the ports of entry while providing importers with easier access to regulators, thereby minimizing bureaucracy and delays in the processing of imported foods. It is hoped that the One Stop Shop will become fully operational during calendar year 2008.

Mr. Speaker, as we address the issue of standards and food safety, one of the concerns brought to my attention is the Hypoglycin A level established for canned ackees, which are exported to the United States and other markets.

I gather Mr. Speaker, that a maximum Hypoglycin A level of 100 parts per million (ppm) is a requirement for export of canned ackees to the United States. However, higher Hypoglycin A levels are considered safe and are accepted in other international markets such as Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that what this means in practice is that an ackee pod has to be wide open before the Hypoglycin A level will fall to 100 part per million. At that time the ackee may start to get soft and fail a hardness test. Every Jamaican knows that once ackee is open, it is safe to use.

I believe therefore, Mr. Speaker, that we should try and make the case for acceptance of higher Hypoglycemic A levels based on objective scientific research. I would therefore like the University of the West Indies to undertake research in this area.

Raising the current ceiling on the Hypoglycin A level would mean an increase in exports of ackee and a relaxation of overly rigorous testing and associated costs to agro-processors, a situation which can render them un-competitive.

3.14 Factories Corporation of Jamaica

Mr. Speaker, I turn to the matter of factory space. The Ministry has portfolio responsibility for the Factories Corporation of Jamaica (FCJ), whose business is the leasing, managing and developing of industrial properties island-wide.

Currently FCJ controls in excess of 44.5 hectares (109.0 acres) of vacant lands and some 174,713.51 square meters (1,879,917.37 sq. ft.) of factory space situated at thirty-six (36) locations in eleven (11) parishes.

When the company commenced operations in 1987, 75% of its tenants were engaged in the garment industry.

Today the occupancy mix is far more diverse and is represented as follows:

▪ Manufacturing	54%
▪ Warehousing	18%
▪ Distribution	14%
▪ ICT	4.5%
▪ Service	1.2%
▪ Other	7.5%

For the Financial Year 2008/2009, the FCJ will continue managing its inventory of land and buildings to facilitate industrial and commercial activity across the island. The Corporation will maintain focus on business sectors with proven growth

potential, and during this period one building (Factory number 4) at the Montego Bay Free Zone will be sold to the Port Authority of Jamaica.

Four factories (number 5, 6, 7 & 8) will be leased primarily for manufacturing and information and communications technology (ICT) purposes, while three new buildings are slated for construction. Two new buildings will be constructed in the corporate area and one in Christiana, Manchester to accommodate the demand for factory and warehouse space.

The FCJ proposes to rationalise its existing assets by disposing of unproductive and unmarketable space, mainly by offering idle lands for sale/lease to industrial investors.

4.0 FOOD PRICES

Against this background, Mr. Speaker, it is only appropriate that I touch directly on the increasingly significant topic of food prices.

Mr. Speaker, world food prices have risen significantly since December 2007 bringing about a state of global crisis resulting in political and economic instability as well as social unrest in developing nations. Despite several record-breaking harvests, world cereals production between 2000 and 2007 fell well short of consumption. The shortfall has forced the depletion of world grain stocks which are now at their lowest levels in 25 years. Food prices have risen 83 percent worldwide since 2005 and some staples such as rice and wheat have risen 141 percent and 130 percent respectively in the last year alone. Jamaica is a primary importer of some of its basic food items from the world market and thus also shares the misfortune common among developing countries as local traders respond to the global stimuli.

There are several commonly acknowledged factors that have contributed to the current spike in food price internationally. These include:

- High price of oil, manifested in increased fertilizer, fuel and transportation costs
- Increased demand for meat and dairy products in the developing world, which requires more grain be fed to livestock
- Diversion of crops for biofuel production
- Adverse weather conditions, such as the recent six-year Australian drought that decimated grain production
- Commodity speculation by investors
- Lack of access to improved inputs and markets amongst smallholder farmers in the developing world - particularly in sub-Saharan Africa - which limits their ability to react to the incentives created by increased demand, and
- Domestic policy responses to higher food prices in developing countries - such as export taxes, bans, or other restrictions - which exacerbate the problem by limited quantities available for import especially among non producing countries

These factors together have created a “perfect storm” that has driven up food prices. Although adverse weather conditions and commodity speculation may nudge food prices up in the short term, the rest of these drivers appear to be longer-lasting, and their effects are likely to be felt for several years.

4.1 Impact of Food Prices

Since 2007, we have seen a dramatic increase in food prices where prices on basic food items rose rapidly in the last quarter and continued into the first half of 2008. Jamaica saw a 19% average increase on its 13 ‘primary’ basic food items during the last quarter of 2007 with counter flour (54%), rice (38%) Milk powder (60%) and Bread (17%) the primary movers. The overall average increase on these basic food

items for 2007 was 26 %. January to May 2008 saw food prices spiralling a further 13 % on average; with the price of rice most significantly affected at 52 %.

4.2 Outlook for the Second Half of 2008 regarding Food Prices

Rising food prices have led to a substantial increase in inflation rates and will probably compel central banks to tighten their monetary policies. It is forecasted that there could be a downturn in growth due to the declining export momentum as a result of weaker consumption in high end markets and the tighter monetary policy.

5.0 REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

Mr. Speaker, I will now switch my attention to the second aspect of my presentation which deals with matters relating to my constituency. As a Member of Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly to the matter of representation of the people. Our people need good and effective representation. However, we need to clarify the role of representation to our constituents so that undue demands are not made on us and that our success is not judged by the persons we help individually.

It is my vision that this government will bring government closer to the people. My greatest concern is that we are losing it out there. We need to let our people know that MPs are not there only for the purpose of “hand outs”. Good representation is about simplifying the services that are there for them and enabling them to access those services.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that arising from recent policy changes, I have seen certain improvements. When I went to my caretaker office in the past, I used to be bombarded with a host of requests for school fees. Because there has been a change in the policy of the government, I am now relieved of such requests.

Another need with which I was bombarded relates to health care. As a result in we always held annual health fairs in January. Over the last two months since

implementation of the new health system, indications are the need for the health fairs is no longer there.

Also, increase in the PATH beneficiaries relieves me of dealing with some of that social burden which consumed my time.

What this means for me Mr. Speaker, is that I now have more time to focus on development issues.

6.0 CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

In line with these principles, Mr. Speaker, I come now to one of the most critical areas of my presentation, constituency development projects.

6.1 Education

Mr. Speaker, it is fair to say that the best investment you can make in your child is to give him or her a good education and in the area of education, the constituency of North West Clarendon has indeed been blessed over the years. We are especially proud of the legacy of the educator and former Member of Parliament and Minister of Education, Edwin Leopold Allen, who has laid a firm foundation on which I can now build. This is the message that I would like to convey to the people of North West Clarendon.

My constituency boasts six high schools Mr. Speaker, and I am honouring and helping to carry on the legacy of the great Edwin Allen by contributing \$6 million to education in the constituency. This includes:

- Vocational Training - \$500,000
- Basic Schools - \$850,000
- Primary School Development - \$750,000
- Tertiary Institution Grant - \$500,000
- Project of Hope (HEART Academy) - \$1 million

- Library Books uniforms - \$400,000
- Educ8 (Remedial Programme) - \$1 million

In addition, I am requesting from the Minister of Education, \$11 million for Edwin Allen High, to commence its night school programme in vocational training. This commendable project was approved by the Board of the School and the Ministry of Education.

Today, I want to salute all the principals and administrative staff in my constituency. I especially want to single out the Kilsyth Primary School in Grantham, some students and teachers of which are here today. I must also congratulate the school for winning the SRC/JPS Science Fair Competition, not once, Mr. Speaker, but twice.

When I first started out in business in 1989, Mr. Speaker, the area was very volatile. A computer lab was contributed by the Jamaica Computer Society, JAMALCO and the community. This led to a dramatic improvement in the performance of students and the area is now “feeding” the Edwin Allen High School with some of the best students. This in turn has caused parents to take a greater interest in the education of their children and themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I started a remedial programme last September before I came to this House and we have graduated 31 of 38 students who started the programme. These persons are now moving on to CXC, vocational training and are also moving into gainful employment. They are now functionally literate.

Mr. Speaker, I also have to strongly commend Mr. and Mrs. Cartland Palmer who returned to Jamaica from Canada, desiring to use their personal resources to develop a HEART institute in Tweedside. Despite many challenges over the last six years of trying to build the institution, two years ago Mr. Palmer admitted the first batch of students and one month ago this institution was formally launched, accommodating about 90 students.

I want to thank Mr. and Mrs. Palmer and their contributors who helped make this a reality. It is my fond desire Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this becomes a permanent

fixture in our community. Therefore, \$1 million from the CDF will be contributed to move some of the programmes to level two.

We are also going to be contributing to the primary and basic schools in a substantial way.

In addition, we are forging a relationship with Food for the Poor - which has helped so much with our basic and primary school feeding programme - to launch a new programme with private sector partnership to convert pit latrines at basic and primary schools, throughout the constituency.

Education, Mr. Speaker, is the key to success and therefore deserving of all the support it can get.

6.2 Roads

Roads in many areas of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, especially the main roads, are in a terrible condition. The Minister of Works and Transport would be aware of some of these conditions, since he has been on a tour with me in the constituency. One of the things that have been brought to our attention is that roads built just a few years ago by some contractors are now in a state of serious disrepair. We must be able to demand that our contractors give us value for money.

Among the road projects we are looking towards, Mr. Speaker, is the building of a bypass road in Spalding to ease traffic congestion in the town. The road from Spaldings Hill to Limit in Manchester is being assessed.

Mr. Speaker, with the efforts of the Ministry of Works and the Minister I look forward to the roads being repaired in Nut Cut in Thompson Town, Pigeon Coop in Victoria, and Piece River in Thompson Town. I also look forward to repairs to Miller City Road in Spalding, Hamm Town Road in Sanguinetti, Lime Kiln Road in Frankfield, the road from Andrew Hill to Shettle in Grantham, and the Piece River Road in Ritchies Town.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to be rehabilitating some roads too. Mattanee to Frankfield was a road that was done two years ago but is now in a state of dilapidation. Nine Turns to Ritchies is in a deplorable condition. We are also going to be dealing with that stretch from Coffee Piece to Dykes Hill, along which there is a wall that if not repaired very soon will make the road impassable.

In the estimates of expenditures we are thankful to the Minister for the allocation that will see the road from Grantham to Walderstan being resurfaced and rehabilitated. We also want to mention the commitment that has been made to resurface the town centres of Frankfield and Spalding.

We were fortunate to sign the first bridge contract with the Minister of Works in January and that bridge will be opened in two weeks in Scott's Pass.

I also want to make specific mention of the fact that the Ministry of Work has signed an agreement with the Canadian International Development Agency or CIDA for work on the Angel Bridge in Frankfield, which is critical to the economic life of the communities served by that bridge.

6.3 Water

Mr. Speaker, we have bought into the slogan "**Water is Life**" and, I will be pulling out all the stops to ensure that my constituents have a predictable and safe water supply. This is a constituency in which 57 communities that had at least a standpipe in the 1980's, did not have any piped water at all when I became MP in September last year.

Since I became MP, two new water supply projects have been signed by the Minister of Water. One is the James Hill water System that will serve both North West Clarendon and Northern Clarendon. Also, recently the Piece River Water System Upgrade Project was signed for \$16.5 million. I extend my thanks to the Minister of Water, Rural Water and the other agencies for their efforts in this initiative which will provide deliver potable water to many districts that are greatly in need of this vital commodity.

The rehabilitation/repair process has started. Bottom Lodge Green, Kilsyth Grantham, Peckham Crossing to Guinea Corn, Middle Quarters in Smithville, Victoria, Gloucester, Thompson Town, Ritchies, Coffee Piece, Copperwood, Sanguinetti, Bailleston, Santa's Hill, Malcolm Town, and others will benefit.

Mr. Speaker, we will also be working closely with the communities to restore water in Lampard District and Fraser Spring. We are in discussions with Rural Water and have submitted improvement projects for Smithville Spring to Wakefield, Woodside to Belmont, Blue Rock to cover areas of Bottom Sunberry, Corn Hill, Bryans Piece, Nine Turns, Etthrick Hall, Andrews Hill, and Jericho to Union.

We are also in dialogue with the Parish Council regarding the Jericho to Union, Park Hall District (from Woodside Spring) and the maintenance of the Cumberland tank to provide water for the district of Cumberland, as well as harnessing a new water catchment at Mitchell Spring.

The contribution from my CDF is \$5 million and this will go to the Parish Council and Rural Water, broken down as follows:

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| ▪ Corn Hill (Blue Rock) Project | - \$1 million |
| ▪ Ritchies, Coffee Piece to Leceisterfield | - \$1 million |
| ▪ Lampard | -\$500,000 |
| ▪ Jericho to Union | -\$500,000 |
| ▪ Park Hall/James Hill | -\$500,000 |
| ▪ Cumberland Tank | -\$500,000 |
| ▪ Mitchell Spring (Cumberland) | -\$1 million |

6.4 Agriculture

Mr. Speaker, I now turn attention to the main economic driver in my constituency, agriculture. The capacity building potential of this sector is undeniable and more focus will be placed in this regard.

I have been working with RADA over the last eight months in my constituency to build this capacity in production. We are going to be embarking on several projects, including the Moravia Ginger Project that will cost approximately \$3 million. The CDF contribution will be in the region of \$1 million while RADA and the farmers will also be making an input. This project will be helping the farmers to access treated plant material on an annual basis, at a cheaper price. The EU has also pledged to contribute \$800,000 through the outreach effort of the Private Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

Also, we are going to be embarking on new projects in the area of bee keeping and honey production. Here the CDF contribution will be \$800,000.

In addition, with support from RADA, we are providing our farmers with assistance in goat, pig and poultry rearing. This is to facilitate employment generation.

A callaloo project will also be started in Alston, Spalding. Mr. Speaker, there is a factory that will take all the callaloo produced, for juice production.

Mr. Speaker, we have been meeting with the Coffee Industry Board and the cooperative in my constituency to assist the farmers in increasing coffee production. This area used to produce 30,000 boxes of coffee per crop but now produces only 8,000 boxes, with an idle coffee factory in Trout Hall. The coffee is not being picked because the farmers are not getting the benefit from added value. Therefore, we are working with the stakeholders to get an investor in the area to not only process coffee but to also produce a range of by-products from our coffee. This, therefore, will give our farmers greater incentive to plant much more and reap greater benefits from coffee.

I must also mention, Mr. Speaker, the fruit tree planting project that I will be starting in my constituency, working in collaboration with RADA. Under this project, we will be planting fruit trees such as lychees, ackees, otaheti apples and others. Farmers will prepare their plots and we will provide the seedlings to assist them in expanding our capacity for fruits and to support our agro-processing potential in the long-term.

In Tweedside we also have an ackee factory that was closed down and we are now working with a new investor to have it re-opened. This will provide farmers with a destination for sale of their ackees in the Peckham/Tweedside area.

Mr. Speaker, I am also investing in some of the starches that we will need if we are to replace some of the products we now import and yam is one such product we have identified. This initiative will also be getting some assistance from the CDF, again with the support of RADA.

6.5 Rural Electrification

Mr. Speaker, we still have people in quite densely populated districts without access to electricity. I am very happy for the Rural Electrification Programme which is working to ensure that all communities receive light and power and in support of that effort I will be contributing \$3 million to facilitate electrification of a number of communities. These include:

- Bryan's Piece to Quarry
- Bowen's Gate to Foga, and
- Brown Town Road in Cumberland

Mr. Speaker, we will also be contributing \$250,000 for street lamps in specific areas most vulnerable to crimes and other anti-social activities that are aided by the cover of darkness.

6.6 Community Development

Mr. Speaker, I am going to be rehabilitating some community centres to convert them to economic centres for youths to empower themselves. I will be contributing to the establishment of four entrepreneurial production centres with the assistance of the Jamaica Business Development Centre (JBDC), another of our implementing agencies. We are targeting Thompson Town, Frankfield and Spalding and are seeking assistance for youngsters who cannot afford the tools and equipment to be able to access these centres.

6.7 Health Centres

I now turn my attention to another critical issue, health care. I have cited the need to upgrade the Frankfield Health Centre to a Type 3 clinic and have asked the Minister of Health to make available an ambulance for this clinic in the near future. Mr. Speaker, we look forward to receiving this urgently needed vehicle. I will be touring the constituency with the Minister to examine all the other clinics to assess their needs.

6.8 Community Centres/Facilities Targeted for Rehabilitation

Mr. Speaker, community-based infrastructure that will be targeted this year for repair and rehabilitation, includes:

- Frankfield Community Centre at the old railway station;
- Tweedside playfield upgrade;
- Sunberry Primary Playfield;
- Alston High Playfield;
- Spalding Sanitary Convenience.

I have applied and received approval from Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) to build a community centre in Trout Hall at a cost of \$19 million. I have received approval for 50% of the cost and I am now looking for another contributor. This project will also benefit other Members of Parliament, one sitting right here next to me (N/Clarendon). We need an additional \$9 million and I am encouraging my colleagues to support this project, which is part of our efforts to alleviate the poverty among the youth in our communities. The project will be carried out in two phases, the first phase including a multi-purpose hard court and a centre that can be used as a community incubator and a Community Access Point.

We are going to be encouraging the spirit of volunteerism throughout the communities by supporting small community projects which will be implemented through voluntary effort. This will not only help to ensure reduced costs for

establishing and maintaining the infrastructure, but also bring a greater sense of pride and ownership.

6.9 Housing Assistance

Mr. Speaker, every time a hurricane affects North West Clarendon, the poor farmers in the hills suffer greatly. I feel that some persons are still dislocated despite the best efforts on the part of Government to ensure that persons receive assistance to repair their roofs.

When a farmer goes in the field all day and returns on a hot or rainy afternoon to an almost roofless house it is, to say the least, very discouraging. We are seeking to make amends to some of these desperate persons and will be trying to get the assistance of other agencies to help in this cause.

Mr. Speaker, the shortage of housing in my constituency is no different from that in the constituencies of many members of this honourable House. What we see is several generations clustered in one house with children sleeping in the same bedroom as their parents and grandparents. We all know, Mr. Speaker, the social problems brought about by this undesirable situation. That is why I am contributing the sum of \$2 million to the Ministry of Housing for the provision of some houses. I am also trying to identify suitable lands in my constituency to deal with the shortage of housing and even to build a scheme for middle and low-income families.

6.10 Internet/Postal Communications

I have also been working with the Ministry of Telecommunications to establish eight Community Access Points or CAP's, in my constituency. I really want the people of North West Clarendon – young and old – to have instant, up to the minute access to information. This will enable further empowerment by equipping constituents with the tools to communicate, research, and importantly, explore entrepreneurial alternatives, which will provide a boost to business activities. I emphasize this in the context of proposed improvements to the postal network within the constituency, which will be upgraded within the next two years to provide opportunities for e-

commerce throughout the whole community. Plans are also in place for the building of a new post office and library in the Frankfield Town Centre.

6.11 Parish Council Facilities

Mr. Speaker, I am going to be working with the Parish Council and other agencies to improve the facilities and parks in my constituency.

We are working to ensure that the park in Spalding will be modified with new fixtures, sanitary conveniences, and a shed for the vendors. These amenities will undoubtedly make the park far more useable and appealing to those who work in it and visit it.

We are also collaborating with the Parish Council and Lift Up Jamaica to complete the market in Spalding, for which there is a shortfall of \$25 million to get the market in use.

6.12 Social Support

Mr. Speaker, there are many persons that are in an economic bind and we need to provide grant support to enable them to start their own micro enterprises. A programme with CDF contribution of \$2 million will be administered with strict rules and an aim to removing these persons from the PATH programme over time.

Mr. Speaker, we will be working with the different agencies such as the JBDC, PSDP, SDC for cluster networking and training, etc. in the implementation of this programme to graduate persons from PATH to entrepreneurship.

6.13 Sports

Mr. Speaker, sports is very dear to my heart. I have been a participant throughout my school years, and continue today to offer my support whenever possible, whether it is football, netball, etc.

The Michael Stern Community Football Corner League Competition will be starting in the first week of July. And also, the Netball Competition started two weeks ago. Moreover, we are working in collaboration with the Clarendon Cricket Association to launch a cricket competition later in the year.

7.0 CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, the task of a Member of Parliament is challenging but I am committed to the objective of building a better Jamaica. The measures I have been introducing will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the lives of our people in the long run. Hence, we must continue to lay a firm foundation for social and economic growth, with the people at the centre of our planning.

I thank you.

MICHAEL STERN
MINISTER OF STATE
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY, INVESTMENT & COMMERCE
JUNE 17, 2008