



**Ministry of Industry
Investment & Commerce**

STATE ^{OF} THE NATION DEBATE

**BUILDING JAMAICA
FOR ALL
JAMAICANS**



**Senator the Hon. Aubyn Hill
Minister of Industry, Investment & Commerce**

**George William Gordon House
Friday, October 6, 2023**

Mr. President, it is with great pleasure that I rise again in this noble Senate to present another State of the Nation address. I am relentlessly grateful to the Almighty Father for His grace and faithfulness that has sustained me to be back here today.

I am very grateful to my dear wife Tamara and our children and family for the support they have given me to serve in this capacity.

The Most Honourable Prime Minister Andrew Holness gets very special thanks for giving me the double appointment of Senator and Cabinet Minister to serve the Jamaican people.

Very special thanks to **Permanent Secretary Sancia Bennett Templer** and her team of expert researchers and especially the team in my office led by Ms. Kadian Jonas. Many thanks to the Chairpersons and Heads of Agencies – some of whom are here today, that serve the country so diligently and well, and in the process lend me their support.

Mr. President, I'm particularly grateful to the **Clerk** of the Parliament, **Mrs. Valerie Curtis** and the parliamentary staff who have rendered so much assistance and guidance to me – especially when my friends across the aisle completely, some malice, would want to lead me astray.

Many thanks to my **Senate colleagues** on both sides of the aisle for being so gracious and engaging in our interactions.

So, what is the State of the Nation that has had to be managed through a devastating worldwide pandemic, disrupted supply chains, high oil prices and the accompanying elevated and punishing price inflation?

Unprecedented. Historic milestone. All-time low unemployment.

National commendable effort.

The HIGHEST CREDIT RATING STANDARD AND POOR (S&P) have ever been given to JAMAICA.

Great-job-creation performance for Jamaicans in every walk of life!

Those, Mr. President, are just **some** of the words and phrases that have been used in describing the recent announcement by **S&P of Jamaica's BEST credit rating ever, and by STATIN, of a historically low unemployment figure of 4.5%.**

Unprecedented and historically low, and highest rating are terms that mean that this BB- credit rating and low unemployment figure of 4.5% have never happened before.

These twin achievements occurred in the many decades that we have been subjected to credit rating and the keeping of employment and unemployment records in Jamaica.

The significant upgrade by the S&P rating agency cannot be over emphasized and must not be trivialized. It is a major achievement FOR ALL JAMAICANS.

Indeed, Mr. President, this significant and historic credit rating upgrade is FOR EVERY JAMAICAN IN EVERY WALK OF LIFE. It's SUCH A PLEASURE TO SAY THAT! It's for all of us!

Here's how ordinary Jamaicans benefit:

1. JAMAICA'S LOAN STOCK = J\$1.1 Trillion = US\$7,14 billion

- ❖ Payments are not smooth but lumpy.
- ❖ Say we pay back an even amount of 10% = US\$714.3M annually
- ❖ Borrow back the same amount.
- ❖ Borrowing is say, 1% less because of the S&P upgrade
- ❖ Savings on that amount at 1% = US\$7.14M per year
- ❖ Over 25 years saving of \$US178.5M

2. Investors, both locally and internationally will find, and are finding Jamaica to be easily the most attractive investment destination in the Caribbean, even in the Latin America region. New Investments create jobs, profitable companies and more tax revenues. **This Andrew Holness administration is BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS.**

In 2013, Bank of Jamaica's governor Brian Winter bemoaned the fact that Jamaica's fiscal affairs were badly out of order.

Not any more, with the Andrew Holness Administration. That is one reason S&P is able to give us this upgrade.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr. President, the significant achievement of getting our unemployment down to the historical low of 4.5%, is an achievement that *affects every Jamaican everywhere.* The lowering of unemployment – and the raising of the number of people in employment - pulls into the EARNING ECONOMY many Jamaicans from the lower levels of our national labour force. **This is good news for a vast number of Jamaicans who needed the work.**

Mr. President, in the face of this outstandingly good news of Jamaica achieving this historically lowest unemployment figure of 4.5%, the **Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate** went to St. James soon after STATIN released the numbers to indicate *that these results have, in some strange way, excluded the ordinary workers in the workforce.*

His Buddy and Leader of the Opposition carried the same kind of misleading narrative to another PNP meeting a couple weeks later.

The Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate when speaking in St. James would have us believe that ordinary Jamaicans have not benefitted from these new jobs - *no benefit to ordinary*

*Jamaicans from the significant job growth in the Tourism and BPO corridor of Jamaica, Mr. President. **Some people have conveyed his statement was a bunch of rubbish, Mr. President.***

It is the **taxi persons, hospitality workers** in the hotels and restaurant businesses in St. James, the **messengers, delivery men, gardeners** and the **day workers and nannies** who get jobs from the increased business activities in the area. Imagine, Mr. President, he went to that area of St. James to convey this foolishness, to employed people of the area.

*It is the **gas station attendants, the sales staff in shops, the very ordinary people in St. James and indeed across Jamaica,** who because of the outstanding efforts of this JLP government, and especially Tourism Minister, **Ed Bartlett**, employment has been increasing consistently month after month. It is the tens of thousands of BPO workers – many added during and since the pandemic and who operate within the ambit of my Ministry – it is to these workers he went to, apparently try and convince them that the jobs that they now have, but didn't have, is NOT good for them. It is to these ordinary, hard-working, Jamaicans, Mr. President, that **Senator Bunting**, went to suggest that the low unemployment figure is **actually bad for them.***

Mr. President, this was conveying an amazing and bare-faced misrepresentation of the truth. His pronouncements conveyed, plain and simple, DISINFORMATION and FAKE NEWS! Mr. President.

Here's what the numbers tell us, Mr. President.

In 2015, one year before the Andrew Holness administration came to power, there were 1,146,800 people who were employed in the workforce. **In that year, 2015, Mr. President, the unemployment rate was 13.3%. I remember it well because at the time I was the columnist for financial arm of Senator Brown's favorite newspaper,** and I remember referring to that high unemployment figure as we moved into the elections of 2016.

Mr. President, by 2019, the year before the pandemic hit, we had moved the number of people employed in the country up by about 110,000 to 1,272,700, and the unemployment rate had dropped significantly to 7.3%.

From the 7.3% unemployment rate that was recorded the year before, the number of people employed in the economy in 2020 fell by about 100,000. Some of us need to be reminded that 2020 was the year we lost just over 10% of our GDP and the Andrew Holness administration DID NOT BORROW ANY MONEY to deal with the health and economic crises, NOR DID WE RAISE ANY NEW TAXES to address the unexpected financial demands that accompanied the pandemic.

The Holness administration managed the health, education, employment and other related crises, and the overall economy, through that COVID-19 crisis for the benefit of all Jamaicans - especially needy Jamaicans. Prime Minister Holness led his cabinet to adopt a very disciplined, empathetic, caring and targeted approach to handle our delicate economy during a very difficult time.

So from that point at the end of 2020 when our **COVID-19-INDUCED unemployment rate** had risen to 9% (and from that desperate period in 2015 when now Senator Bunting - then **Minister Bunting** - was a member in the Cabinet of the PNP government which presided over that desperately high unemployment figure of 13.3%), Mr. President, to now at this wonderfully JLP-crafted figure of 4.5% at April 2023, since 2016 we have added the quite fabulous number of 148,800 new jobs to record that UNPRECEDENTEDLY LOW 4.5%, unemployment figure.

WE ARE BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS.

When we promised in 2015-16 to add that kind of large number of jobs in the economy, **THEY SCOFFED AND JEERED** and said it couldn't be done. **WELL, JLP PROMISE MADE, THE MOST HONOURABLE ANDREW HOLNESS HAS ENSURED THAT THE PROMISE IS KEPT!**

Between the beginning of 2016 and April 2023 the Andrew Holness administration sliced 8.8% OFF Jamaica's unemployment figure. That also is very likely a record in the region, Mr. President.

THESE LOW UNEMPLOYMENT RECORDS, Mr. President, ARE somethings to celebrate!

This Andrew Holness Administration is BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS.

Mr. President, **the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate** would want to tell us **and the Jamaican people** that the vast majority of *that additional 148,800+ Jamaicans who were added to the employment role since 2020* are mainly rich people, **TOPANARIS** – if you will, Mr. President, and that they are not the ordinary, **hard-working Jamaicans who make our economy and country work well day after day.**

Apparently, that's what he would want Jamaicans to believe. **Mr. President, THAT IS A LIE!**

Incidentally, Mr. President, it's the leader of the Opposition who said he was going to surround himself with TOPANARIS if he ever – ever becomes leader of this country.

So I want Jamaicans to know what the online dictionary and google says TOPANARIS means “**a rich snob who does not like to share.**” It continues: “**In Jamaica we often use the term to describe people who behave as if they are better than others.**” Now tell me, Mr. President, is only den kinda people a go run JAMAICA if the Leader of the Opposition and his friends take over? What will happen to ORDINARY PEOPLE from St. Elizabeth, Denham Town, St. James, St. Thomas, Central St. Andrew, Portland, Spanish Town, districts of Trelawny, Hanover and Westmoreland.....dem no count?

Indeed, Mr. President, it appears that the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate would want Jamaicans to believe that the 13.9% unemployment rate he and his losing PNP government bequeathed to us and Jamaica in 2015 is BETTER than the 4.5% RECORD LOW unemployment rate Jamaica now enjoys under the Andrew Holness administration.

Mr. President, when the reality of the solid and consistent performance of the Andrew Holness team hit them in the face it looks like the PNP leaders then turn idiot and talk pure rubbish. But Mr. President, Jamaicans are seeing and feeling the benefits that this JLP administration is creating in new jobs and social services.

Mr. President, let me remind the PNP leadership and talking heads that A JOB is one of the best benefits that the Andrew Holness Administration could ever provide to ordinary Jamaicans. And we have provided tens of thousands of those benefits called JOBS! PNP leaders can go hug up their 13.9% unemployment figure and sit in their Old Hope Road Kerensia-names Museum and ponder the good fortune the JLP, under the leadership of the Most Honourable Andrew Holness has brought Jamaica in reducing the PNP's HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURE of 13.3% to a record low 4.5%!

At best, Mr. President, the Leader of Opposition Business in the Senate, his Party Leader and his PNP party are really out of touch with reality.

The Andrew Holness administration found creative and useful ways to help needy Jamaicans in their time of need. Indeed, WE are BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS.

Mr. President, the NOW FAMOUS, I DARE SAY, ICONIC \$1.5M PAYE TAX RELIEF!

Mr. President, in 2016, just before the general election of February 25 the then leader of the opposition, now Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, launched the now **famous, dare I say iconic, \$1.5 million income tax relief commitment.** It was publicly **derided by the PNP, the government at the time,** and by numerous other prominent high-level party supporters.

So you simply cannot imagine my visible consternation, when I heard none other than the flailing **Leader of the Opposition** at the PNP's national annual Party Conference last month calling for, NO, DEMANDING, Mr. President, for nothing less than the doubling of that **now famous income tax relief creation by the Andrea Holness administration.** The same plan they had so **publicly, and virulently castigated** and **derided** before the whole country in early 2016 - **before and AFTER** the general election on February 25, 2016, the PNP leader now shamelessly wants to copy.

At the rallies and in press statements in early 2016, Mr. President, the PNP hierarchy tried to rubbish the \$1.5 million income tax relief plan, **but the Jamaican people would have none of**

it. The Finance Minister and campaign Director for the PNP in the February 25, 2016 general election, **Dr. Peter Phillips**, even tried to invoke the **foreign bogeyman** forcing the Observer newspaper to carry the following comment on February 15, 2016 **"Phillips said the Party's (JLP) proposal 'is telling us in their own way that they are tearing up the agreement that Jamaica has with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the international community'"**.

That was pure nonsense and cheap politics, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I remember very well that practically every single PNP party person and supporter one spoke to told us how the \$1.5 million tax relief plan was wrong, wrong headed, couldn't work, and the country couldn't afford it.

Maybe a leading PNP TOPANARIS wrote a very bold prominent, as I recall it, front page, long article in Senator Brown's favourite newspaper, on Friday, February 19, 2016 - a week before voting day on Thursday, February 25 - declaring that the \$1.5 million income tax relief plan by the JLP in the February 2016 election was ***"inequitable"*** and ***"distortionary"***, among other negatives.

Mr. President, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to recall this episode and **to remind the Jamaican people of how wrongheaded the PNP and its leaders have been about this \$1.5 million income tax relief plan.** I was there when it was being crafted and I remember very clearly

some of the persons that Party Leader Andrew Holness called at the time to inform them of the plan he was going to put forward, and I remember their reactions.

Mr. President, Party Leader Holness was very quick on the draw. On Monday, February 22, 2016, just three days before the general election in 2016, **Gary Spaulding** wrote an article in Senator Brown's favorite newspaper with the headline "**Holness rebuts Matalon on tax proposal**".

The newspaper report said, "Declaring that this is basic economics, Holness, said, our plan is based on one simple principle: 'You know how to spend your money better than Peter Phillips (finance minister of the last four years)'".

The now Prime Minister Holness continued in that February 22, 2016 article: "In fact, there will be a positive impact for your household, and for our economy", *insisted Holness. 'We are going to give back to the working people of Jamaica who have been made the working poor by the PNP (People's National Party).*

PNP BORROWED AND TAX JAMAICANS, ANDREW HOLNESS CUT TAXES AND GROW THE COUNTRY.

Mr. President, I absolutely must report and remind the Jamaican people that for the four years before the Andrew Holness administration took over in 2016, the PNP put \$58 billion

of taxes on the shoulders and heads of the Jamaican people. \$58B, Mr. President. Unbelievable! Unconscionable!

Remember, now, Mr. President, that by this time between February 1989, and February 2016, PNP had been in power for 23 of those 27 years!

What did they do with all that money that they borrowed?

Where are the schools that they should have built, Mr. President?

Where are the health centers, new police stations, and new roads that they should have built, Mr. President?

Where are the public parks and recreation centers that all that borrowed money and hefty taxes on Jamaicans should have built?

Where are they, and since we can't find them, where is all that money the PNP borrowed and taxed Jamaicans for, Mr. President?

The Gary Spaulding article ended with Party Leader Andrew Holness making the following prophetic statement: "The additional spending that he will do will result in more taxes to be collected in GCT without an increase in the GCT rate".

Well, as accurately predicted by now Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Mr. President, we collected enough taxes to make the whole INCOME TAX RELIEF PLAN WORK. Indeed, a couple of years later, **the Andrew Holness administration reduced the GCT tax from 16 1/2% to 15% [another 1.5 miraculous reduction, Mr. President].** And as finance minister, **Dr. Nigel Clarke** reports regularly, our tax revenue, keeps increasing, **while we have cut taxes, and never raised taxes in the last seven years!**

PNP DON'T COPY JLP's TAX PLAN

So now, Mr. President, **the hapless Leader of the Opposition so publicly, so shamelessly,** has gone before his own PNP party supporters to disclose that **he has absolutely no plan as to how to run the economy of this country and seeks to copy, openly and barefacedly, the Andrew Holness administrations, now famous and iconic income tax relief plan.**

Not just to copy it, Mr. President, but to double it!

Mr. President, it is clear that the PNP and their leader are **LOST in the wilderness (that generally a 40-year lost and wandering punishment)** and **have absolutely no sensible plan as to how to run the Jamaican economy and the country as a whole.** *They certainly have none that they can disclose to the country.* That's why they are trying to copy those things that the **ANDREW HOLNESS ADMINISTRATION** has done so well.

We in the JLP just keep on focusing on doing well for the country and **BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS.**

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Mr. President, I am asking you to graciously tell the LEADER of the OPPOSITION to sit down quietly in a dark corner of the MUSEUM at all Old Hope Road and ponder deeply the \$1.5 million income tax relief that was so innovatively crafted by the Andrew Holness administration – and tell him that it's Firmly and strongly copyrighted in the minds and hearts of the Jamaican people, and it's not available to be copied by him and the PNP!

THE BLUEDOT POLLS TELL US WHY THE PNP HAVE COPY JLP PERFORMANCE PLANS.

Mr. President, the BLUEDOT pollsters used 9 performance measures to evaluate how Jamaicans view the present JLP government versus anything that the PNP has to offer.

Let's start at the only place where they had the smallest possible measure of an advantage, that is

on **the inflation issue**. In the poll, they got about 25 points and the JLP scored about 24 points – **that is neck-and-neck**, Mr. President. **Inflation**, as we all know in this instance, is largely imported through high inter oil prices, high food, and other supplies caused by tight and sometimes long and dysfunctional supply chains. Most of that is out of the control of the government and **that's the only area that the PNP had a very small advantage over the government.**

When we look at the **other eight measurement points**, Mr. President, how did the JLP Government perform, according to the Jamaican people? The JLP Government led by the Most Honourable Andrew Holness beat the PNP and its leadership by wide margins on every one of the those questions put to the Jamaican people.

1. On the **ECONOMY**, the Andrew Holness administration beat the PNP by 15 points, or is seen as about 75% better than how the Jamaican people view the PNP opposition.
2. On the **UNEMPLOYMENT** measure, the same kind of result where the current JLP administration is leading by about 15 points and is seen by Jamaicans as about 75% better than whatever the PNP offers.
3. On the building of **ROADS**, it's about the same kind of large margin and 75% ahead by which the Andrew Holness administration (BROGAD the BUILDER, himself) leads PNP.
4. On **EDUCATION**, the JLP government is substantially better than how the Jamaican people view the PNP,
5. On **CRIME**, Mr. President, something that **the PNP, and especially the leader of the opposition business in the Senate**, likes use to try and beat up on the JLP administration, the Jamaican people, according to the BLUEDOT poll, see the **Andrew Holness**

administration as being better at managing crime than whatever the PNP propaganda is trying to sell to the Jamaican people.

Indeed, the latest figures published this week tell us that murders are down by 12% or 141 fewer Jamaicans have been murdered this year to September 30, 2023. Big investment, improving policing and better policies and managements are brining these results.

6. On **HEALTH, the Andrew Holness administration** is seen as far superior to the PNP.
7. The JLP administration leads the PNP by a significant margin when Jamaicans were asked to assess both parties on the matter of **HOUSING**.
8. The Andrew Holness administration has a substantial lead over the PNP when both parties were assessed on **SOCIAL WELFARE** by Jamaicans, according to the BLUEDOT pole.

Those are very substantial and material reasons **why the PNP is in such a terrible dilemma, and why it's leaders - bankrupt of ideas and plans - seek to copy what the JLP does, or try to smear us with endless verbal mud and slander are, invariably, baseless.**

JAMAICA'S BUSINESS MINISTRY IS FOCUSED ON EXPORTS, INVESTMENTS AND E
ONOMIC GROWTH

Soon after I arrived at the Ministry of Industry Investment & Commerce, Mr. President, a bunch of data grabbed my attention, and gave my Ministerial Mandate a very clear focus. STATIN had just published the 2021 trade figures and these are the numbers:

Imports of goods and services totalled US\$5.975 billion.

EXPORTS totalled a mere US\$1.441 billion.

Negative Trade Balance = US\$4.534 billion.

I asked for the data for our trade balance from 1960 and found that up to early 2022, of 61 years of trade data, **it was only one year, 1966 - long time ago, in which Jamaica posted a positive trade balance.**

To top it off, **we are a country of only 3 million people** with a relatively small, **per capita** GDP.

Mr. President, that was the data set that really, sharply, focused my mind.

In the 10 years since 2013, and certainly in the seven years since 2016, we have been able to get a firm control of the **country's debt to GDP albatross** and the Andrew Holness administration is well on the way to removing that debt danger from around our necks by moving the debt-to-GDP figure down from a high of 147% to currently 77%. We are confident that it will continue to move and reach the 60% debt-to-GDP target that we aspire to by 2028.

Mr. President, as a country, **while we have struggled and wrestled our debt-to-GDP challenge**

down to a more manageable level, and are we winning, we have allowed **THE TRADE BALANCE CANCER** to spread across our economic body, and, for the most part, have not even spoken about it in any consistent manner as a major problem – at least not until eight or nine months ago.

Well, Mr. President, we have 61 of 62 years of negative trade balances, as an independent country. That is a major, dangerous and long-threatening problem. We have done the most amazing and wonderful work to bring down our debt-to-GDP and we keep bringing it down. **However, if a company keeps reducing its expenses and not build new and more revenues,** it will still fall into serious financial problems.

So, Mr. President, we have to build the income, the revenues – if you will, in order to have the cash to maintain the infrastructure we are putting in place, and build the new ones and the services that we need.

We have to get up and get out of our business chairs, Minister and business people alike, and go overseas to expand extend existing markets. **We have to go and find new markets to which we can export a lot more than we do now, indeed, in order to make Jamaica wealthier country.**

Mr. President, as a country with only 3 million people with a relatively low per capita GDP, we have to export a lot more to many more markets in order to become a richer country. We

simply cannot continue to sell to only 3 million relatively poor people and become wealthy.
Clearly, that has not worked for over 60 years.

**REPOSITIONING THE MINISTRY & TAKING BUSINESS PEOPLE TO FIND NEW
EXPORT MARKETS.**

Mr. President, we all know that running a government as we do takes a lot of cash. **Local Government** activities have to be financed, this year the budget for the **Education ministry** is about J\$150 billion Jamaican dollars, **Health and hospital services** have to be provided, **Roads have to be built and maintained**, **Drains** have to be cleaned and the **Security Forces** have to be financed. Managing and allocating all that cash has to be done by the **Ministry of Finance**, which must also pay down our debts and the related interests.

As I have said before, it is the revenue that the government collects, primarily from Jamaica's business sector, that pays our recurring and capital expenses, and funds our debt repayments.

At this point I must congratulate my colleague Minister, the **Honourable Ed Bartlett, Jamaica's World Minister of Tourism**, on the outstanding job, he and his team have accomplished in bringing back tourism to a position that is greater than before the pandemic, and, indeed, this summer has been a record year for tourists arrival in the country. Therefore, a record year for tax revenue contribution and employment of tens of thousands of ordinary Jamaicans.

Similarly, Mr. President, I have to congratulate the players in the Global Digital Services Sector (GDSS) - which most people know as the BPO sector – in my ministry, for the amazing work that they did to ensure that, over the years of the pandemic and after, the Global Digital Services Sector continues to grow at double digits rates.

I must thank the Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. Nigel Clarke, and his team, for working with us to get the work-at-home program instituted and extended, and for the way it has continued till today. That continued collaboration between our ministries is vital to ensure that the work-from-home project continues without disruption and with fast and timely decisions.

Compliments must also go to the Manufacturing and Mining sectors, that are recovering and that are really contributing to the growth of exports, the creation of many local jobs and tax revenues, and the overall GDP growth.

WE ARE BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS!

This means then, Mr. President, that businesses have to continue to grow, and increase their profits and the tax revenues government collects from them. . Mr. President, our local business must EXPORT A LOT MORE THAN THEY DO NOW.

One of my first action as the new Minister in early 2022 was to ensure that the 20 agencies in the ministry act as a coordinated unit rather than as individual silos. **The overall objectives of the Ministry were clearly and more narrowly defined into three:**

1. **The Ministry's first objective is to grow Jamaica's exports substantially.** This will be done by finding every possible acceptable method to **facilitate, enable,** and **encourage** businesses to **focus their activities on exports** while serving the local market. When necessary, the Ministry of Industry Investment & Commerce will **regulate** to ensure that a level playing field exists among the various participants in the economy.

Many of the hardworking head of Agencies are here:

- Mrs. Shullette Cox – President, Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO)
- Mrs. Sharonmae Shirley – CEO, Jamaica National Agency for Accreditation (JANAAC)
- Mrs. Kelli-Dawn Hamilton – Interim CEO, Jamaica Special Economic Zone Authority (JSEZA)
- Mrs. Andrea Marie-Dawes – Executive Director, Anti-Dumping & Subsidies Commission

2. The second and related policy focus is **to seek and secure, substantially more local and foreign direct investment to expand the Jamaican business productive capacities,** to

enable them to produce greater amounts of goods and services to export to new markets and new customers.

3. The Ministry and its Agencies will work with training agencies such as HEART-NSTA, and local private training facilities, to train the estimated 300 or 400,000 young Jamaicans that are NOT NOW in the workforce. Focus will be placed on apprenticeship training with the surety of certification and placement of the trainees in jobs. **Senator the Hon. Dr. Dana Dixon**, the Minister who has responsibility for the HEART-NSTA, and Dr. Taneisha Ingleton, the relatively new Managing Director of HEART-NSTA, have HEART-NSTA well on the way as a recent video from HEART-NSTA has shown. **I renew my call and encouragement to local businesses to step up the training they offer their employees.** Mr. President, I was really pleased when about two weeks ago I attended a graduation ceremony for 20 very young FORKLIFT graduates at the RED STRIPE FOUNDATION all trained by a local private training institute and strongly supported by Project STAR led by Keith Duncan. It was good to see the 19 young men and one young woman already taking up their new jobs.

Wisynco and Coca-Cola partnered together to launch **Growing Together Training Initiative** aimed at training 1,000 independent entrepreneurs who partner with WISYNCO and Coca-Cola. I launched that training initiative yesterday.

With those new objectives, the Ministry and it's 20 agents have been meeting quarterly to confirm that the three main objectives of the Ministry are carried to the business community - to all small

and large players - and that all in the business sector are being **supported, facilitated** and **encouraged** by the Agencies of the Ministry.

Mr. President, **the natural outcome from this reassessment, and re-positioning of the Minister of Industry Investment & Commerce and its agencies** was that **we would have to get out of our offices and get business leaders to leave their offices, and we travel together overseas to find new markets and customers.** This we started to do in October 2022 when we took the first set of companies and a delegation of about 35 business leaders to Guyana.

In the one year from October last year to this month, I have led seven business missions to Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, the Dominican Republic, cities in Florida, Georgia, New York, and Washington DC, Canada, and the United Kingdom. The largest delegation I led was of 73 people, five of them from the government to Guyana in January 2023. To date, we have had 97 companies and 133 business executives accompany us, **all paying their own expenses,** and we have had tens of millions of US dollars worth of contracts secured by many of these companies, and other contracts are being negotiated.

The **companies range from** very new, even unlisted ones on the local stock exchange, medium-sized companies to very well-established business houses in the manufacturing, contracting, trading, and the ICT sectors **I was amazed that we started off with 6 ICT services companies on our first business mission to Guyana and traveled with about 15 or so to Toronto. Many were surprised we had as many as 6 in the first place!** *It was very encouraging to see young entrepreneurs in their 20s and 30s get the exposure the mission afforded them that they would*

never get otherwise at this stage of their business careers. It was also a great pleasure to my Agencies' teams and me to see the business activities which **developed during the course of the mission among Jamaican business people who never knew each other before coming on the business missions.**

It is a wonderful sight and experience, Mr. President, to travel with and see so many quite young JAMAICAN entrepreneurs travelling across the Caribbean, the United States of America, Canada and Britain - NOT looking for work - BUT SEEKING OUT AND SECURING OVERSEAS CUSTOMERS AND MARKETS FOR THEIR JAMAICAN PRODUCTS AND SERVICES.

Other Latin American, African and Asian markets are calling, Mr. President.

I have permission from these companies to relate the following, Mr. President:

- **One on One Educational Services Limited**, a company that offers tailored learning and development solutions to empower employers to train and upskill their staff, have indicated that through their participation in the missions to Atlanta, Georgia; Toronto, Canada and Washington DC, business connections have been solidified resulting in:
 - Signed an Agreement with Microsoft to deliver Microsoft TEALS project in High Schools across Jamaica and the Caribbean. Under this project, One on One will be

delivery advanced Computer Science courses in the areas of Cybersecurity, AI, and other next generation subjects to high school.

- Signed another agreement with an AI-Based company in the Austin, USA, with two AI patents, to train their AI with a view to aid in One on One's mission to develop AI for teaching, coaching and learning.
 - participation in a pilot project with an international development association to deliver Spanish lessons to students in Jamaica and the Caribbean, leveraging a unique streaming arrangement from Uruguay.
 - negotiations to secure funding for their AI subsidiary company, which underscores the confidence investors have in their vision and offerings.
 - development for Black History Curriculum in collaboration with key Government stakeholders within the Greater Toronto Area. This initiative signifies the commitment of One-on-One Educational Services, to developing culturally significant and diverse content.
-
- **ResolveIT**, a local award-winning managed technology solutions provider has:
 - Signing of one-year renewable ICT management contract with a financial institution out of Trinidad, across its three locations
 - Signing of an NDA with an IT company in Guyana to offer white labeling services
 - Coming out of Canada, Resolve IT is now an official strategic partner of a leading, online payment gateway and fraud management solutions provider.

 - **Optimity Group**, a digital transformation company has:

- closed a cybersecurity white label partnership with a company in Guyana. This partnership will see all subsidiaries under the company, selling their cybersecurity services in their respective countries.
 - They also managed to close a partnership with one of major telecommunications provider in Guyana, to migrate 20,000 customers from Legacy PBX to a cloud hosted solution, and for this project they have exported IT engineers to facilitate the contract in Guyana
 - Coming out of the Dominican Republic (DR), they have secured a letter of intent from the large sport association to be their official ticketing provider in the DR;
 - Have similarly signed an MoU with a software leader in the Carnival Mas distribution space in Trinidad. This partnership will see the AITIX arm of Optimity Group, aggressively targeting events in Trinidad.
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- **Dairy Industries Jamaica, (DIJL), a GraceKennedy Subsidiary**, makers of the well-loved Tastee Cheese, was unable to export dairy products to Trinidad for several years due to their regulatory changes. JAMPRO convened a B2B meeting with the key regulatory authorities to resolve areas of concern, resulting in a speedy approval process establishing that DIJL had satisfied all their requisite importation guidelines. As a result, DIJL is now in receipt of their first order that will be on its way to the twin-island in the very near future.

 - **And Mr. President, Jamaica Broilers Group**, a large manufacturing conglomerate, has recently informed us that through participation in the mission, they have now secured an

order out of Trinidad for their Best Dressed Chicken value-added products for the very first time. The products on order are breaded nuggets, tenders, and strips.

THE MSME ROADSHOWS BY THE MIIC AND IT'S AGENCIES IN COLLABORATION WITH THE IDB

1. Mr. President, we at the Minister of Industry Investment & Commerce recognize that many small businesses across the country are often reluctant to go to big buildings and institutions – that includes their banks, other government agencies, and certainly many of those at our Ministry. **So, we have decided to take the Ministry and its 20 Agencies on ROADSHOWS across the country to meet, facilitate and encourage micro small and medium size enterprises do use the many very useful services that we and/or agencies offer.**
2. The first was held in MANDEVILLE on August 10, 2023 and another three will be held in MONTEGO BAY (October 26th), OCHO RIOS (November 1st) and KINGSTON (November 21st), this month, and November. At these Roadshows we encourage MSME's in the region to come and familiarize themselves with the agencies of the ministry. Some are encouraged to display their products, others have the chance to win substantial cash prizes and all have the opportunity to expand their businesses through the contacts that they make, and from national publicity they gain through the radio broadcasts and social media publicity that is arranged for them.

3. Mr. President, the first roadshow found great favour with the MSME entrepreneurs who attended, and we know the excitement and enthusiastic interest, is building for the others that are to come as we seek to improve the prize money from \$300,000 to a higher figure.

THE PRODUCTIVE INPUT RELIEF (PIR) FROM THE MIIC

Mr. President, the Ministry provides incentives to manufacturers through the Productive Inputs Relief (PIR) scheme. These incentives include import duty and income tax relief, offering a lifeline for growth. As at March 31, 2023 approximately 816 companies have benefitted from Manufacturing status fiscal incentives under the Productive Inputs Relief-Fiscal Incentive Regime.

The financial incentives amounted to:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| • 2021 - JA\$80.13 M | $\frac{80.13 M}{0.20} = \text{J\$}400.66\text{M}$ |
| • 2022 - JA\$109.29 M | $\frac{109.29 M}{0.20} = \text{J\$}546.45\text{M}$ |
| • 2023 – JA\$88.49 M | $\frac{88.49 M}{0.20} = \underline{\text{J\$}442.45\text{M}}$ |
| | \$1,389.56 |

Mr. President, this JLP administration, led by the MOST HONORABLE ANDREW HOLNESS, is BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS!

So Mr. President, after all the PNP's Cass Cass, their self-flagellation, fake news, numerous misrepresentations and relentless mudslinging, HERE IS THE TRUTH ABOUT WHERE WE ARE TODAY IN JAMAICA!

HERE IS THE TRUTH ABOUT WHERE WE ARE IN JAMAICA TODAY:

- MURDER is down 12%, that's 141 fewer people that were killed to September 30, this year, compared to the same period last year.
- **Employment**, new jobs, are at its highest level, and **unemployment** is at a record a d historical low of 4.5%.
- The Andrew Holness administration has fixed and built more police stations than any other government in the history of this country.
- Debt to GDP continues to go down.
- Standard & Poor's has raise our credit rating to the highest ever.
- Even our exports are up 37% year to year.
- And the Andrew Holness administration has still not raised any taxes on the people of Jamaica for over seven years.

Mr. President, the Andrew Holness ADMINISTRATION IS BUILDING JAMAICA FOR ALL JAMAICANS.

Jamaicans broadly agree that the JLP's government is the best administration to manage the affairs of this country.

If it, pleases you, Mr. President.