



The Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation (KSAC) has stepped up its drive to collect trade licence fees from business operators downtown Kingston.

Beginning September 3, the KSAC, in partnership with Tax Administration Jamaica (TAJ), will embark on a campaign to identify businesses involved in trading activities that require such licenses and determine the status of their payments.

Mayor of Kingston, Angela Brown-Burke, who outlined details of the campaign dubbed: 'The Trade Licence Compliance 2012 Initiative' at her downtown offices on August 27, said that where necessary, the businesses will be served with assessment notices and steps taken to have them comply with the required payments.

Trade licence fee is set at a maximum of \$5,000, and the payment is due on April 1 each year.

Mrs. Brown Burke informed that the municipality currently collects about \$10 million from trade licence fees and there is potential to earn significantly more. "The data we have suggests that if the appropriate strategies are put in place and if these are efficiently managed and adequately sustained, income from trade licences can be increased... to an estimated \$75 million per annum," she noted.

The Mayor said that the KSAC has already recruited and will train 20 persons to carry out the exercise along with four supervisors from the Inland Revenue Department (TAJ) and members of the Municipal Police.

The process will involve a street by street survey to determine the businesses operating in the targeted areas and a comparison of the data with the TAJ payment records to determine tax liability. Once liability is determined, assessment notices will be prepared and served on the

business, with a commitment from the operator on a date for payment.

Failure on the part of businesses to comply will result in the issue of a 'levy writ' or court action as provided by the Tax Collection Act.

Mayor Brown Burke does not foresee taking anyone to court based on the small fines that are currently in place for the breach. "The fees have not been revised for quite some time and are therefore quite low; possibly this might explain the need for a reminder to put this on the agenda of our businesses," she said.

Representative of TAJ, Norma Kerr-Clarke, made a plea for "every trader, every business person, who operates from a building" to pay the trade licence fee, which she said, is minimal.

"We are going to ask that you give our officers the support. We do not envisage any problems. We ask that you cooperate, that you open your records if you are asked to, and we will facilitate whatever questions you have, whatever difficulties. We are here to help," she stated.

Commanding Officer of Kingston Central, Supt. Steve McGregor, in pledging support, said the police is willing to assist with any initiative that brings structure to downtown Kingston.

Under Section 23 of the Trade Licence Act, "if a person carries on a trade or business.... without having within the time prescribed, taken out the licence herein provided, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding two dollars for every day on which, while unlicensed, he carries on such trade or business..."