



Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM), Richard Thompson, has assured that there are no health concerns regarding the 25 Haitians who arrived in Portland by boat on February 5.

He said the Ministry of Health has already conducted tests for diseases, such as malaria and dengue.

Mr. Thompson was speaking at Wednesday's, February 6, Jamaica House Press briefing, at the Office of the Prime Minister, which was hosted by Minister with responsibility for Information, Senator the Hon. Sandra Falconer.

The group included seven children, 16 men, two women, four boys and three girls, from two to 14 years old. Also included are a two year-old child, who was born in Jamaica, and six other persons who had previously arrived in Jamaica following the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti.

Mr. Thompson noted that a number of agencies are involved in the process, including the Ministry of National Security, Portland Parish Council, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Passport Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA), Adventist Disaster Relief Agency (ADRA), Jamaica Red Cross, and the Salvation Army.

He said it is estimated that it would cost the Government some \$45,000 per day to care for the group, inclusive of food, water, electricity and gas.

Minister Falconer, in acknowledging the cost to Jamaica, said she has heard the questions about cost, but apart from the fact that "we are signatories to the UN Convention it is in the DNA of Jamaicans that we take care of people."

“We can’t have Haitians in need who have come to our country and we do not make sure that they are taken care of. We treat them as we would like any other country to treat Jamaicans who go there. We want to cut down the length of time that they are here on our shores, but as long as they are here, we will ensure that they are taken care of – medical treatment, food and shelter,” she said.

The group is being housed at the ADRA facility in Portland, where they will remain until Friday, February 8, after which they will be moved to another location in Portland, and then repatriated to Haiti.

Mr. Thompson said this should be done by early next week. “That process (repatriation) is not a quick process, but what we try to do is ensure that it is speedily dealt with,” he added.

In the meantime, border patrol has been increased by the Jamaica Defence Force, and on-site security is being provided by the Jamaica Constabulary Force.