

**Ministry of Local Government,
Community Development and Sport**

Contribution to

The Sectoral Debate 2004

*"A modern system of local government
is essential to good governance in Jamaica."*

Presented by:

Hon. Portia Simpson Miller

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mister Speaker I would like to begin by thanking Almighty God for blessings untold. Over the years I have been truly blessed by the tremendous support and encouragement that I have received from my family, friends and colleagues.

I would like to pay special tribute to The Most Honorable P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister for his extraordinary vision, his counsel and quality of leadership and particularly his unwavering support in advancing the Local Government agenda.

Let me also thank my Cabinet and Parliamentary colleagues for their continued support as we work together to uplift the people of Jamaica whom we all pledged to serve faithfully.

To the people of South West St. Andrew – the men, women and children who call South West St. Andrew home, my councillors – Audrey, Basil and Karl, constituency executives, area coordinators, and youth leaders, I salute you and thank you for your love, loyalty, resilience and patience. The journey has been long, the road has been rocky and although the future seems uncertain and the strongest among us grow weak, we are not without hope. I know that with the help of the Almighty together we will bring about the changes in South West St. Andrew that we so desperately seek.

I would like to thank my husband Errald, for his love and partnership, his consistent encouragement and his remarkable generosity of spirit.

I am eternally grateful, Mister Speaker, to my spiritual leaders and advisors, members of the Minister's fraternal and numerous prayer groups who constantly call or visit, lifting me up with their prayers.

To my Permanent Secretary, Miss Loraine Robinson, advisors, directors and staff of the Ministry and its agencies, I say thank you for your advice and support, and I salute you all for your dedication and commitment often under extremely trying conditions. You are an excellent team!

I would also like to thank my personal staff in my support unit at the Ministry, members of my security team and my housekeeper, Marva. You have all been a tower of strength.

The Ministry would not have been able to accomplish some of our achievements without the cooperation and assistance of international donor and lending agencies. In this regard I would like to express our appreciation.

Mister Speaker, I would like to salute the Mayors, the Councillors and the staff of all the Local Authorities for their hard work in advancing the Local Government agenda.

Let me also thank the Clerk of the House and parliamentary staff for their dedication to the duties of this Honourable House. I would also like to say thanks to members of the media for continuing to inform the nation of our work and deliberations.

My greatest inspiration, Mister Speaker, comes from the people of Jamaica. They are a constant source of motivation especially when the going gets rough, and the challenges are many, rapid and appear insurmountable, and I would like to thank them for this.

Finally, Mister Speaker, I join my other colleagues in recognizing the dignity and decorum you bring to this Honourable House, and I would like to thank the Deputy Speaker who has ably assisted in guiding the proceedings of Parliament in his own inimitable style.

STATEMENT OF VISION

Mister Speaker, in March of this year I had the privilege of participating in a series of island wide consultations which were facilitated by the Social Development Commission (SDC) with the involvement of stakeholders on a number of issues. We had participants spanning the spectrum of political, social, religious, economic and professional affiliations. I was struck, Mister Speaker, by the diversity of perspectives and ideas proposed and at the commitment and passion which accompanied these proposals. I was amazed at the wealth of knowledge and the willingness and enthusiasm to offer solutions.

I was heartened by the abundance and depth of good will and the desire for us to succeed and to **get it right!**

But you know, Mister Speaker, there was a single factor that was common to all and that was the need for a shared vision. Every man, woman and yes, there were some children, who participated, had a vision of a better way, a better place, a better community, a better parish, a better Jamaica. We listened, learnt and were deeply encouraged to see the people expressing the view that national development must begin with development in cities, towns, and communities.

Concurrent with the peoples overwhelming demand for social and economic upliftment based on proper standards was an even more impatient cry to **begin the change process now!**

The message was loud and clear, Mister Speaker, the citizens are saying that despite the remarkable efforts of this Government towards transparency, efficiency and customer satisfaction, there are still too many areas of bureaucratic inertia reinforced by what they feel is a seemingly closed and sometimes secretive approach we have to governance.

As The Most Honorable P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister observed and I quote:

“The structure of governance now in place represents the old order. In essence, the foundation of society, the people, has been transformed at a much more rapid rate than the institutional and structural features of the society. The new more informed Jamaican is more demanding than ever to be involved in a meaningful way in shaping his or her destiny.”

This leads me, Mister Speaker, to share with this Honourable House the philosophy that informs the interventions we have made and intend to make that will transform one of the oldest systems of Local Government in the Western Hemisphere to reflect the new realities of the national and global economies.

Simply put, Mister Speaker, the theme of my presentation is that a modern system of local government is essential to **good governance in Jamaica**. Our purpose is to fundamentally transform our local government system to facilitate development that is driven by the following five principles:

1. Sustainable Community Development

The objective of sustainable community development is renewal and transformation, and its purpose is to secure integrated development to address the multiple needs of communities. It is therefore concerned at once with building and facilitating development infrastructure; with improved service delivery; and with institution building that guarantees equitable and sustainable development. The strategy is to help communities strengthen themselves and to build frameworks that compel government and representatives to keep faith with the people. **In these ways we lay the building blocks for a more independent citizenry, stronger communities and therefore a stronger nation.**

2. A new management regime for the Local Government system

The core principles and objectives are simply to secure efficiency, effectiveness and ethical responsibility. These are the essential bases for better service delivery and good governance. So in practice the reform programme also embraces the up grading of the human resource development system, refining the financial regulations, and designing structures and relationships, to support the wider governance and national development objectives. A culture of public-private partnerships and a more positive image are only two of the special features of our efforts and initiatives to transform management at the local level.

3. Consolidation of a new relationship between Central & Local Government

The real purpose is to destroy the old order of dependence on the Centre and to make Local Authorities more autonomous, and more responsible. It is to build local and central relationships that reflect mutual support and interdependence, and to stress the reality that both are partners and stakeholders in the broad project of national development. That is why we advocate new methods of financing local government operations. That has led us to emphasize more dynamic and coordinated roles for Councillors and Parliamentary representatives. That also is why we continue to insist on stronger inter-agency involvement as a way of producing integrated development and weakening the traditional local-central divide. **This pattern of advocacy is also aimed at sensitizing citizens to the links between local and macro development issues. Its vision is to release community potential to create change. In these ways communities will view themselves as agents in the overall programme of national development.**

4. Building a new economy that involves and benefits the poor

On the one hand our practice would rely on private-public partnerships. This would be driven by ideas about enterprise development within urban and rural communities. It would fully appreciate the need for skills building through education and training.

We have found that the existing incentives under the Urban Renewal Act, excellent piece of legislation though it is, is insufficient to attract private investment in inner city areas. We will be establishing a committee to prepare other proposals that will ensure greater real investment in our urban and rural townships.

In addition, Mister Speaker, the new economy and the new path envisaged for our poor communities must not only lead to an increased investment and ultimately wealth, but more importantly, must lead to the retention of the investment inflows. It is the constant outflow of capital from formerly stable communities that has transformed them into under developed areas.

What has happened, Mister Speaker? What has happened to Rollington Town, Franklyn Town, Whitfield Town, Greenwich Town, Trench Town, Rae Town, Jones Town, and Vineyard Town?

These were the homes of our Rhodes scholars, such as Anthony Abrahams, Rev. Earl Thames, Franklyn Johnstone and the home of Queens Counsel David Muirhead. These were the homes of Bob Marley, Collie Smith, Ken Boothe, Alton Ellis and George Headley. They were the communities that nurtured and produced some of our best sons and daughters.

We must recapture and rebuild these areas to provide the framework for development that the citizens are demanding.

We must achieve **an environment of peace and stability**. This is critical, particularly within designated enterprise zones and the wider community, to ensure sustained investments to produce development.

We can and must introduce these ideas of the “new economy” through community development initiatives. We should market sports as an agent of economic development, and we must make the conditions more appealing for the growth of community tourism.

5. Wholesome values, morals and social habits

It is a vision opposed to the waste of resources. Its watchword is as much about building productive capacity as it is about ensuring productive social relations. Our vision envisages broader and deeper patterns of “stake-holding” by the people. So, overall, the vision commits to a better deal, a better quality of life for the poor. It also sees the “new economy” initiatives as helping to spur overall macro economic growth.

This vision is about citizen's participation: creating the space for our citizens to become involved in the affairs of their communities as a right, thereby establishing a firm and transparent basis upon which our societal arrangements may be made to flourish.

This vision is about autonomy: defining a clear distinction between the roles of Central and Local Government.

This vision is about development: It will facilitate a process of community development that makes for the creation and retention of wealth and thereby the reduction of poverty.

This vision is about empowerment: It will empower citizens and communities to take responsibility for the management of their economic, health, educational, cultural and recreational needs.

In the final analysis, this vision is a signal component of the enabling environment conceptualized by Prime Minister P. J. Patterson that is a necessary prerequisite for national growth and sustainability.

Mister Speaker, this is not only a task for the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport. It requires the efforts of all of us, ministries, political parties, and other stakeholders to work together with the certain belief that it is possible to create the future outlined in this vision.

SUMMARY OF CHALLENGES

- ❖ One of our challenges is that of ensuring proper management of the process. In this regard, we have relied on the best management practices available. That, however, requires costly, high calibre human resources at strategic desks.
- ❖ Another challenge is the need to achieve inter-ministerial and agency cooperation to pursue our objectives. We have sought to mobilize whatever inter-ministerial and other cross-agency support we can. But for this pattern of cooperation to work it must become settled public policy and practice.
- ❖ A third challenge is to ensure that our priorities are shared nationally. We have been operating on the basis of clearly defined priorities. But even the priority agenda requires dedicated financial, technical and social support.
- ❖ By far the greatest challenge we face in the pursuit of this vision is the issue of limited resources. This reality has compelled us to **do more with less**, but we are committed to finding creative and innovative ways to achieve our objectives.

PROFILE OF PERFORMANCE

Mister Speaker, we recognised that we had to **reach beyond merely putting out fires, as they emerged.** This has been especially so with the fire services, solid waste management, and infirmaries. In all of these efforts we tried for **a more integrated social and community development approach.**

There were times when the frustrations were simply unbearable and some of these occasions received widespread publicity. These frustrations remain, to be sure, but the Ministry remains undaunted that issues facing it are fundamental to the commitment of this Government in building better communities.

I have tabled the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport Performance Report. This report details the performance within the portfolio of my Ministry. I will now highlight a few of these achievements:

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

We have promoted a solid set of reform ideas:

- We have influenced a change process that is now difficult to reverse.
- We have built capacity and started the re-discovery of important values in community leadership and the spirit of voluntarism.
- We have brought together political representatives, technical personnel, and civil society representatives for dialogue with communities and, as a consequence, have demonstrated that much can be done in partnership with the communities.
- Our processes and approaches to local governance now represent “models” for states within the Caribbean and the wider Commonwealth.
- Mayors, Deputy mayors and Councillors participated in numerous international conferences, forums and seminars on Local Government issues, gaining insight and important lessons for strengthening their Councils’ operations.
- We attended the 2nd meeting of Ministers responsible for Decentralization, Local Government and Citizens Participation (RIAD), held in Mexico City, in September 2003. At this meeting, Jamaica was elected as a Vice President of the RIAD, with responsibility for coordinating the programmes of RIAD among OAS member states in CARICOM.

- In April 2004 the Ministry hosted the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) which sponsored the “Caribbean Symposium on Local Democracy and Good Governance.” Caribbean Ministers attending this Symposium agreed to form a Caribbean Forum of Ministers responsible for Decentralization, Local Government, Community Development and Citizens Participation, and I was elected Chairman of the Forum.
- Jamaican Local Government practitioners have been elected to serve on several international local government institutions, and to be part of international observer teams. For example, Mister Speaker, His Worship, Cllr. Robert Montague, Mayor of Port Maria and myself were elected from this region to the Board of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

Within the operations of the Local Authorities, the implementation of the reform process has begun to yield some success:

- A. Improvement in collection of property taxes.
- B. Local Authorities have begun taking steps to expand their revenue base through increased user fees and more realistic local charges. These have yielded good results.
- C. There has been improvement in the approval process for building and development projects in several Authorities.
- D. There is increased cooperation across party lines within many Councils.
- E. There has been greater openness and involvement of citizens in some Councils.

The Ministry will continue to consolidate this process in two ways:

Firstly, strengthen the process towards management reform within the Councils to enable greater accountability and better provision of services to the public.

Secondly, increase the pressure for the preparation of Parish Development Plans to become the platform for local and national development planning.

JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE

The Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) is mandated to provide rescue and firefighting services and to save lives and protect property island-wide. During the last financial year the Fire Brigade recorded the following successes in its operations:

- The Brigade responded to 9,791 fire calls and 1,353 special service calls. Property saved was valued at approximately \$135 Billion. The estimated value of property at risk was \$137 Billion, while property lost was \$1.7 Billion.
- The Emergency Medical Service responded to 2,456 calls ranging from trauma cases, mothers in labour (some of whom were actually delivered by the EMS), stab wounds, broken limbs, and we could go on.
- The Fire Prevention Division of the Brigade continued in its role of taking the message of fire prevention to the nation. During the year 1,062 fire prevention/fire safety lectures were delivered, 201 fire drills were conducted, 799 Subdivision Plans were inspected and approved, while 418 building plans were inspected and approved. In addition, 55,881 fire prevention brochures and instruction sheets were issued.
- 106 new recruits joined the brigade in December 2003, while 157 in-service personnel received training locally and overseas in Fire Engineering, Emergency Medical Service, Investigative Techniques and Business Administration.
- The Brigade continues its Community Outreach activities by maintaining its homework programme for GSAT students at the Trench Town and Rollington Town Fire Stations. In the recently released GSAT results, thirty-five (35) students from the programme – fifteen (15) from Trench Town and twenty (20) from Rollington Town - gained places at High Schools to start in September 2004.

Over the next twelve months the strategic approach of the Jamaica Fire Brigade will be as follows:

1. **Rehabilitation of the Fire Brigade.** This will include the procurement of new vehicles now being finalized by the Ministry of Finance in consultation with the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development & Sport, the rehabilitation of the existing fleet, where possible, the procurement of firefighting equipment and protective gear, and a comprehensive evaluation of the fire stations with a view to rehabilitation or replacement. We will begin with the building of a new fire station in Falmouth this year.
2. **A restructuring/modernization exercise for the Brigade is to be pursued.** A request has been made to the British Government for assistance to undertake this exercise. This phased exercise will begin this year.

3. Thirdly, we will concentrate on the **development of an appropriate human resource development program** for the Brigade.

The Cabinet is determined to ensure that the Jamaica Fire Brigade can discharge its responsibilities in full and to ensure the proper functioning of the Fire Services. Only yesterday it received a report from officials of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development & Sport, who met at the direction of the Prime Minister, under the guidance of the Cabinet Secretary, to undertake a detailed examination of the budget of the Jamaica Fire Brigade.

The results of that exercise will be reflected in the Supplementary Estimates to be brought before this House. Special attention will be given to the servicing of fire hydrants, the provision of uniforms and protective gear for the men and women of the Fire Services, on a phased basis.

Mister Speaker, I would like to pause to commend the men and women of the Brigade for their tireless and selfless work under extremely adverse conditions. On behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, I would like to thank them for their patience, understanding and commitment to service. A commitment so beautifully expressed in the **“Firefighter’s Prayer:”**

*When I am called to duty, God
Wherever flames may rage.
Give me strength to save a life
Whatever be the age.*

*Help me embrace a little child
Before it is too late.
Or save an older person from
The horror of that fate.*

*Enable me to be alert
To hear the weakest shout,
And quickly and efficiently
To put the fire out.*

*I want to fill my calling Lord
And give the best in me.
To guard my every neighbour
And protect his property.*

*And if according to your will,
I am called home to thee,
Guide my spouse and children Lord
And their protector be.*

Mister Speaker, from both sides of this Honourable House we say, “Maximum Respect.”

NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

The National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) established by the National Solid Waste Management Act (2001) subsumed all the Parks and Markets companies in order to regulate and manage the island's solid waste. Over the last 24 months, the NSWMA has pursued the island wide integration of solid waste services.

- The Authority has succeeded in standardizing its operational procedures and policies across its four regional offices, streamlining staff in the regions and improving allocation of trucks for garbage collection.
- Twenty (20) compactor trucks were acquired to enhance service delivery.
- The Authority has commenced enforcement of the National Solid Waste Management Public Cleanliness Regulations.

The National Solid Waste Management Authority has identified the following priorities for the next twelve months:

1. Road side pick-up of travel waste.
2. Coastal pick-up on a quarterly basis.
3. Continued improved landfill operations.
4. Collection and treatment of medical waste.
5. Upgrading of sub-offices.
6. Provision of park services in the area of technical support.
7. Increased coverage of regularly scheduled collection, and production of a collection schedule.
8. The development of critical regulations including licensing regulations and tipping fees.

WOMEN'S CENTRE OF JAMAICA FOUNDATION

Mister Speaker, the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation (WCJF) continues to empower young women and men to break the cycle of poverty which puts them at risk of repeat unwanted pregnancies and low employment potential.

WCJF offers a slate of programmes, which focuses on Education, Skills Training and Developmental Counselling.

- During the past year, 1,383 adolescent girls were assisted. Of this number, 987 were returned to the school system and 24 sat the CXC examinations. 846 babies of teen mothers and 101 babies of working mothers were cared for in the stable and supportive environment of the Day Nurseries at the main centres and outreach stations. 684 young men were assisted in the Programme for Young Men, which started 4 years ago. 490 young men are in apprenticeship training, 131 are in training institutions, 5 returned to school whilst 9 are employed in meaningful jobs.
- 2,750 adults, both males and females, benefited from the walk-in counselling service offered at all centres. 877 school children were assisted through confidential counselling and medical services at the Kingston counselling clinic. 45 adolescents were also trained as peer counsellors to assist the guidance counsellors in their respective schools. 441 children, age 10-18 years, participated in the Youth Activity Programme offered at 3 rural centres.
- Through the Skills Training Programme, 139 women and men between the ages 17 – 25 years received instruction in Cosmetology, Bakery Production, Food Preparation, Garment Construction and House Craft.

It is heartening to report that through the variety of programmes offered, the Women's Centre is able to reach a wide cross-section of the youths in Jamaica. The collaborative effort of other stakeholders, the media, Government ministries and their agencies, volunteers and funders, local and international, continue to provide support for the programme. The staff members are to be commended for their dedication to duty and commitment to the welfare of our young people in their care.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In March of this year, the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development & Sport facilitated four Regional Community Consultations. Three thousand five hundred and sixty-two (3,562) persons representing Community-Based Organizations, elected representatives, the private sector, Government agencies, and other persons participated in these consultations.

We consider this a significant achievement. More importantly, the outcomes gave us vital understanding of the local social and economic reality, and helped to authenticate our own perspectives on the fundamental importance of the work of this Ministry for national development rooted in communities. The Ministry will treat the recommendations with utmost seriousness.

One specific recommendation that I have already acted on came from the consultations in St. James, Hanover, Trelawny and Westmoreland. The Prime Minister and the Government were commended for establishing an Office of the Prime Minister in that region. However, the participants specifically recommended that **various Cabinet Ministers should, on a scheduled basis, be required to spend a day in that office so that they can be accessible to citizens to meet and discuss the concerns pertaining to their respective portfolios.** I am pleased to inform the House that the Prime Minister has agreed with this recommendation and I will be the first to make myself available to get the process going.

The second recommendation was **that regular Parish Consultations be held.** These will be held as agreed in the coming months and will be structured to ensure the participation of the local authorities and key agencies in keeping with the issues raised. The other recommendations have been documented and are receiving the appropriate attention.

Our thanks go out to all those who participated and spoke so frankly and nationalistically about what needs to be accomplished.

The Social Development Commission (SDC) continues to have a very positive impact. A major output of the SDC is the **building and strengthening of citizens' organizations** such as Community Development Committees, Development Area Committees and Parish Development Committees. Presently 218 of Jamaica's 780 communities have active Community Development Committees. These are aimed at bringing together the over 5,000 community-based organizations throughout Jamaica. This is one of the legs on which community life will be built and raised to a higher level. Thirty three per cent of the development areas intended were established. This represents a clustering of 780 communities into 73 Development Area Committees dealing with economic, administrative, town planning and/or geographic and topographic functions.

The SDC has a specific output of producing Community Profiles through increased research and data collection activities. These activities include:

- The establishment of Community Borders and Boundaries
- Production of Community Maps
- Conducting Poverty Assessments
- Production of Community Profiles
- Maintenance of local databases of community information.

Of the seven hundred and eighty (780) communities, 430 have their borders and boundaries completed, 467 have completed maps, and 252 have completed Community Profiles, of which 135 of these profiles have been validated.

The SDC also has a specific output of facilitating the development of Community Plans. Of the seven hundred and eighty communities, 262 have identified their priorities, 179 have consulted key stakeholders on these community priorities, 104 have developed specific project details from the identified priorities, and 92 communities have completed the documentation of their plans.

These Community Development Plans have provided the basis for development of 74 projects, which have already been submitted to the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF), under an agreement between the JSIF and SDC, as part of the National Community Development Project being funded by the World Bank. These plans are also beginning to create the environment for partnerships and networks, with key agencies and international donor agencies to support community development.

The Social Development Commission will continue to:

- a) Build and support the citizens based structures such as the **Parish Development Committees, Development Area Committees and Community Development Committees.**
- b) Facilitate the establishment of the **Jamaican Community Database** and the development of **Community and Parish Profiles.**
- c) Support the **Development of Community Development Plans** and the building of networks to support the implementation of these plans.

SPORTS

Sport continues to be a light around which the nation can proudly gather. It is an agent of unity, detribalization and brings hope and feelings of accomplishment among our people. The crowds that continue to support the “Reggae Boyz” demonstrate this potential. The excellent performances at the recently concluded National Athletics Trials reinforce the tremendous potential of sports to Jamaica. This potential is not only confined to the technical skills of the sport itself but in the economics of it. Sport is one of the biggest industries worldwide and represents an area that we can and must explore with more vigour in the future.

In review, we continue to see our sports men and women on a path of development and achievement as we prepare for the 2006 World Cup Football, the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, the World Junior Championships in Grosseto, Italy, the hosting of the 2004 Special Olympic Games, as well as the 2004 Regional Swimming Championships. We can feel confident that our nation will remain among the world leaders in sport.

The dominance of our Jamaican athletes in the Carifta games and the Penn Relays, the accomplishments of the National Netball Team, and the history making qualification for the Olympic Games in badminton by Nigella Saunders, make us proud of our continuous sport accomplishments.

I would like to recognize and salute the World Junior Record 200 metres men, set by ‘teenage sensation’ Usain Bolt in Barbados. I would also like to recognize the new national record set by Asafa Powell at the National Trials of 9.91 secs. for the men’s 100 metres.

And I would like to thank and commend the Prime Minister for his announcement of the incentives to be given to the medal winners in the Olympic Games this August.

- Mister Speaker, the Institute of Sports, the Government agency with responsibility for the implementation of government sports programmes and its policies, has been providing continued and ongoing opportunities of training, coaching and competition working in harmony with the various sporting associations.
- A general manager is now in place at Independence Park Limited (IPL), and we are pleased that there have been increased levels of activity at the various facilities at the National Stadium Complex, with the attendant increase in revenue flows.
- Independence Park Limited has installed and commissioned into use a state-of-the-art electronic video display board, funded jointly by the Sports Development Foundation (SDF) and Cable & Wireless Jamaica Limited – demonstrating once again this Government’s commitment to the forging of alliances with the private sector for the benefit of all Jamaica. Not only can patrons at the National Stadium enjoy instant replays of all the action but the display board also provides the opportunity for IPL to increase its revenue streams through commercial use of the board.

- IPL co-promoted the successful Jamaica International Invitational Athletics meeting on May 7, 2004.
- IPL continues to build co-operative links with our National Sporting Associations.
- The Sports Development Foundation (SDF) continues to provide badly needed funds to the Institute of Sports, G. C. Foster College and the Social Development Commission to the extent of \$29.8 million.
- The Sports Development Foundation continues to fund critical sports infrastructure projects expending a total of \$74.73 million during the year, an increase of 188 percent over the previous year.
- The National Council on Sports, chaired by the Prime Minister, continues to serve as a coordinating and advisory body and is intended to assist in developing a national consensus on sports, and ensure coordination and a proper monitoring of activities by ministries, agencies and institutions. And here, Mister Speaker, I would like to specially thank the Prime Minister for his leadership and vision, which has helped to create a focus on the development of sport, bringing to bear his personal influence which has in no small way contributed to the successes that we have had in all sports.

Mister Speaker, just yesterday the Prime Minister chaired a meeting between executives of the Jamaica Football Federation (JFF) and private sectors leaders with a view to their providing funding to cover training, preparation and equipment for the Reggae Boyz on the Road Germany World Cup 2006, as well as assistance to the Male and Female Under 17, Under 20, and Under 23 Football teams.

The Regional Community Consultations highlighted the critical importance of sports to the process of community development. During the next twelve months:

- Greater focus will be placed on the community sports infrastructure and the economic opportunities that can be derived from sports as an industry. For example, the Cricket World Cup 2007 could have tremendous transformative power for Kingston's city redevelopment plans and community tourism development.
- Continue to mainstream sports as an instrument of unity and national pride.
- Expand the corporate partnerships to support sports development and pursue options to exploit new economic opportunities through sports.
- Continue efforts to complete the following special sports projects such as the Sports Library, the Sports Museum and the Sports Wellness Centre.

MINISTRY

My vision aims to **create a tighter integration of the three portfolio elements that define the Ministry: Local Government, Community Development & Sport.** All three will and must work together to engineer integrated and sustainable development. Expect then that the endeavours of sport will be oriented to goals of both social and economic development. The Local Government system will lead the socio-economic transformation of rural, urban and inner-city communities, making them more productive entities. Community and parish development committees will be key institutional vehicles for the development effort. Thus, the vision is that **integrated and sustainable development will assist in displacing poverty, empower communities and guide them to build a culture of partnership and the other principles of good governance.**

The Ministry will continue to focus on being the policy centre coordinating these areas of responsibility:

- a. It will be the hub around which inter-ministerial linkages and coordination will take place.
- b. It will rely on the newly re-activated National Advisory Committee on Local Governance Reform chaired by the Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, Professor, the Honourable Rex Nettleford to help provide technical advice and support.
- c. Continue to strengthen international linkages and partnerships.
- d. The Ministry will continue its focus on mobilizing financial, human and other resources required to adequately discharge its responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted to present as sincerely as I know my vision. I have traveled the country and participated in a series of consultations. I have listened and reflected deeply on the sentiments of the Jamaican people as it has been expressed to me. I am firmly and passionately committed to this vision.

In 1950 a great son of Jamaica Thom Girvan made this simple statement “*If we can work out an answer for the village, we will find the answer for the country.*”

Isn't this the essence of community development, Mister Speaker? Surely, *if we can work out an answer for the community, we will find the answer for the country.*

I genuinely believe this to be true. It is in the community that the transformation of the entire country begins.

That is where we must take care of each other.

That is where we nurture our families.

That is where we socialize our children.

That is where we build good work ethics and values of production.

That is where we lay the foundation of strong values and attitudes essential to becoming good citizens.

That is where, Mister Speaker, we work out solutions to grow our economy to take care of ourselves and each other.

That is where we must establish economic enterprise zones to facilitate investment as a deliberate strategy.

That is where we must involve people in community policing and in establishing a secure environment.

That is where we must involve our people in the fight for the proper education of our children.

Mister Speaker, if we get it right at the community level don't you believe we will get it right at the national level?

Many persons bemoan the conditions in our communities particularly the high levels of crime and violence. Some feel that the society has lost its vision. Many believe we have become a divided nation. But I know that we are not a nation without hope!

Because I believe that if we mobilize and organize our communities, we would spend less on fighting crime and violence.

We would spend less on public cleansing.

We would spend less repairing schools and community centres.

Strong, unified communities within the context of transforming governance is the way that we make decisions which will have a significant impact on the health of our society and its economic and social well being. Strong unified communities will positively affect Justice, Equity, Community Development, Economic Development, Prosperity, Security, Identity and self-confidence as a people and as a country.

And I could go on Mister Speaker, but I think the point has been made that if we organize communities and get these communities to accept their civic responsibilities and in turn we as government live up to our responsibilities then we will be firmly on the road to *getting it right!*

I am convinced that *Strong Communities* will lead to *Strong Parishes* and *Strong Parishes* will lead to a *Strong Nation*.

Mister Speaker, the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport and the Local Authorities have the extraordinary potential to influence the course of national development, and to provide an environment in which we are motivated to care for each other and to share with each other despite political differences, race, gender or class. We are uniquely positioned where the functions and services we provide place us directly at the local level, in the heart of the seven hundred and eighty (780) communities across Jamaica.

These communities form the core of every division in every constituency represented here by the members of this Honourable House. The message, Mister Speaker, from the seven hundred and eighty communities across the Jamaica is *it is time to get it right!*

If we don't get it right, Mister Speaker, it matters not who leads the fight against crime or more importantly who leads the country. **It will destroy us all if we don't get it right.**

And what better time, Mister Speaker, than the present? "Time, [it is said] waits on no man." I am heartened by the economic forecast of growth and development and I am tremendously excited with the energy and enthusiasm of our private sector partners and encouraged by the increasing interest of investors from all over the world. Undoubtedly, Mister Speaker, this Government can point with pride to ultra modern seaports, airports, highways, buildings, growing service industries and modern housing as signposts of our emergence into the 21st century.

As we stand ready to reap the benefits of economic growth and development, let us deepen those interventions now at the community level with the help and direction of those thousands of community development workers and volunteers who want us to *get it right!*

It was the vigorous work of the community development workers that revived the spirit of the people, whose bitter experiences of colonialism had led to the uprising in 1938. And it was that new energy, generated in communities across the island that made it possible for the national movement towards independence to come into being.

This is the climate, Mister Speaker, in which any lasting and sustained growth in our economy can realistically be achieved.

There has to be a climate in which a renewed wave of passion for community development can be seen sweeping across this nation, with people in all fields and from every station in life enthusiastically participating in community activities.

There has to be a climate where as a people we recapture that community spirit, that marvelous spirit that was bequeathed to us by our ancestors ... a spirit of community that speaks to accountability and responsibility, leading to a strong sense of security and identity.

This is the climate, Mister Speaker, in which we want to be creating jobs at the local level in order to create a livable and vibrant community where human initiatives, work, and stable families can flourish - a community where streets are safe to walk, the air and water are clean, housing is secure, and all services are accessible.

Such a livable and vibrant community is one where learning is a commitment for life, which in turn can foster the skills, habits of mind, and attitudes that will make work rewarding and families nurturing.

Mister Speaker, let us show all our people that through new action on community development and Local Government Reform that facilitates economic development, they can sit around the table and enjoy the fruits of our collective labour.

Let us show all our people, that they can indeed join the march, fearlessly and with confidence, into the 21st century.

Let us show all our people, that they can be gainfully employed and achieve an excellent livelihood exactly where they are living.

Let us show all our people that together we will never rest until each and every one of us, as sons and daughters of this nation can feel a sense of belonging.

Let us show all our people that together we can build a nation that holds the sanctity of life as paramount and upholds and respects the rights and dignity of its citizens.

Let us show all our people that as a nation we seek not only to be prosperous but we also seek to improve the living standard of every Jamaican.

Let us show all our people, Mister Speaker, that together we seek to ensure that none of us is homeless.

That none of us is hungry and that each and every one of us has access to good health care.

Let us show all our people that together we can ensure that all our children are educated and are provided with the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

When we have succeeded in ensuring that none is left behind, that we all have equal stakes in this beautiful country, then and only then, Mister Speaker, will we produce extraordinary results on a consistent basis.

Only then, will we be transformed into a secure and caring nation, a great nation, where individuals fulfill their potential, are in control of their destiny and take responsibility for their lives and work always for the larger good.

I now invite my colleagues in this Honourable House and the entire nation to reflect on this vision and programme, and to commit to working together to **“GET IT RIGHT”**.

The country requires it!

The communities have demanded it!

We have an obligation to deliver it!

To fail is not an option. Let us get it right and ensure that no citizen is left behind in this march towards development, with **ONE VISION, ONE PEOPLE AND A STRONG JAMAICA**.

I thank you, Mister Speaker.

God Bless Jamaica.

End