

Ministry of Local Government,
Community Development and Sport

Contribution to

The Sectoral Debate 2005

*“The re-organization and empowerment of the Local Authorities
as well as the emphasis on community development
are two processes that are critical
in improving governance in the country.”*

Presented by:
Hon. Portia Simpson Miller

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mister Speaker my first acknowledgement this afternoon is to the Lord God Almighty to whom I lift my voice in thanksgiving for mercies too many to mention. He has been my source of inspiration, strength and light at the end of the tunnel in life when all else seems to grow dim.

Special thanks to my spiritual team of pastors and prayer warriors across the island and the special group of women who go into prayer daily to intercede on my behalf.

I give thanks for the strong support during the past year afforded me by family, friends and colleagues.

Let me pay special tribute to one such colleague, the Most Honorable P.J. Patterson, Prime Minister for his unwavering diligence to making the vision of a better Jamaica through continued commitment to community development and participation.

To my Parliamentary Colleagues I say, thank you for your encouragement and may we continue to work assiduously in putting service to the people of Jamaica above self.

To each of my constituents of South West St. Andrew, each and every-one of you including my councillors, Audrey, Basil and Karl, constituency executives, area coordinators, and youth leaders, to God be the glory great things he hath done. South West is no worse off than it was last year and though improvements are not always happening as fast we would like them to, I salute you for your perseverance in trying times. Heartfelt thanks and love for your continued support and confidence in my abilities to lead you for so many years. I use this opportunity to publicly pledge with the help of God Almighty to relentlessly pursue your vision for better economic and social conditions. Challenges we face, and though daunting the task may seem, but together we can achieve.

Errald, my husband, advisor and friend, thanks for your unwavering support over the years and your generosity of spirit and kindness of heart.

To my Permanent Secretary, Miss Loraine Robinson, advisors, directors and staff of the Ministry and its agencies I say thank you for your invaluable advice and support and I deeply acknowledge your commitment and dedication. You definitely epitomize the saying: when the going gets rough, the tough get going.

A special thank you to my personal staff at the Ministry and my housekeeper, Marva. Thanks for being there for me.

The continued support of international donor agencies is a major success factor in the achievements of the Ministry and in this regard, I express deep appreciation to the European Union (EU), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Department for International Development (DIFID), and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

Mister Speaker, to the Mayors and Councillors and to the administrative staff within the Local Authorities, I commend them for their hard work in keeping the local government reform on the front burner of our priorities. I thank them for their support.

To all Jamaica I say a big thank you as I continue to serve as your obedient servant.

PREAMBLE

Mr. Speaker the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development & Sport has portfolio oversight of 23 public entities which deliver a range of services that touch the daily life of every Jamaican citizen.

Mr. Speaker I am tabling two documents before this Honourable House today.

Firstly, I am tabling a Ministry Paper on the Jamaican Policy Against Doping in Sport (2005). The Government of Jamaica is committed to the fight against drugs in sport and will do everything in its power to safeguard the integrity, values and 'spirit of sport', and to ensure an anti-doping environment which influences behavior among participants, and dissuades athletes from using prohibited methods.

Secondly, the Performance Report of the Ministry for the period 2004/2005 which is a comprehensive and detailed account of the work of the Ministry and its agencies. I urge members of the House to take the time to peruse this document. I would like nonetheless to highlight a number of areas of the work of the Ministry.

SPORT

Mr. Speaker I would like to begin with sport.

Sport continues to be a source of inspiration, unity and hope for all of us here and abroad. We can see this in every area of sporting endeavors.

At the Olympic Games held last year in Athens, Jamaica had a haul of two gold, one silver and two bronze medals. Who can forget the images of our golden girls and the tremendous pride that we all felt with the playing of the Jamaican National Anthem not once but twice

Our commendations to Danny McFarlane in taking the silver medal in the very competitive four hundred meters hurdles. He displayed tenacity endurance and self-belief.

The pre and post Olympic performances of Asafa Powell have been superb. Since last year, he has consistently ranked number one in the world.

Due to our prowess in track and field and Special Olympics, the Government of Jamaica approved entering into a partnership agreement with Special Olympics International, thereby receiving financial support from Special Olympics international to benefit more MEDFEST programs.

The first of these programs was inaugurated at the Windsor School near Spanish Town, April 23, 2005. It should be noted that Special Olympics Athlete, Tamara Mitchell, at the Winter Games in Japan, won three gold medals in the 100, 200 and 300 metres and Testa Johnson won gold in the 333 metres and silver in the 500 metres.

The Para Olympians won one gold and two bronze medals while breaking a world record at the Olympic Games held in Athens.

Gymnastics and Tae Kwando continue to develop by winning medals and unearthing new talents. We look forward to their continued growth and development.

In cricket, Jamaica won the Regional Carib Beer Cup competition this year.

The Jamaica Netball team won the Caribbean Senior and under Sixteen Championships and is world ranked number two at the junior level and third at the senior level.

The Jamaica National Football team won the Digicel Football Championships that was held earlier this year in Trinidad. We were all very disappointed that the Reggae Boyz did not qualify for the World Cup 2006, but we are looking forward to greater things in the upcoming Gold Cup competition to be held in the USA in July 2005.

Our Volleyball Riddim Girls qualified for the second round playoff to be held in Santo Domingo.

We must build on these achievements. We must find a way to use these positive influences to inspire the Jamaican society to greater successes. This is indeed a solid foundation on which to build a brighter future.

Institute of Sports

The Institute of Sports is being repositioned to provide support to sustain the high standards in sports attained by Jamaicans in various sporting arenas.

In 2005/2006, the Institute intends to actively pursue the establishment of partnerships with private sector organizations to facilitate the implementation of its programs. A number of private sector firms have pledged their support for the Institute's programs and for this we are thankful.

Mr. Speaker let me at this point say special thanks to corporate Jamaica for their continued support of sports, and may I commend the thousands of volunteers who continue to give their time, energies and skills willingly in supporting the

development of our nation's sports. Let me also Mr. Speaker thank the Media for their support.

Cuba will assist Jamaica in the disciplines of boxing, volleyball, basketball, swimming and hockey. Jamaica will assist Cuba with cricket and athletics. Five Cuban coaches have been identified. Special requests were made for these coaches by the respective Sporting Associations and we are happy that INSPORT was able to sign an agreement with the Cuban Sports Institute to make this a reality.

The Institute will engage the services of a sports psychologist to support the mental development of our athletes.

Sport Tourism

On a daily basis, by their outstanding performances, our athletes are adding golden value to the brand – **Jamaica**.

The Board of Institute of Sports has established a Special Committee to explore the ways and means to capitalize on this fast growing and lucrative area of economic growth.

Brand-Jamaica will be on display later this summer in Helsinki, Finland, at the World Athletics Championships when our Jamaican athletes will again take on the world. So, look out!

Sports tourism will be encouraged by the hosting of major international events while capitalizing on the achievements of our sportsmen and women especially our track and field athletes when they are competing at the World Championships to be held in Helsinki, Finland in August 2005.

In this regard, it should be noted Mr. Speaker that thirteen triple jumpers from the United Kingdom visited Jamaica recently for training at Catherine Hall, Montego Bay.

World Cup Cricket 2007

Jamaica has been awarded the yellow package in the Cricket World Cup 2007 to be held in the region. The World Cup Cricket 2007 opening ceremony will be held in Greenfield, Trelawny. We will also be hosting six first round matches and one semi-final match at Sabina Park.

The World Cup presents an opportunity to mobilize the nation to take advantage of the significant inflow of tourists expected from this mega event. Note should be taken that this will be the biggest event ever to come to this region and has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economy and national pride.

Let me commend the Honourable Prime Minister for his efforts to make this dream a reality and to pledge the support of the Ministry of Local Government, Community Development and Sport and all its agencies in doing everything to ensure the successful implementation of these games and activities in Jamaica.

Independence Park Limited

The recently concluded Jamaica International Invitational Track Meet presented by the Independence Park Limited with the support of the Sports Development Foundation sought to tap into this sports tourism market.

Independence Park Limited has been identified for the long-awaited establishment of the Sports Library and Archives. This will again allow not only for this information to be available to our citizens but will be accessed by visitors to our shores who will be introduced to the extremely rich legacy of Jamaica in the field of sports locally and internationally.

The unveiling of a statue in honour of Merlene Ottey for her contribution to Jamaican track and field athletics, will add a further major attraction to the complex.

Independence Park Limited continues to focus on increasing the usage of the facilities and more importantly developing its commercial viability.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that only last Saturday, (May 28, 2005), all six facilities at the Park were being used simultaneously. This demonstrates the growth in the number of sporting activities taking place at Independence Park as well as the developing interest in sports by Jamaicans and represents an encouraging sign of things to come.

Sports Development Foundation

The Sports Development Foundation is investing J\$186m in support of programmes through government agencies, sporting associations, community-based organizations and projects. Meanwhile, athletes also benefit directly from a special fund.

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

On February 10, 2004 Jamaica became the 97th signatory to the Copenhagen Declaration on Anti-Doping in Sports. This signified the Government's commitment to the fight against doping in sport. This is supported by an approved budget of \$25M for 2005/2006.

One of the key elements in the Jamaica Anti-Doping Program is the establishment of a national anti-doping organization named the Jamaican Anti-Doping Commission (JADCO). However, pending the enactment of the requisite legislation, Cabinet gave approval for an Interim Anti-Doping Committee to be established to maintain and carry out the Jamaican Anti-doping Programme. Cabinet has approved the necessary drafting instructions to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and, also the Jamaican Policy against Doping in Sport 2005. This has already been tabled in the Honourable House today.

International Year of Sport

All of this is being done in the recognition of the United Nations Year of Sports and Physical Education.

THE JAMAICA FIRE BRIGADE

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my focus to the Jamaica Fire Brigade which continues to face significant challenges in its efforts to fulfill its mandate of "Saving Lives and Protecting Property" given the limited resources. Nonetheless, during 2004/05, the Jamaica Fire Brigade responded to a total of 14,190 fire calls saving property estimated at \$2B. The Emergency Medical Services also responded to 2,504 calls during the year.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of the Fire Services there are five main areas I want to highlight this afternoon:

The First area is that of training, Mr. Speaker. No organization can survive without constant training and development, hence the Ministry has embarked on a plan for the training of firefighters. To this end, Cabinet has approved the acquisition of property at Twickenham Park in St. Catherine for this purpose and a deposit has been made to the current owners.

A Training School Development Committee has been established and tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that the Jamaica Fire Brigade Training School begins operations in the financial year 2005/2006. Long term plans for this include the training of firefighters and officers in the region. This initiative, Mr. speaker, should assist the school to be self-sustaining and not be a charge on the public purse.

The second area is refurbishing. Under this programme, Mr. Speaker, the Stony Hill, Rollington Town and Morant Bay Fire Stations were refurbished and the Falmouth Fire Station was demolished in May, in preparation for the building of a new prototype fire station, which is expected to be complete by the end of October 2006. Work will commence on a regional prototype fire station at Barnett Street in Montego Bay in September 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the third area is on vehicles and equipment. I am heartened to report to this Honourable House that the negotiations for the purchase of much needed units for the Fire Brigade are now complete. We are now in the process of acquiring the necessary endorsement from the National Contracts Commission and approval from Cabinet.

I therefore expect Mr. Speaker, to be announcing the name of the supplier very shortly.

This contract is for the procurement of thirty three fire fighting units in the first instance which should be arriving in the island over a nine month period. The other eight units to complete the total of forty-one vehicles will be purchased in due course.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that this hiatus between order and delivery of fire units is not unusual, as these units are purpose-built to meet the specification of any particular territory. However, Mr. Speaker, the Government, well recognizes that a way has to be found for the Brigade to continue to offer service in the interim.

A programme has therefore been put in train to refurbish serviceable units at a minimum cost by the Vehicle Repairs and Maintenance Division of the Brigade. Under this programme, it is expected that approximately six units will be refurbished, and will result in a more dependable fleet until the new units arrive. Mr. Speaker, in order to accomplish this and to ensure that the Maintenance Division is able to put in place an effective preventative and predictive maintenance programme, the Brigade's workshop is being retooled, with tools and equipment costing approximately \$500,000.00 for Financial year 2005/2006.

Mr. Speaker, the Brigade continues to enjoy corporate support and received last year, donations of three fire units – two from the combined efforts of the J.R. Group and Digicel and another from the United States Embassy.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth area is the reorganization and modernization of the service.

The programme to re-organize and modernize the Jamaica Fire Brigade, Mr. Speaker, is another step in the Government's Public Sector Modernisation programme. The programme is being conducted through a technical assistance programme under the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID).

Mr. Speaker, a six-man team is currently in the island to conduct a review of the operational effectiveness, the administrative systems and the governance arrangements in the Brigade, at the end of which a Diagnostic Report will be

provided. Ultimately, a Performance Improvement Plan will be prepared which will inform all decisions regarding modernization and restructuring of the Brigade.

The fifth area Mr. Speaker, is the Community Outreach Program. I am most heartened and encouraged by the spirit of the members of the Brigade, who have devised a self-help project, whereby every two months, teams of firefighters will work on selected stations, focusing on improving their appearance. This Ministry, Mr. Speaker, has committed to provide paint, equipment and supplies in order to assist in achieving this most laudable objective.

The first such project began on Labour Day, Mr. Speaker, when approximately 100 firefighters worked to transform the appearance of the Fire Boat Station in Newport East. Work continues on the station, particularly on the plumbing and electrical works.

Mr. Speaker, please permit me to ask the members of this Honorable House to join me in saluting the men and women of the Jamaica Fire Brigade, who have demonstrated in no uncertain way that the spirit of volunteerism is not dead in Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by congratulating the officers, sub-officers and firefighters of the Jamaica Fire Brigade, who, in the midst of all the challenges which they face daily, have found time to dedicate to the less fortunate in the communities in which they serve.

I refer Mr. Speaker, to the Home Work Programme initiated by the Board of the Jamaica Fire Brigade, at the Trench Town and Rollington Town Fire Stations. The programme focuses on students in these communities who are sitting the GSAT examinations. They are mentored by members of the Brigade and provided with facilities where they are able to conduct their studies and do their home work in relative comfort.

Mr. Speaker, in the past year, the programme was extended to include a spiritual dimension, with member of the Brigade transporting the students to church each Sunday morning.

I am proud to announce Mr. Speaker that Forty-three (43) students on the programme gained places at various High Schools in 2004 school year. Without a doubt, Mr. Speaker, these are encouraging results and will therefore be replicated at other Fire Stations across the island in the upcoming school year.

Bush Fire

Mr. Speaker, The increase incident of bush fire over the last year has been much cause for concern, but Mr. Speaker, I think it important to advise this Honourable House that effort to combat this problem will have to involve community members

to a large degree as these fires are often in areas that are inaccessible to fire units.

The Fire Brigade Mr. Speaker has therefore developed a programme of public education to teach farmers and other community members methods of preventing bush fires and also to contain and extinguish such fires.

Despite the huge challenges facing the fire services, significant progress is being made to overcome them and we expect this focus to continue over the next year.

NATIONAL SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

The National Solid Waste Management Authority has been faced with a number of challenges chief among these were the allegations of mismanagement and corruption. The Ministry took steps to address these allegations by requesting the Contractor General and the Auditor General to investigate the operations of the Authority.

The Contractor General presented an interim report in April and the final report will be submitted to me next week. As you are aware Mr. Speaker, the Board resigned en bloc and the Permanent Secretary has been asked to head an interim management team until a new Board has been named. This Board will be named shortly.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the Authority continued to forge partnerships to facilitate improvements in Solid Waste Management. Collaborative links were established with the **SEEN Groupe**, of Martinique, to facilitate the safe management and disposal of biomedical waste that can be detrimental to the environment.

A Hazardous Waste Management Policy has been drafted through inter-agency collaboration to reduce the negative effects of special or hazardous waste on the environment and human health.

The Authority also joined with major providers of cellular services in Jamaica to identify an effective system for the disposal of discarded batteries and cellular phones. Similar partnerships between the Authority, the Ministry of Land & Environment and private sector distributors developed a project for the proper disposal of used lead acid batteries.

The Authority also partnered with NGOs and community groups for a special programme of collecting non-biodegradable waste from deep rural communities. These efforts were recognized with awards from Ridge to Reef and the Coastal Water Improvement Project (CWIP).

The restructuring of the operations of the Authority will allow for improvements in the delivery of this vital service in a more efficient and effective manner.

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE OF JAMAICA FOUNDATION

The Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation continued to fulfill its mandate by providing education, training and developmental counseling for young people with special needs at its 7 main centres and 6 outreach stations.

The Centre's core programme – the Programme for Adolescent Mothers – provided continuing education for 1,602 teen mothers during the fiscal year. Of the 1,602 girls served, 524 were returned to the formal school system; 69 attended CXC classes and 813 accepted contraceptive methods. Unfortunately, there were 236 “dropouts” from the programme. The reasons most commonly cited were financial difficulties, migration and the death of a primary provider.

The Foundation continued other programs which are offshoots/support activities to the Programme for Adolescent Mothers. In 2004/2005, the Chubby Cheeks and day nurseries for babies of teen mothers and working mothers catered to a total of 994 babies. Over 1400 men and women accessed our Referral/Walk-in Counseling services.

The Skill Training Programme for young men and women in the 17-24 age group trained 165 persons in areas such as cosmetology, garment construction, bakery production, catering and house craft.

The Centre also catered to the needs of young men and youth at risk. The Young Men at Risk Programme provided education and training, reproductive health counseling and job placement for 863 young men in the 17-25 age group. While the Youth Activity Programme provided education and training for 1,588 children/adolescents in the 10-18 age group who are at risk of or who have “dropped out” of school. Of this number, 360 were new participants and 80 were returned to the formal school system.

Among the challenges faced by The Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation is the implementation of its programs by limited staff to cope with a growing clientele, and coping with the special educational needs of the clientele. These needs range from low literacy and numeracy skills to attitudinal problems in respect of the more positive social values.

In 2005/2006, the Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation intends to expand its reach by increasing the number of participants by 10% and encouraging at least 50% of pregnant schoolgirls within the prescribed age, to enroll in the programme. In terms of the curricula, the Centre will expand the offering in Information Technology to include students at all centers.

Secondly the foundation will strengthen the relationships/partnerships with other agencies of the Ministry and Non-Governmental Organizations and improve the physical environment especially in regard to the temporary facility at the Morant Bay Outreach Station.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker you will recall my tabling in this House Ministry Paper 7/03 regarding the reform of local government.

The re-organization and empowerment of the local authorities as well as the emphasis on community development are two processes that are critical in improving governance in the country.

This re-organization is driven by the following nine areas of focus:

The First area of focus is the development of a national policy on both decentralization and the principles of local government reforms that enjoy widespread bi-partisan support across the nation.

To facilitate this process I re-established the National Advisory Council on Local Government Reform in 2004.

The National Advisory Council (NAC) on Local Government reform intensified its work through the research-sponsored grants to the Association of Local Government Authorities (ALGA), the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies (SALISES) and the Local Government Reform Unit. The NAC held its first round of consultations with key stakeholder groups and is also participating in other local level consultations organized by Association of Local Government Authorities and the Social Development Commission. These consultations have been providing valuable feedback and perspectives on key aspects of the reform.

The National Advisory Council is preparing a report of its activities and this report is expected to be completed by the end of next month. The report will be discussed with all the stakeholders in July and these consultations should assist the National Advisory Council in finalizing its recommendations.

The Second area of focus is to have all local authorities develop and submit a reform plan that enjoys the support of the citizens within the jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker I have to say frankly that I have been less than happy with the pace of this activity in the councils. In recent times I have seen a greater urgency on the part of some Councils such as St Thomas, Clarendon, and St Elizabeth to push this process along. I have also been encouraged by the activity of the Association of Local Government Authorities in holding consultations in association with the Social Development Commission on local government

reform. During the course of this financial year we will have to step up the pace of this activity.

The Third area of focus Mr. Speaker is the support for the development of mechanisms and processes for the participation of citizens through the establishment of the Community Development Committees, Development Area Committees and Parish Development Committee (PDC). The aim is to build their capacity to be the primary vehicle for citizen involvement in the development and governance processes. In the key output area of governance, the Social Development Commission (SDC) seeks to facilitate improved, inclusive and transparent processes for including civil society and the private sector. In support of this objective, the SDC continued to work with citizens in their communities to enhance understanding of current realities, challenges, priorities and options; Their focus is to strengthen the capacity of Community Based Organizations to pursue community development planning and participate in deliberations with state agencies and the private sector.

SDC's efforts to empower communities resulted in 340 of Jamaica's 783 communities having 43% active Community Development Committees. CDC's federate over 5,000 community-based organizations (CBO's) in the country.

The Commission also continued to work with Development Areas and other groups to gain 100% coverage. At present 42% of Development Areas have established committees. These groups had regular meetings and were able to agree on development constraints and priorities for their communities.

The production of community and parish profiles through local participatory and quantitative processes and the use of this data by citizens to develop community development plans and access relevant expertise are primary to SDC's core work.

In 2004/05, SDC continued to refine, validate and document its research methodologies and findings.

The Commission worked with STATIN, NEPA, PIOJ, Parish Councils and citizens to define and map 462 (42%) community borders and boundaries. A total of 166 (21%) current community profiles are available and parish profiles are slated for revision starting in 2005.

During the past year, over 170 projects emerged from community processes and received support from a range of external agencies.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, Community Based Organizations require continued support to develop the necessary skills and attributes to enable a stronger involvement in Development Area and Parish Development Committee processes.

The Fourth area of focus Mr. Speaker is the development of capacity within the local authorities through a range of training interventions at all levels.

In an effort, Mr. Speaker, to adequately respond to the challenges of sustainable local development, the Ministry focused on upgrading the human resource and technical capacity within the Planning Departments of the Local Authorities. All Local Authorities now have a Director of Planning in place. Urban Planners have been appointed in KSAC, Manchester, St. Ann and St. Catherine Parish Councils. The entire technical staff is being trained in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to ensure that they have the best tools to do the job.

Improvements have also been made to the Development Approval Process to make it more user friendly and to reduce the processing time. The subdivision application form is available electronically on the Ministry website and will be on the Local Authorities websites this financial year.

The plan is for the Implementation of twenty institutional strengthening training interventions targeting 1,100 persons by September 2006. These training areas will include Financial Management, Public Works Management, Councillor Training, Performance Management and Citizen Participation. The Ministry will also lead a series of non-training interventions in Organizational Analysis and will develop courses in Municipal Engineering and Infirmary Care.

It is also our intention Mr. Speaker to launch an Association of Local Government Trainers by September 2006.

The Fifth area of focus Mr. Speaker is the rehabilitation of infrastructure (including roads, markets and parish council buildings) and the development of a maintenance programme to ensure the sustainability of the parish infrastructure.

In terms of infrastructure provision, Mr. Speaker, 168.2 km of parochial roads have been rehabilitated in ten parishes with funds from the Inter American Development Bank and the European Union. The investment in the parochial road infrastructure during the year was valued at approximately J\$771M. An additional 26.79 km of roads in three parishes will be rehabilitated.

Mr. Speaker, 34.78 km of parochial roads were rehabilitated through the Parish Infrastructure Development project in Hanover, Westmoreland, St. Mary, Kingston and St. Andrew at a cost of J\$211,458,709.19. Work is in progress on an additional 10.48 km of parochial roads in St. Thomas and Portland.

Rehabilitation works were completed on 133.42 km of parochial and RADA agricultural roads in Manchester, St. Ann, St. Elizabeth, St. Thomas, Clarendon and St. Catherine at a cost of J\$559,537,605.41 under the European

Union/Stabex Grant. The rehabilitation of a further 16.31km of parochial roads is to be completed this year in St. Thomas, St. Mary and Portland.

The Manchester Parish Council's administrative offices were rehabilitated at a cost of \$45 million. These offices were officially opened earlier this month.

The Ministry would like to acknowledge receipt of two bobcats for drain and gully cleaning from the coastal water improvement project (CWIP) USAID. The Portland Parish council received one of the bobcats while the other is stationed at the ministry and will be used by other Local Authorities.

And Mr. Speaker I am happy to inform this House that a total of J\$133.7M was disbursed from the Equalization Fund to the Local Authorities to facilitate parish programs, including drain cleaning and road rehabilitation.

The Sixth area of focus Mr. Speaker is the promulgation of major laws for the reform of local government operations in three major areas; namely Local Government Reform, Local Government Finance and Financial Management and Unified Local Government Service. The focus also includes the legislative review of priority laws for amendment and enactment

Mr. Speaker, in this regard a major focus during the past year has been the support of efforts aimed at the development of a new National Building Code. This exercise is being led by the Bureau of Standards and the Jamaica Institution of Engineers in partnership with the Local Authorities and other stakeholders, The Ministry has also commenced preparatory work towards the promulgation of a new National Building Act in collaboration with our partners.

Work on a draft policy framework is far advanced, and it is expected that the Bill for this new Act will be taken to this Honorable House before the end of this legislative year.

In addition to the above Mr. Speaker, the legal arm of the reform process is receiving much attention as the **Legal and Institutional Reform Steering Committee (LIRSC)** was reconstituted in May last year to coordinate and accelerate the legislative reforms for local government. The Committee's composition reflects broad stakeholder involvement with representatives from the Local Authorities, Civil Society, the Ministry and other Government entities.

Mr. Speaker the options of entrenchment of local government in the Jamaican constitution is expected to be examined during this process

The Seventh area of focus Mr. Speaker is to foster sustainable development through the preparation and implementation of parish development plans in a

participatory process involving all stakeholders including community groups, the public and private sectors.

During 2004/2005, Mr. Speaker, efforts was intensified to encourage the preparation of Parish Development Plans. It is recognized that these plans are critical to national development planning. The Local Authorities are slowly pursuing this component. Parish plans are now at various stages of completion for Kingston & St. Andrew, Manchester, St. James, Hanover and Portland with the Kingston and St Andrew Corporation's being the most advanced. St Elizabeth has just launched its initiative in this regard. The National Housing Trust through its "Township Program" has contributed \$12m to support the St James development plan.

The Eighth area of focus Mr. Speaker is the financial autonomy of the local authorities. This includes identifying and implementing dedicated sources of revenue. This would effectively deliver the range of services expected by the citizens. In this regard a more direct discussion with the Minister of Finance will be pursued during the financial year to arrive at new agreements to facilitate the achievement of this objective

The Ninth area of focus has been advancing local democracy in the Caribbean and active participation in the international forums for reform. Jamaica has been playing a leading role in the promotion and advancement of local democracy in the Caribbean and we have been vibrant in our representation at international forums on local democracy and governance issues.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I was confirmed again this year to the chair of the Caribbean Forum of Local Government Ministers. Jamaica is now spearheading the convening of a conference of Caribbean Ministers of Local Government to be held in this fiscal year. This conference will hopefully be instrumental in forging a common and coherent set of strategies and programs for advancing democratization at the community level among regional states.

Support to the Reform Process

The reform process has received good support over the year. The Ministry received a grant of CDN \$610,000 which is approximately J\$27.5M from the Government of Canada to support several Local Government Reform initiatives through the Government of Jamaica/Canadian International development Agency (GOJ/CIDA) Supporting Local Government Reform Project (SLGRP). These funds were then disbursed through smaller grants to selected organizations actively pursuing reform initiatives. This approach is consistent with the new emphasis of giving the local authorities a much more prominent leadership role in the reform process, and utilizing every opportunity to enhance the image and capacity of these entities.

The **Association of Local Government Authorities (ALGA)** received a grant of CDN\$100,000 to provide support to the Local Authorities and Parish Development Committees.

The **Social Development Commission (SDC)** received a grant of CDN \$90,000 to increase levels of public awareness and education about Local Government and Local Government Reform (LGR). The SDC is seeking to inform citizens of their rights/obligations and encourage participation in the reform process.

The **Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social & Economic Studies (SALISES)** received a grant of CDN \$95,000 to undertake research on Local Government issues on behalf of the National Advisory Council.

The **Portmore Municipality** received a grant of CDN \$95,000 to finalize the preparation of a Sustainable Development Plan for the Portmore Municipality, as well as to develop By-laws in order to confer legal status to the Portmore Citizens Advisory Council. This new by-law will serve as a model for other Local Authorities interested in obtaining legal status for their Parish Development Committee.

The **Manchester Parish Development Committee (MPDC)** received a grant of CDN \$75,000 to enable the committee to continue work in conjunction with the Manchester Parish Council, in preparing a Sustainable Development Plan for the Parish of Manchester

The **St. James Parish Council (JPC)** received a grant of CDN \$55,000 to assist the updating process of the Greater Montego Bay Redevelopment Plan and support the re-activation of the St. James Parish Development Committee.

The **Ministry** through the **Local Government Reform Unit** received a grant of CDN \$100,000 to offset the provision of technical, secretarial & logistical support to the National Advisory Council, the Local Authorities & Parish Development Committees in the preparation of Parish Reform Plans, as well as other reform initiatives.

Mr. Speaker the reform of local government is critical to deepening local democracy in the country. Local democracy is simply about freedom close to home. At its most basic, it is about citizens controlling those who exercise power in local government and taking an active role in decision making.

Effective local governance and local democracy in my view are pivotal to the country's national development. Mr. Speaker to build on the solid foundation so expertly articulated by the Honourable Prime Minister in his budget presentation, we must this right. Local democracy, particularly the strengthening of local

government and wide citizens' participation including women and youth, is the best way to promote democratic values, deepen the democratic process and build credibility and acceptance in the process of governance. This would allow the citizens at the local level to become far more involved in solving some of the problems and challenges we face today.

Mr. Speaker I wish to place on record my support for the initiatives of the government and specifically for my colleague the Honorable Peter Phillips the Minister of National Security in the fight against crime and violence. I am convinced that if we can deepen this local democracy and bring our citizens more into this fight it will ensure that we will be victorious sooner rather than later.

I would like to invite the house to focus on how we can support the reform process, on how we can strengthen the community development process, how we can concentrate our efforts to mobilize the citizens in one movement become the center stage of these strategies to rid our country of crime and violence. This is the surest way to secure the future of our country.

Mr. Speaker I am in full support for the Education reforms being pursued by the government through the Ministry of Education. Mr. Speaker again I suggest that if we could get the citizens of the country to form a community alliance in support of education we could reap benefits far beyond our best expectations at the moment.

The local government process represents the best foundation that underpins the work of all other areas in the country. This is so because it is the closest level of decision making to the people. The communities and the citizens that live in them are the heart and soul of this system. To build on the solid foundation that has already been laid by my Government we need to get this aspect of our system right.

With greater consensus and fixity of purpose I know that we can do it.

We can do it because Jamaicans are the best at what we do when we are committed to doing something.

Mr. Speaker to "Fail" is just not an option if we are to secure the future.

I Thank You.