## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tribute to the Late Joseph Hibbert</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Constituency Matters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. SPARCOM</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Youth &amp; Children</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Culture</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sports</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Gender Issues</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Conclusion</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, I have been a member of this Honourable House since 1997, and have always looked forward to the opportunity to debate important national issues and champion the cause of my constituents.

I must say a big thank you to the people of Central St. Catherine for continuing to elect me as their MP with increased majorities – every time! You have been the wind beneath my wings for these past 16 years; individuals on whom I can depend for support and inspiration at all times – love and respect.

I thank the Jamaica Labour Party for continuing to demonstrate confidence in me, as its candidate in Central St. Catherine and in particular, to the Most Honourable Edward Seaga with whom it all started. As Leader of the party at the time, he said to me, “I know you are the right person for that constituency and I know you can do it!” Others thought I would be a lamb to the slaughter.

Also, to the Leader of the Opposition, thank you for appointing me a spokesperson and for reposing confidence in me; having assigned me responsibilities for youth, children, culture and entertainment, sports and gender affairs.

Thanks to the Speaker, and my colleagues on both sides of the House, as well as the Clerk and staff for their support.

And last, but certainly not least, I thank my long-suffering family for their understanding – my daughter, Paula McNeill Surtees, her husband, Jonathan Surtees and my grandchildren, Atavia, Mitoya and Ana; my security and staff for the support they continue to give me in spite of the long and strenuous hours they work.

Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence for a minute as I remind the House that this date, June 19, has particular significance for me. It is the 37th anniversary of the 1976 State of Emergency, in which I was imprisoned for 7 months at Up Park Camp by the government of the day.

This unfortunate event in my life will always live with me, but I have learnt to live with it despite the scars and setbacks it has caused me. It was a regrettable experience, but it has certainly made
me stronger and more committed in my desire to serve the people of this nation who mean so much to me.

I raise it today because Mr. Speaker, there is a saying that “Men forget but never forgive. Women forgive but never forget.”

I want to pay special tribute to my mother who took care of me in Canada after being exiled from the land of my birth and suffering from ill-health. My mother continues to give to Jamaica as part of an active Jamaican Diaspora through the Jamaican Canadian Association (JCA) and Women for PACE, an organization that has adopted hundreds of basic schools in Jamaica. PACE is a legacy project which was launched by Mr. Seaga, who was Prime Minister at the time, in commemoration of Jamaica’s 25th Anniversary of Independence.

I am sure that those who participated in the State of Emergency and are still alive have learnt a lesson from it. I hope that those of you who have succeeded, those who have passed, will be reluctant to allow this country to ever again descend to that level of political intolerance. I hope that you are all committed to helping to remove those scars from the political landscape. Mr. Speaker, I have now gotten that off my chest.

There are a number of new, young members in this House and I must advise them that for this country to go forward we cannot treat each other with disdain and bigotry, simply because we are on different sides of the House. This also goes for a few of the older members.

We have common commitments, common problems and therefore we must seek common solutions, and the only way we can do so is through dialogue and objectivity.

It is your duty, our duty, to ensure that the mistakes of the past that have divided and defeated us, do not occur again; and on that note I wish to pause to do the following.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE JOSEPH HIBBERT

Mr. Speaker, I must pay tribute to the life and work of a patriotic Jamaican, the late Joseph Hibbert – friend, colleague, MP, mentor and son of rural St. Andrew.
Mr. Hibbert distinguished himself over many years as a career civil servant, giving yeomen service to the Works Ministry and by extension, the people of Jamaica.

He was a gentle giant. A man with a sharp mind, unquestionable intellect, and an eye for detail. His passion for the people he served knew no bounds. For many of them, he was simply, ‘Maas Joe’.

I am personally pleased to have had the pleasure of working closely with Joe over the years. Our paths crossed as he responded to what many of us in here would consider the call to even higher service - life in active politics.

It's ironic Mr. Speaker, that for one who left the comfort and solace of private life; transitioning from life as a first-rate civil servant, to life as a representative of the people, his boldness would ultimately be betrayed.

Regrettable it was, that as the Parliament paused to salute one who served among us, our colleagues opposite – none of them, saw it fit to add their voice. That's not what we are accustomed to Mr. Speaker. It is inconsistent with the tradition we have come to uphold in this Honourable House and a true Jamaican tradition.

While in life we may have our fights but in death we unite. In politics, we must constantly remind ourselves, lest we forget, that “the same knife that stick sheep, stick goat”. Joseph Hibbert’s family is truly hurt by this display of callousness but with time being the master of all things, we look forward to Joseph Hibbert's ultimate vindication.

CONSTITUENCY MATTERS

There are a large number of burning issues in Central St. Catherine, among them, Road Rehabilitation and Infrastructure development; Welfare and Housing; Unemployment among
Women and Youth in particular and the need for a serious funding programme to assist inner-city youth at the tertiary level.

Road Rehabilitation and Infrastructure Development

Road rehabilitation continues to be a major problem. Through JDIP/ JEEP we were able to partially patch a few roads and rehabilitate Ensom Avenue and Kennedy Lane, in the Ensom City Division. But as there is so much more to be done in all 3 divisions that make up the constituency, I am looking forward to the next phase of the JDIP/JEEP Infrastructure Development Programme for a generous consideration.

Through the JSIF Inner-City Basic Services Programme, some grand plans were presented to the community of Tawes Pen and we were happy that finally there would be some improvement in the infrastructure there. But, after almost 10 years not much has changed, and the World Bank funded programme will end very soon.

In this case, my biggest disappointment is that after all these years the sewage plant is still not replaced. The people continue to live in an unhealthy environment. Sewage flowing out from the sides of the tank, sewage flowing out of the man holes, sewage in the gutter, sewage running in the gully, sewage running in the streets, sewage, sewage everywhere, while children study, play and get sick. It is a disgrace! And who gets blamed? The Member of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I had to turn up the pressure to get NEPA to serve an enforcement order on the NWC for them to become proactive in joining with JSIF to solve the problem. So now there is a new plan to replace the existing dysfunctional sewage treatment plant with a new pump station and pipeline to take the sewage out of the community to the NWC treatment facility in Eltham. I also got a commitment that the Eltham treatment plant would be upgraded because it is in a deplorable condition. But during all of this agony, I am told that JSIF can barely find the funding to get the job done.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know why the ICBSP programme was not fully implemented in the Tawes Pen community. I want to know when work on the sewage plant, if nothing else, will commence. Mr. Speaker, it will be a national disaster if the sewage tank explodes. It is
disintegrating and it is in the centre of the community. It is an emergency; it is a health hazard and an environmental disgrace.

The deadline for the work to begin keeps shifting while the World Bank funded programme is rapidly coming to an end.

I don’t intend to create a fuss about it in the House today, but I need some answers. Where are the funds that were earmarked for infrastructure development in Tawes Pen? Where is the money? Where was it spent and why has Tawes Pen not gotten its fair share of the ICBSP infrastructure development programme? No water upgrade, no road rehabilitation, no community centre.

**Welfare and Housing**

Welfare cases are numerous. I can never find enough in my CDF to deal with welfare matters – especially funerals – sometimes I have 10 funerals all at once.

Most of the communities are either informal settlements or occupied by the very poor and unemployed – most household heads are unemployed, single mothers with a number of children. While the CDF allocation helps, it is really a drop in the bucket.

Housing and land tenure is another major issue, but I plan to intensify my efforts to have this addressed, as I look forward to meeting at the earliest time with the Minister as a follow-up to my written requests to the Ministry of Transport, Works & Housing.

Minister Guy made an announcement about housing solutions for 16 Jobs Lane. Minister, I don’t know where at 16 Jobs Lane you can do all that you have announced but we will talk when we meet.

**Educational Assistance**

I spend over $4 Million on education annually from my CDF allocation to provide uniform, books, fees etc. at all levels from basic to tertiary. This is in addition to the CSJP and JSIF
assistance that is given at the tertiary level. But this only skims the surface of what is a growing need.

There is an increasing number of young people from the Spanish Town communities who have matriculated to tertiary level, but are unable to find funding to go to university or have had to drop out of college and university.

The Government needs to establish a special scholarship fund to assist inner-city youth who strive to educate themselves to the highest level in order to better their lives and their families. The nation can only benefit from this.

I welcome the debate which has started in this House on the issue and hope that we will be able to get some action out of it.

I would like to thank CSJP/JSIF for their social intervention programmes in the communities in Spanish town although at times, I am impatient with how they do things and disappointed with the long delays in getting results. However, I am still thankful, recognizing that it is the “system” that needs fundamental changes and not the functionaries who try their best.

SPARCOM

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the wider, parallel issues which affect constituencies with similarities to Central St. Catherine and the harmonization of these issues for the general benefit of constituencies within the same region or which are suffering similar deficiencies.

My years in this House have taught me one major lesson, and it is that “rain don’t fall on one man house top”.

We represent constituencies which largely suffer the same fate, with people with the same problems and the problems are endemic, sometimes epidemic and even possibly pandemic and, since they are contagious, we have to be more liberal in our approach to constituency issues.
Mr. Speaker, I want to use as an example of this approach in my own parish of St. Catherine. At the centre of the parish is Spanish Town, Jamaica’s former capital between 1534 and 1872, and still a national treasure, a town shared by me and adjoining constituencies.

The town holds great historical significance, including the old King’s House, on which steps the proclamation of emancipation was read in 1838, and the historical Spanish Town Square, considered one of the finest Georgian structures still standing anywhere in the world.

There are other historical sites and there is a recent history of industrial and commercial development. Only Kingston could have matched the number of factories which were once operating in and around Spanish Town. But the financial sector meltdown in the 1990s reduced the town to a shell of its former glory and today, Spanish Town continues to suffer from a serious level of neglect since that unfortunate period.

Unemployment is unbelievably high, there is a need for improvement in the health and educational facilities, there is need for significant social and economic intervention; the buildings are deteriorating, traffic is choked and development is stifled by the lack of interest and the lack of expansion over the past two decades.

The result, Mr. Speaker, has been increased crime and violence, the unravelling of the social fabric and the ensuing hardships and frustrations caused by the lack of opportunities for self-development.

Mr. Speaker, I am currently nurturing a dance group, the Spanish Town Dance Theatre Company, in the constituency and it is so inspirational to see the enthusiasm and excitement it generates among the youths involved, simply because it offers them an opportunity to express themselves and the hope of fulfilment.

That is why I am so disappointed that the proposal to create the Spanish Town Redevelopment Company (SPARCOM), which was approved by Cabinet in 2006, continues to die a slow death and will eventually become a still birth if we don’t act now.

The objective of SPARCOM, a public/private sector entity is to arrest “the urban decay” settling in Spanish Town. The redevelopment company plans include:
1. A Redevelopment Area Plan and a comprehensive community awareness programme designed with special emphasis on 22 communities, among them: Tawes Pen, March Pen Road, Africa, Job Lane, Shelter Rock, Windsor Road, Rivoli, De La Vega City, Thompson Pen, St. John’s Road, Gordon Pen, Morgan’s Lane, Dallas, Waterloo Lane.

2. The development of the Heritage Tourism District with Emancipation Square at the centre as a tourism attraction.

3. The development of a distinct Civic and Administrative Focal Point for the Town.

4. The development of a distinct Regional Retail and Wholesale District in Spanish Town. In fact, the GraceKennedy group have set up their operation in Spanish Town as a result.

5. The development of viable mixed income neighbourhoods.

6. The development of a package of financial incentives and technical assistance that would give Spanish Town a competitive edge and make it attractive to investors.

I remember the enthusiasm generated when it was announced. The then Chairman of the National Investment Bank of Jamaica (NIBJ), Aubyn Hill, was named Chairman of the company and indicated that his team stood ready to take all necessary steps to improve the old capital, as soon as Cabinet gave approval. The Cabinet gave its approval in 2006. This came out of OPM under the present administration as Government.

Further, during the JLP administration, taxation legislation to facilitate this development was passed. To date – nothing more – SPARCOM is like an iron balloon, it just cyaan ‘buss’.

This is not a partisan issue. SPARCOM was not intended for Central St. Catherine alone. It would impact the development of East Central and West Central St. Catherine, as well as the new constituencies of South Central and Eastern with benefits extending beyond those boundaries.

Mr. Speaker, the Government needs to get SPARCOM funded and operationalized to give the people of St. Catherine hope. The IMF restrictions won’t prevent it. SPARCOM will help to stop the decline in dereliction, improve the physical condition of Spanish Town and its environs and improve its economic viability.
For ownership and management government must lead the way through such agencies like the Development Bank of Jamaica, the Tourism Enhancement Fund (TEF), the National Insurance Fund (NIF), the National Housing Trust (NHT), the St. Catherine Parish Council and by partnering with private sector companies, MPs, other stakeholders and the people for a joint effort to make it happen. Over to you Prime Minister, it’s in your shop.

Amidst the rumble, however, we still give thanks for the proud moments. While crime rises in other areas, it is on the decline in Central St. Catherine and in spite of the unhealthy environs, some of our children are doing very well, like the National Spelling Bee champion boy, Gifton Wright, who made Jamaica proud in the Scripps Howard National Spelling competition in the US.

We also boast several outstanding football teams, among them, Albion, who have just moved up to the Major League, Flamingo, Tawes Meadows and Black Lions. In basketball, the Spanish Town Spartans are poised to possibly win the mid-season playoffs. In netball, we boast the champions, Job Lane, with the Spanish Town netball team hot on their heels. The Spanish Town Dance Theatre company, although a young company, have many medals in Festival and are now preparing for their season of dance in October.

We have young attorneys-at-law, doctors, scientists, teachers and many other young professionals coming out of these communities. We are proud of one of the world’s best female cricketers – Stephanie Taylor and Tremaine Stewart of the Reggae Boys, both from the Gordon Pen community; Chevelle Franklyn from Tawes Pen, Lieutenant Stitchie – Jobs Lane. I could go on but time does not permit.

NATIONAL ISSUES

YOUTH & CHILDREN

Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister of Youth & Culture may think that I have been paying a considerable amount of attention to her portfolio. Yes, it is my responsibility to do so and it is warranted.
The fact is that, our children, particularly those in conflict with the law, are in the greatest need of care and protection but they are getting the least attention.

The Government’s response has been more focused on punishing them and locking them up instead of lifting them up and protecting them.

Mr. Speaker, what I am about to say may be interpreted as contentious but these are truths supported by facts, not platitudes.

As a Government, the JLP felt that the Correctional Services were designed for treating with adult criminal offenders. The objective of their incarceration is punishment. We did not consider this to be the correct institutional or policy framework for treating with delinquent children who need to be reformed, cared for and mentored - not punished.

I join with Jamaicans for Justice (JFJ) and other voices, calling on the Government to immediately do the following:

i. Remove children from the Horizon Adult Remand Centre, Fort Augusta and police lockups;
ii. Remove the designation of “Uncontrollable Child” from legislation as a reason to incarcerate a child;
iii. Revise the Child Care and Protection Act and Corrections Act;
iv. Provide access to quality legal counsel for children who come before the courts;

Minister Hanna’s announcement that the Government proposed to spend $75 Million Dollars to create, at selected police stations, facilities for holding juveniles, is a retrograde step.

**UNCONTROLLABLE CHILDREN**

Uncontrollable behaviour is by far the most cited reason for a child to be admitted to a juvenile institution. In 2012, 54 children were admitted as uncontrollable – the largest number in 4 years.

In 2012, 73% of children admitted to juvenile facilities had committed nonviolent offenses. This is the highest rate in the last four years, with an increase of 8% since 2011.
The lack of diversion programmes is forcing the over incarceration of juveniles at inadequate facilities.

Mr. Speaker, when a girl is found to be uncontrollable, she is sent to Fort Augusta Adult Correctional Facility, Horizon Adult Remand Centre or Diamond Crest Juvenile Correctional Centre. These children with behavioural and emotional problems must not be incarcerated, much less sent to prisons with adult populations.

Mr. Speaker, according to information I have gleaned, we have approximately 6,000 children in state care. There are approximately 2,500 children in Child Care Facilities (Children’s Homes and Places of Safety).

There are no Girls Homes in operation in Jamaica and only one Place of Safety for girls in the corporate area, when up to 2011 there were 3 – Glenhope, Musgrave, Homestead.

Musgrave was completely destroyed by fire. Glenhope is still functional but not occupied by the girls and it is currently being slowly taken over by the Glenhope Nursery, which adjoins the facility.

Homestead now has a mixed population of so-called “uncontrollable” girls; girls who are on fit person’s order and who should be properly placed in a Girls Home to learn a skill or go to school as they are without a family home; semi-correctional girls who are awaiting correctional orders to be placed at one of the adult correctional facilities. Homestead is also overcrowded and inundated as most of the Glenhope staff were transferred there after sitting idle from December 2011 to January 2013.

My information is that the girls are not even being properly prepared to be placed in foster homes, so that as they are placed, they end up back in state-care or run away from their foster parents.

Mr. Speaker, it puzzles me as to why we have our girls in adult remand facilities when the Windsor Girls Home is unoccupied. The facilities there are being wasted when all that is needed is to improve the security of the place. Why is the Glenhope Place of Safety not being used to house these girls when only a small section was damaged by fire in December 2011.
Both places of safety are equipped with skills training facilities with equipment sitting idle.

There are approximately 350 children in Correctional Centres as at December 31, 2012. Since January 2012, over 150 children have spent at least 2 days in a police lockup for being deemed uncontrollable or in need of care and protection.

Being deemed uncontrollable is the most common reason for children to enter the justice system; and 68% of children in conflict with the law have had no legal representation.

In terms of the family home environment, 50% have a family member who had involvement with the police or courts; 41% are afraid someone might physically hurt them; 38% had been in a child care institution at some point; 87% have seen fights in their community; 77% have seen or heard someone being shot; 55% were suspended or expelled; and 34% dropped out of school.

In terms of personal experiences: 47% reported experiencing abuse, the most common being severe beatings at home; 47% have used marijuana; 43% have used alcohol; and 37% have thought of killing or hurting themselves in the past.

What these figures are saying to us, is that the problem with our children or juveniles and, by extension our youth, goes way beyond the issue of building a new prison or setting up specialised areas in police stations to accommodate them after they have gone down a certain road.

When the JLP lost power in December 2011, we were on our way to effectively dealing with the problem. The responsibility for children was transferred just months before, to the ministry of youth and I proceeded to engage UNICEF in a discussion aimed at funding a youth and child specialist to ensure that special and focused attention would be given to our children and youth.

We certainly wouldn’t have solved all the problems, but we made sure we had a grasp of them and we had a plan in place to deal with them. In fact, Prime Minister Golding at the time, announced that juvenile correction and remand facilities would be removed from the correctional services and placed under the CDA.
We constructed the Metcalfe Street Juvenile Remand Centre in Denham Town for the boys, as the beginning of a programme which would have addressed the issues of juveniles in adult facilities.

And to show that we were not just about building lock-ups, on December 20, 2011, approximately one week before the General Election in 2011, we signed an agreement, involving various stakeholders, for the provision of intervention programmes for boys at the Metcalfe Street Secure Juvenile Centre.

The agreement was signed by the Ministry of National Security, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

It was about care and protection while they are in the facility, a programme of redirection that would help them to make the right choices upon their return to their families and communities.

We understood that any effective juvenile justice programme must also focus on addressing the underlying factors behind the offending behaviour of juveniles, and the agreement between USAID, UNDP and the Ministry of National Security underscored the international partners' commitment to work directly with the Ministry in achieving these goals of ensuring public safety and the rights and well-being of youth, who find themselves in conflict with the law.

Other measures we proposed were:

1. For work to commence on the renovation and outfitting of the Montpelier Youth Camp in St. James to provide accommodation for 250 children;

2. That boys housed at the Rio Cobre Juvenile Correctional Centre be relocated to Montpelier and, thereafter, the Rio Cobre Centre be designated a juvenile correctional centre for girls;

3. That the former youth camp at Cape Clear in St. Mary, which was being used as the regional offices of the Social Development Commission (SDC), be converted into a juvenile remand centre, to house boys who are to be taken before the Court or are awaiting a decision of the Court. Boys being housed at the St. Andrew Remand Centre in
Stony Hill would be transferred to Cape Clear, and the Stony Hill facility would then be designated a juvenile remand centre for girls.

The intention was to ensure that children on remand are housed in separate facilities from those subjected to correctional orders. As soon as the Cape Clear became operational, there would have been no reason for children to be held at police stations longer than is necessary to arrange for them to be transported to the Cape Clear facility, nor would any of these children have to be held at adult correctional institutions.

Courtroom space would have been provided at Cape Clear, so that children housed there would not have to leave the premises for attendance at court.

4. The Hill Top Juvenile Correctional Centre in St. Ann would have been retained as a high security facility for boys, and the Diamond Crest Correctional Centre in St. Elizabeth would have been used for girls with particular behavioural problems that require special attention.

It grieves me that a change of government could have so altered plans already in motion for such an important game-changing development in ensuring the rights of our children, that a year and a half later we are in a crisis situation.

I believe that the failure of the Minister to follow up on what we had started is going to cost this nation, immensely.

I don’t want to think that the Government refused to continue with our policy because they were not the authors of that policy. I would prefer to believe that the Minister took too long to acquaint herself with the severity of the situation and, in the meantime, allowed her feet to slip off the pedals. But, Mr. Speaker, we are in a crisis. We need to implement real solutions now.

I don’t believe that the problems affecting our youths are insurmountable, but the Minister must step up. The Government must act in the interest of our children, listen to their cries and do the right thing.
We have lost too many of our children to violence, drugs and bad parenting and we need to face the challenge now of saving future generations from the same fate.

I am suggesting that the government accept that this problem demands the highest level of cooperation between the Government, the Opposition and Civil Society. All of us must work together to save our children. Pooling together two or three ministries under the umbrella of an Inter-Ministerial Committee is not the answer.

The Minister should accept that enough studies have already been done to inform the way forward on these issues. Some of these studies have shown that placing children in adult prisons leads to more incidents of suicide and victimization, which is costly in both human and socio-economic terms.

Yesterday, the Minister said Jamaica has been in breech for 20 years. Yes, we inherited 18 years of neglect and recognized that a wholesale overhauling and systematic change was necessary and we were on that path.

The JLP administration recognised this during our term as Government and sought to implement structures in order to observe the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets minimum standards for their detention.

You need the support of the Opposition to reduce political tensions; you need the input of Civil Society groups with the necessary expertise to guide and monitor the process; and you need the multilateral and bilateral as well as private sector support for financial and strategic assistance.

So, Mr. Speaker, through you, I am saying to the Prime Minister today, you need to give this one special attention if we are going to save this and future generations. Time is running out and the current economic and social crises are not helping. P.M. take control of this matter, do something about it. You will be blamed.
CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN

Mr. Speaker, in recent times we have seen some serious instances of brutal, cruel and vicious crimes against the nation’s children. The good book reminds us: **Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate; Psalm 127:3-5.**

Mr. Speaker, the people are asking why the same dispatch and dedication that was given to finding those who robbed the Minister of National Security and assaulted the brother of the Honourable Prime Minister, is not given to apprehending and bringing to justice the criminals in the Irwin Rape case, Tamara Laing, the decomposing body of an 8 year old found late last month, Natasha Brown 4 year old of Ducans, Trelawney, killer of little Ananda Dean among others.

Mr. Speaker, said Claudette Pious in an Observer article dated May 22, 2011 posits "*I think as a nation, we have failed our children because they are not priority in terms of our planning and we tend to respond mainly to crises. So if there is something happening with our children, there is a lot of excitement and buzz and possibly some quick-fix solutions, but in terms of seriously positioning our children on the national agenda, I'm not sure, from where I sit, that there is enough care and support for our children nationally*."

Mr. Speaker, the number of child/teen killings between 2001 and 2010 raises serious concerns, as statistics published by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) show that 1,600 more were gunshot victims. According to data from the PIOJ’s annual **Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ)**, Jamaican children are not only being killed, but they are also killing. Between 1996 and 2001, some 629 recorded murders were committed by youths 17 years old and younger. That same age group was responsible for a total of 4,523 recorded major crimes - murder, shooting, rape/carnal abuse and robbery - during the same period. ESSJ reports published between 2001 and 2010 repeated the menacing fact that young people in Jamaica were prime murder targets. The 2001
ESSJ data also revealed that "the largest number of those killed were young persons, aged 21 to 25 years."

Mr. Speaker, with regard to crime against our children I make several recommendations to safeguard, preserve and maintain the nation’s future.

- Accelerate the protracted process of developing and implementing key legislation and policies. The lengthy delays in this process severely impede progress for children.
- Expedite the implementation of the National Plan of Action on Child Justice, which would enable greater focus on restorative justice for juveniles and community-based diversion programmes; the finalization and implementation of the National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence; and the finalization and enactment of the Disability Act.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the social welfare system for children, with a view to making sweeping reforms as we better safeguard and serve children in need of care and protection. Provision of appropriate resources for the strengthening of key institutions for children, including the Office of the Children’s Advocate and the Child Development Agency, and greater support for NGOs providing services for children on the streets and children with disabilities.
- Establish mechanisms to support and strengthen services for parents at the community level, in tandem with current efforts to operationalize the National Parenting Policy.
- Improve data collection, analysis and reporting on child-specific data (age 0-17 plus) to provide a stronger evidentiary base for policies and programmes.
- Implement the recommendations of the Child Protection Audit (2008), focusing on reporting and handling of child abuse cases, particularly sexual abuse.
- Improve the quality and relevance of education, making schools child-friendly, student-centered, interactive learning environments that are more appealing and conducive to our children and their development - our boys in particular.
- Equip the offices of the OCA and OCR with resources required to effectively carry out their mandates in the fight to protect and ensure the development of the nation’s youth.
• Establish mechanisms designed for early detection and referral of children who are at risk.
• Undertake urgent reforms to ensure compliance with international standards on children who are deprived of their liberty.
• Invest in and expand programmes addressing conflict resolution, anger management, safety in the homes and community safety, particularly among youth.

Children and youth are not a homogeneous group and so when they come before the courts or other state agents their individual situation must be considered and addressed.

We need to adopt best practices for our nation’s children and youth instead of paying lip service and making grand announcements that don’t make sense. Mr. Speaker, the system of accountability and transparency must be meaningfully engaged. The breakdown must not be allowed to persist for much longer.

Mr. Speaker, local studies have shown that one of the root causes or influencing factors for the situation of these children is little to no positive parental or family support as well as various types of abuses. I dare say then that with the wealth of child and youth development expertise available in Jamaica a better approach and model to respond to these children can and should be developed.

As so many others have done, I am compelled to place the following recommendations on the table. We should:

1. Strongly encourage the State to enact measures within its childcare system to ensure compliance with its responsibilities and obligations under the American Convention and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which it is a signatory to and is bound by.
2. Forcefully remind the State of the guidelines established by the UN Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, and the UN Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness and the Improvement of Mental Health Care.
3. Issue new State policies on the matter of children in conflict with the law that are in line with Jamaica’s international commitments, including, beginning to refer to “juveniles” as “children in conflict with the law”.

Mr. Speaker, Napoleon Hill states "*Cherish your visions and your dreams as they are the children of your soul, the blueprints of your ultimate achievements.*" Therefore, I advocate on behalf of all children: children and youth in lock-ups and state care, youth-at-risk, youth in remand centres, youth in places of safety and youth with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, young people's lives are at risk. It’s not about dress up, fix up or make up; this is real work which calls for a real plan of action. This is a **COLD HARD REALITY.**

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. Speaker, Youth Development ought to be a pre-eminent focus of the Ministry of Youth and Culture, driven by the reality that 61% of our population is under the age of 30.

The latest labour force report by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica stipulates that at present the youth unemployment rate in Jamaica is now at 37%. This is an extremely dismal and depressing situation. The vision of Jamaica to be “the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do businesses” marks a fundamental commitment to support the entrepreneurial talent and creativity of our youth so as to empower them to contribute in a meaningful way in rebuilding and reviving the economic potential of this great nation.

The Jamaican youth have a wealth of talent, skills and the potential to make a positive contribution. Therefore, we must sing the same chorus and add harmony to the song of Youth Entrepreneurship. Emphasis needs to be placed on helping programmes such as the Jamaica Youth Business Trust, Jamaica Business Development Centre, Young Entrepreneurs Association, Rural Youth Employment Project and the Young Farmers Entrepreneurship Programme as well as the Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP) to realise their vision.

I urge the government to implement the National Youth Entrepreneurship Policy which we left in order to encourage a greater cross-section of the youth cohort to apply and practise sustainable
enterprise development. The objective is one of which the Minister of Youth needs to be reminded to ensure that youth are able to contribute to building and strengthening communities while honing their creativity and talent for their own personal development.

Mr. Speaker, the NCYD has experienced many portfolio shifts over the past decade emphasizing again to our youth that instability is a normal part of the response to development and empowerment. This organization has faced surmountable odds and has done a lot of work but this must be formally assessed and a social impact assessment done to establish its successes while ensuring mechanisms for its development.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister in her contribution to the debate yesterday spoke of a proposal to merge the National Centre for Youth Development (NCYD) with the National Youth Service (NYS) for more effective youth main streaming and implementation of programmes and initiatives. The Opposition notes with interest, the direction in which the Government is seeking to head, but is of the view that it would have been more appropriate for the government to have engaged all the key stakeholders prior to making this significant announcement.

In any event, clarification as to what exactly is being proposed and the modalities that would be involved is entirely appropriate and necessary at this juncture.

Mr. Speaker I advocate for the NCYD because I know the potential it possesses to contribute more fulsomely to national development if given the chance to be a non-partisan, transparent entity, where staff is allowed to freely use their expertise to foster and facilitate youth development.

CULTURE

JAMAICA FESTIVAL

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about what is happening at the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission (JCDC).
The JCDC is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and we on this side are ever mindful of and supportive of the mission of the JCDC. It was founded by former Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Edward Seaga when he established the Festival Office in 1963.

The fact is that in 1968 the Festival Office evolved into the Festival Commission as a force for cultural development on behalf of the government.

It was an Act of Parliament, Act 32 of September 1968, which broadened its mandate to encourage the annual Independence Anniversary Celebrations throughout the island, as well as to stimulate the development of local talents.

In May of 1980, the Commission’s mandate was extended by another Act of Parliament (Act No.8 of 1980), and with this, its name was changed to the Jamaica Cultural Development Commission. Mr. Speaker, 1980 represented a paradigm shift in the agency’s functions and responsibilities.


So why are we celebrating the 50th anniversary of the JCDC in 2013? What we should be celebrating is the 50th anniversary of the Festival Movement, which deserves its own anniversary because of its contribution to Jamaican culture and in order to recognize the contributions of its stakeholders over the past 50 years.

And why has a decision been taken to cancel the annual Festival Song competition this year, and replace it with this nostalgic reflection and the selection of the best song over the past 47 years?

The Festival Song Competition started in 1966. This is the 47th anniversary, why can’t we wait until 2016 and have a proper 50th anniversary celebration of the annual competition and look at its legacy?
Or, is it that this is just a cover up for a lack of proper preparation for the competition and probably the whole festival programme and Independence celebrations this year?

Last year it took the winner of the Festival Song competition seven months to collect her prizes, although the competition had sponsorship. I am sure none of you on that side knows the name of the Festival Song for 2012 or even know the name of the singer. Then this year, we hear that there will be no competition.

When this administration is in government it kills the cultural development programme of the JCDC and the Independence celebrations. When the JLP is in government we light up our culture on high and inspire the nation.

The mission of the JCDC has always been: to enhance national development through cultural practices by creating opportunities that unearth, develop, preserve and promote creative talents and expressions of the Jamaican people. This can only be achieved in an innovative and creative manner through professional and responsive staff collaborating with all stakeholders, inspired by a Minister who is truly committed and passionate about our heritage and culture.

I ask: Is the Commission currently fulfilling that mission? Is the Minister ensuring that this mission continues to be accomplished? Is the Minister proudly demonstrating the leadership necessary for the JCDC and staff to overcome whatever challenges they face?

I am concerned about quite a few things:

With entertainment being separated from the culture portfolio, is the Ministry of Culture or the Ministry of Entertainment better suited to direct the activities of the JCDC, especially as it concerns the preservation and promotion of the arts, our culture and our heritage?

Was entertainment moved to the Ministry of Tourism to promote its commercial development, and if that is so, why wasn’t it transferred to the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce, instead?

Has the JCDC’s budget been affected by the separation of entertainment from the culture portfolio? Who is responsible for what?
I think the government needs to give the public a full explanation of these developments, because the cultural and creative industry, especially the music industry has a very significant role to play in Jamaica’s business development and we must have clarity, consistency and transparency in the development of this sector.

ENTERTAINMENT ZONES/ NIGHT NOISE

Mr. Speaker, during his contribution to the Sectoral Debate last week, the Member of Parliament for South East St. Elizabeth joined the call for amendments to be made to the Noise Abatement Act, to extend the lock-off time for specific venues.

Yes, the Act should be reviewed to take into consideration certain venues, which should be classified as designated venues. The Member also suggested that there seems to be selective application of the law, as some events are allowed to go all night while others cannot go past midnight.

You may recall, Mr. Speaker, that the opening hours for bars up to last December, was from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Mondays through Saturdays; taverns could open between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Sundays Hotels were allowed to operate their bars from 7:00 a.m. until midnight any day of the week.

However, the Spirit Licensing Act was amended to allow these establishments to be able to open from 7:00 a.m. to midnight, Mondays through Saturdays, and from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. on Sunday.

It was predictable that there would be some conflict between the opening of the establishments under the Spirits Licensing Act, and the approval for some events to go on until 2 a.m. under the Noise Abatement Act.

I noticed that the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment recently held consultations with stakeholders in the entertainment industry reviewing the issues around noise abatement.

It was said that one of the proposals put forward was for the creation of entertainment zones across the island – nothing new.
I just want to inform the Minister and the Minister of State that this is something that successive governments have grappled with.

The issue of Noise Abatement was a matter I had to address, in terms of balancing the differing views and reconciling the competing interests. And while a Cabinet note was prepared, as a first step toward the development of a Green Paper, the delicate balancing act that was involved each step of the way, served to underscore the complexity of this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I give you an example: we could declare the area of the National Stadium a Party Area, but you would be surprised to learn of the adverse effect it has on residents in the hills above the stadium and surrounding communities.

In Portmore, dances were allowed on the “Back Road”, but there again the noise penetrated across the canal and affected persons in communities like Edgewater.

Mr. Speaker, efforts in recent times aimed at enforcing the night noise act have resulted in a number of unavoidable socio-economic consequences: commerce is being stymied – tailors, hairdressers, vendors, concessionaires, performers, suppliers of products (food, drink, containers, ice, confectionary) and promoters are all losing significant income. The multiplier effect of this loss of income will be significant.

We need to recognize that for many in this chain, their main or only source of income, is under threat. They will have no option but to resort to alternate means of earning which can lead directly to an increase in crime and vagrancy.

Dances, parties and other forms of entertainment are the only release for many who find life hard. As such, events collectively are the valve on the pressure cooker that is our society.

For many, attending dances and parties is what keeps them away from a life of crime, mischief and idleness.

We must recognize that anything that affects the entertainment industry, directly affects the tourism industry and by extension the nations survival. Every year hundreds of thousands of
tourists come to our shores and spend much needed hard currency to experience our culture and music.

It is a very delicate issue and I hope that we can come to some useful conclusions in the end.

As I said, our view has always been that we should have these party zones. However, in selecting these zones, we have to ensure that the right of the neighbourhood to have a peaceful night’s rest is protected.

I just ask that the work which started under my leadership as Minister, continues expeditiously, bearing in mind all the factors.

NATIONAL SYMBOLS

I suggested during the Sectoral Debate, that the Government and the Opposition should be able to work together to sustain the value and integrity of our national symbols, without any form of political or social discord.

I did so, because I felt it important for the government and the opposition to collaborate to educate the population on the need to heed national customs and courtesies for the proper display and use of our national symbols.

I also pointed out that, over the years, various government agencies and/or departments have received requests from local and overseas entities for the use of folk culture material, emblems and symbols and, while it was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in these requests, following the summer Olympics and with the celebration of Jamaica 50, there was no single agency able to provide definitive guidance with respect to the use of these symbols.

With the exception of an incomplete draft Handbook of National Symbols issued by the Office of the Prime Minister in 2004, and a Code for National Symbols, there is no clear, comprehensive policy guidelines or legislative framework. While the Handbook provides descriptions of the national symbols and emblems, as well as background on their origins in addition to some restrictions regarding their use, it offers no guidance as to their management.
As a result, the present situation is that permission for the use, display or performance of the national symbols and emblems is being handled in an ad hoc manner. Additionally, while others are reaping great financial rewards from the use of these items, Jamaica receives little, if any, financial gain.

The national emblems and symbols are iconic representations of Jamaica's history, people, aspirations and values, created as visual signs and representations of the nation, to imbue unity and patriotism among all Jamaicans, as well as respect from all its citizens and foreigners.

While restrictions on the use of the national colours pose a serious challenge, it is imperative that we manage our national emblems and symbols to the advantage of the Jamaican people.

I am making another appeal to the Government to make this a priority. We cannot continue to ignore the flagrant disregard for the importance of the national symbols, especially the national flag.

At the same time, I am calling on the Government to continue the work of an Inter-Ministerial Committee set up under the previous Jamaica Labour Party government for the management, regulation, use, display and performance of Jamaica’s national emblems and symbols.

It is, in my opinion, the patriotic duty of every citizen is to uphold the customs and courtesies of our national flag. We need a code that determines the rules for displaying and caring for the national symbols, especially our flag and our national anthem.”

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR REPARATIONS

Mr. Speaker, I note with concern, the absence of any reference in the Minister’s presentation yesterday to the National Commission on Reparations (NCR) and the notable work they have been engaged to do. It was not even included in the listing in the back of the printed speech.

This non-inclusion is most curious especially since the Minister of Culture made a commitment in this House that the Commission would be funded so it could continue its work and have a report ready for Parliament as soon as possible. The Commission needs to advance the work it was tasked to undertake. At this time, it would be entirely appropriate for the Government to
provide the House with an update – a progress report if you will, on the NCR and the whole question of reparations.

SPORTS

VERONICA CAMPBELL-BROWN

Mr. Speaker, let me express regret at news implicating one of our most decorated athletes in a case of doping violation.

Like the rest of Jamaica, the Opposition is monitoring the development with understandable concern. And while I will not venture to say too much on the matter at this time, I must indicate that Veronica Campbell-Brown is an athlete in whom we have tremendous confidence.

I have known her to be a humble, sincere athlete who is known as a fierce, fearless, and fair competitor. As Minister of Sports in the previous administration, I witnessed first-hand, her exemplary conduct and have no reason to question her integrity. Veronica has won considerable acclaim over the years and been doing Jamaica extremely proud.

We await the outcome of what I trust will be a transparent and justiciable disciplinary hearing.

NATIONAL SPORTS POLICY

Mr. Speaker, I must let the government know that I am not pleased with the way the National Sports Policy issue has been handled.

My expectation was that the Green Paper would have been reviewed in this House as well, so that the submissions from all sectors who wished to make an input could be accommodated.

I believe that the Minister should have allowed for discussions at the level of a parliamentary committee which would request submissions from the general public, prior to tabling the White Paper.
I had tabled the Green Paper in November 2011, which was approximately one month before the General Election, and, with the change of Government, I had expected that even if there was a need to review the Green Paper, it would have been re-tabled for discussions here as well.

I believe the minister was dictatorial in the way she handled the issue, and from experience there is no doubt that there will be entities and individuals who will agree with me. Therefore, it is very likely that the policy will not receive the level of support that we had hoped for.

I can’t see the basis on which the Minister is insisting that “This policy is for all Jamaicans”, when most Jamaicans were not able to contribute to its development.

This would is a crucial blunder in terms of our sports development and I am urging the Minister to rethink her handling of the issue and reshape her attitude to sports development in the country.

**DIVERSIFICATION**

I took note of the Minister’s references to the diversification of Sporting Disciplines, and I am happy that she has decided to continue government support for a policy which was introduced under my stewardship.

However, as the Minister should know by now, the fly in the ointment has always been the lack of enough financial support from the public and private sectors and I sincerely hope that this will change as our athletes are ambassadors and need all the support they can get as they fly the nation’s flag high.

**ATHLETE’S INSURANCE**

On the issue of athletes insurance, again another initiative of my administration, I welcome the decision to continue in that direction and to seek the input of the Tourism Enhancement Fund and the National Health Fund. The Sports Development Foundation was already on board. I genuinely wish this effort every success; our sportsmen and women deserve this service.
Mr. Speaker, since we are in a period of engagement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), I think it is important that I bring to the attention of the Members, the advice of Managing Director of the Fund, Christine Lagarde, in a recent article titled “Dare the Difference” in which she tried to put in context the value of the input of women to the success of economic policies. I quote:

The world has changed in dramatic and sometimes unexpected ways since I was a girl. Plenty of changes have been for the better—improvements in technology or medicine for example. Others have not helped.

I am worried about inequality and the environment in which women have to survive.

The evolving situation of women at work is also very important. It is one area where there has been progress, but not nearly enough.

The challenges of growth, job creation, and inclusion are closely interlinked. The IMF is in continuous dialogue with its member countries on how to achieve stability and growth—importantly, growth that is inclusive and generates jobs.-

Growth and stability are necessary to give women the opportunities they need. It is, however, a two-way street. Women’s participation in the labour market is also a part of the growth and stability equation.-

There are many policy actions that can help women join the workforce or start businesses: better and more affordable child care, more flexible work arrangements, improved access to finance, and legislating equal rights for women to own property. IMF staff members are not the experts in many of these areas—nor should they be. Yet the macroeconomic implications of these policies make them of importance to the IMF, and we can identify relevant issues, drawing on the expertise of others.-

In other areas the IMF does have expertise and can help. We can seek out gender-smart fiscal policies by examining how taxes and government spending affect gender equality and opportunities for women. For example, higher taxes on so-called second earners in the family
can reduce the incentives for women to work. Rethinking issues like these can offer a huge opportunity, particularly because the female labor supply is far more responsive than the male labor supply to such incentives.

We also need to help our member countries plan for the future. We know, for example, that many countries will soon feel the fiscal and growth effects of aging populations—and dwindling workforces. Mobilizing the untapped female workforce can be part of the solution.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, I don’t intend to speak today on all the wide ranging areas for which I am Opposition Spokesperson and covered as former Minister. I will address additional areas during the parliamentary year as I move the appropriate motions and table questions to the 7 Ministers who have been assigned responsibility for the portfolio areas I covered.