



...Fuelling growth everywhere

SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2024-2025

Tuesday, June 4, 2024



THEME:

"Fuelling Jamaica's Growth Everywhere"





...Fuelling growth everywhere

SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2024-2025

THEME:

“Fuelling Jamaica’s Growth Everywhere”

BY

MINISTER OF SCIENCE, ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, AND TRANSPORT

HONOURABLE DARYL VAZ, MP

Tuesday, June 4, 2024

CONTENTS

OPENING REMARKS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, SPECIAL MENTIONS.	6
FUELLING JAMICA'S GROWTH EVERYWHERE.	7
FUELLING GROWTH IN JAMAICA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR.	9
FUELLING JAMAICA'S AVIATION LEGACY	9
Ian Flemming International Airport (IFIA) & Domestic Aerodromes.	9
Jamaica's Aviation Traffic - Full Recovery Post COVID-19 Pandemic and now Growing . . .	10
Proposals from MBJ and PACKAL for the Economic Recovery and	
Long-term Sustainability of the SIA and NMIA Concessions	11
Major Capital Programmes – MBJ (SIA), PACKAL (NMIA)	
and AAJ (IFIA) and the other airports.	11
MBJ/SANGSTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PROJECTS.	11
Norman Manley International Airport Projects.	13
FUELLING JAMAICA'S AVIATION REGULATION & SERVICE	14
MARITIME AUTHORITY OF JAMAICA	16
JAMAICA URBAN TRANSIT COMPANY LIMITED	17
JUTC REFURBISHMENT	18
Cashless Fare Collection System	18
Montego Bay Metro and Rural Parishes	18
Rural School Transportation System (RSTS)	19
JAMAICA RAILWAY CORPORATION	20
Student Passenger Rail Service.	20
Commuter Rail Service	21
Rail Excursions.	21
ISLAND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY.	21
ROAD TRAFFIC ACT	22
TRANSPORT AUTHORITY	23
AGED VEHICLE POLICY	24
RIDE HAILING SERVICES.	25

FUELLING JAMAICA'S ENERGY SECURITY	27
The Policies and Support Policies.	27
National Energy Policy (2009 – 2030) Reviewed and Updated.	27
Other Policies	27
FUELLING JAMAICA'S ENERGY DIVERSITY	28
Non-Technical Loss Reduction.	28
Rural Electrification Programme (REP)	28
Petroleum Pricing.	30
Oil and Gas Exploration	30
Integrated Resource Plan 2 (IRP 2).	31
Generation Procurement Entity (GPE) - Request for Proposals (RFP).	31
171.5 MW Power Plant Replacement	31
The Government Electrical Regulator (GER)	31
FUELLING JAMAICA'S PETROLEUM SUPPLY	32
Contribution to Tourism – Sangster International Runway Project:	32
Contribution to the Local Manufacturing Sector:	33
Anticipated Developments/Outlook 2024	33
Project to Install Facilities to Convert Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) to Asphalt.	33
Jamaica Aircraft Refuelling Service (JARS).	33
2024/25 Projections	33
FUELLING JAMAICA'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS GROWTH	35
FUELLING GROWTH – REDUCING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.	35
Planned Programmes FY2024/2025	36
FUELLING JAMAICA'S GROWTH THROUGH INTERNET ACCESS.	37
Connect Jamaica (Public Wi-Fi) and Community Wi-Fi	37
Fuelling Jamaica's Telecommunications Growth Through Partnerships	38
Technology Advancement Programme (TAP).	39
USF ICT Clubs in Schools.	40
Provision of ICT devices	40
Fuelling Jamaica's Growth through Improved Telecommunications Services	40
SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY.	40

FUELING JAMAICA’S GROWTH THROUGH SCIENCE	45
The Gamma-Irradiator	45
Empowering MSMES Through Support	45
Mapping of Jamaica’s Science, Technology, and Innovation (ST&I) Landscape with Global Approach (GO-SPIN Model)	46
Re-Establishment of the Hazard Laboratory Waste Ad Hoc Committee (HALWAC)	46
Advancing STEM Education and Science Popularization:	47
PRIORITIES/OBJECTIVES FOR 2024/2025	47
CONCLUSION.	49

OPENING REMARKS, ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, SPECIAL MENTIONS

Madam Speaker, it is indeed an honour to once again stand before this Honourable House to report on the performance of, and the upcoming plans for, my portfolio responsibility, the Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport. I have given my commitment to making this journey a successful one that will leave a lasting legacy for this country, long after we are gone. I do not take this task lightly, as I humbly continue to serve my country, Jamaica.

I thank God, for His continued strength and guidance, and for enabling me to update our blessed nation on the strides we continue to make in science, energy, telecommunications, and transport.

As I address the House this afternoon, I publicly place on record my gratitude to my Cabinet and Parliamentary colleagues, spurred by the leadership of our Prime Minister, The Most Honourable Andrew Holness.

My dear wife Ann-Marie, my children, grandchildren, relatives, and friends, I am grateful for the unconditional love and support—indeed, you are a large part of why I am here today.

To the people of my beloved constituency - West Portland, my councillors and constituency workers, I say thank you. Thank you for entrusting me to represent you for almost two decades and I look forward to doing so for many more to come. I wish God's richest blessings on my constituents, the neighbouring constituents of East



Hon. Daryl Vaz (M.P.)

Minister of Science, Energy,
Telecommunications and Transport

Portland with whom I have more than a passing acquaintance, and the people of Jamaica.

I express my deepest gratitude to William J.C Hutchinson, my State Minister, for the support and dedication to the work of the Ministry. I also thank my Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Carol Palmer, who we all know is quick-thinking, thorough, and firm with a no-nonsense stick-to-itiveness, for the steadfast guidance and support she has provided to me and the Ministry over the years. To the phenomenal team at the Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport, I say thank you for your hard work and dedication. I am always grateful for the support of the board members, especially my advisors, Dr Parris Lyew-Ayee Jr, and Wayne Chen, who give of their time and talent to contribute to the plans and achievements I will report on today.

Madam Speaker, technology makes it possible for my contribution to reach Jamaicans at

home and abroad, and I thank everyone on social media, television, radio, and those streaming in for interacting, and sharing their feedback – this is the very essence of how digital technology ensures we keep connected.

FUELLING JAMAICA'S GROWTH

Madam Speaker, it is now a year since the Prime Minister entrusted me with the newly formed Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport. Since then, we have made significant strides in aligning ourselves as a new Ministry, while building on the programmes and initiatives that existed in the respective portfolios.

It is with this in mind that I deliver my maiden presentation, as the Minister of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport, under the theme:

“Fuelling Jamaica’s Growth Everywhere”.





FUELLING JAMAICA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR



FUELLING GROWTH IN JAMAICA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

Madam Speaker, Transport, being the most recent addition to my portfolio responsibilities, has proven to be the largest area of responsibility in the Ministry. Comprising 13 agencies and departments, this area requires astute focus and planning through policy, legislation, and implementation.

I will begin with a look at the Aviation arm of this portfolio.

FUELLING JAMAICA'S AVIATION LEGACY

The Airports Authority of Jamaica (AAJ), a self-financed statutory body, is responsible for directly operating the Ian Fleming International Airport (IFIA) and three domestic aerodromes: Tinson Pen, Ken Jones, and Negril. The AAJ also maintains concession administration and oversight of the Sangster International Airport (SIA) and Norman Manley International Airport (NMIA), operated by MBJ Airports Limited (MBJ) and PAC-Kingston Airport Limited (PACKAL), respectively.

This year, the AAJ will celebrate its 50th Anniversary with a range of activities to mark its achievements over the period.

Ian Flemming International Airport (IFIA) & Domestic Aerodromes

Madam Speaker, the AAJ continues its efforts to secure scheduled commercial air service

following the successful launch of two airlines, InterCaribbean and QCAS (Quality Corporate Air Service) in June 2022, and most recently the launch of American Airlines (AA) service into IFIA from Miami International Airport on February 24, 2024. The AA service currently operates twice weekly but is expected to be increased as the demand grows. This service represents a game changer for IFIA, the surrounding parishes of north-eastern Jamaica where the airport is located, and the travel and tourism industry of the country in general.

In addition to the Air Navigation System (ANS) improvements executed by the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority (JCAA), the Authority had to fast-track a range of improvements to meet regulatory and customer service requirements for the safe and efficient operation of the American Airlines flight. These include:

- Further expansion and modification to the arrival and departure facilities for passenger comfort and safety.
- Building new office facilities for both IFIA and airline staff; a new fire station to accommodate two Aircraft Fire Fighting and Rescue Vehicles (ARFFVs) and staff to meet Category 6 firefighting capabilities as required for this size aircraft; a private passenger lounge and a VIP lounge; new facilities for aircraft ground handling, baggage holding, and canine services and additional roadways and car park facilities.

These improvements were implemented incrementally between March 2022 and March 2024 at a cost of approximately J\$520M.

Regarding the Domestic Aerodromes, in September 2024, a special incentive programme will be rolled out by the AAJ to stimulate the domestic commercial passenger service in the aerodromes.

Jamaica's Aviation Traffic - Full Recovery Post COVID-19 Pandemic and now Growing

Madam Speaker, Jamaica's aviation traffic, pre-COVID-19, stood at 6.6 million passengers, with SIA handling 4.76 million (72%) and NMIA handling 1.84 million (28%). SIA primarily served tourism (over 95%), while NMIA had a mix of Jamaican leisure, business, and about 40% tourism, making tourism the main driver of Jamaica's aviation traffic, contributing around 80%.

COVID-19 caused a 66% drop in aviation traffic, but since the reopening of borders in 2022, Jamaica's aviation traffic saw rapid growth, reaching 7.0 million passengers in 2023, surpassing pre-COVID levels by some 6%, three years ahead of the original recovery forecast.

However, this remarkable recovery led to challenges such as congestion at SIA and service quality issues at NMIA. In response, the government and airport authorities acted promptly; at SIA, measures included introducing online C5 Immigration and customs declarations, installing 40 additional Automated Border Control (ABC) kiosks and six e-gates. NMIA also saw improvements, with 20 additional ABC kiosks and three e-gates. Bathroom renovations are ongoing and new chillers for the air conditioning system are also expected to be installed for the NMIA.



Additional e-gates have been procured for installation at both airports and major capital expenditure programmes are underway to address future capacity and regulatory requirements at these airports. This rapid recovery is promising for Jamaica's economy, but addressing the challenges is crucial for sustained growth.

Proposals from MBJ and PACKAL for the Economic Recovery and Long-term Sustainability of the SIA and NMIA Concessions

Madam Speaker, the lengthy negotiations regarding the concession agreements for SIA and NMIA, sparked by the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, have finally ended.

After thorough consideration, the Cabinet approved the final response to the Long-term Proposals for SIA and NMIA on September 11, 2023. For SIA, this entails no additional compensation beyond the Force Majeure Event claims, alongside a concession period extension of up to 12 months to address losses incurred during the pandemic.

Regarding the NMIA, concessions include a reduction in the concession fees to facilitate the runway extension of 300 metres and the implementation of Runway End Safety Areas (RESA). Additionally, there will be a cap on regulated airport charges to prevent tariff increases detrimental to airport traffic. Work for the runway extension is now expected to commence before the end of 2024. These developments mark considerable progress

in ensuring the resilience and efficiency of our airport infrastructure amidst challenging times.

Major Capital Programmes – MBJ (SIA), PACKAL (NMIA) and AAJ (IFIA) and the other airports

Madam Speaker, improvements to airports are by nature very capital-intensive. The AAJ has capital projects amounting to US\$98M programmed between 2024/25 and 2027/28 of which US\$50M is programmed for 2024/25. MBJ and PACKAL have capital projects of US\$269M programmed between 2024/25 to 2027/28 of which US\$82M is programmed for 2024/25.

These projects are in response to, among other things, traffic growth, industry and regulatory compliance, innovations for efficiency, and changes in the operational environment.

MBJ/SANGSTER INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PROJECTS

The MBJ Phase 3 Runway Extension – The project which started in 2019 is now practically completed. The first element of the project, which was the runway and apron expansion, saw the new/extended section of the runway being brought into use in August 2023 and the remaining works, that is, the shoreline protection, and enabling (external) works, being completed earlier this month.

Madam Speaker, the Runway Extension Project has increased the declared take off run by



398 metres, moving the range from 2,662 metres to 3,060 metres, and has provided Runway End Safety Areas at both ends of the runway as mandated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This project is of significance, as it enables SIA to accommodate and better serve direct flights from farther destinations such as Asia.

It is to be noted that, MBI is investing its own funds to continue the improvement and expansion of the facilities at SIA, having invested US\$309 million on capital projects since the commencement of the concession up to 2023. MBI is now slated to spend approximately US\$100 million under its current Master Plan for the remainder of the concession of which US\$28M is to be expended in this fiscal year.

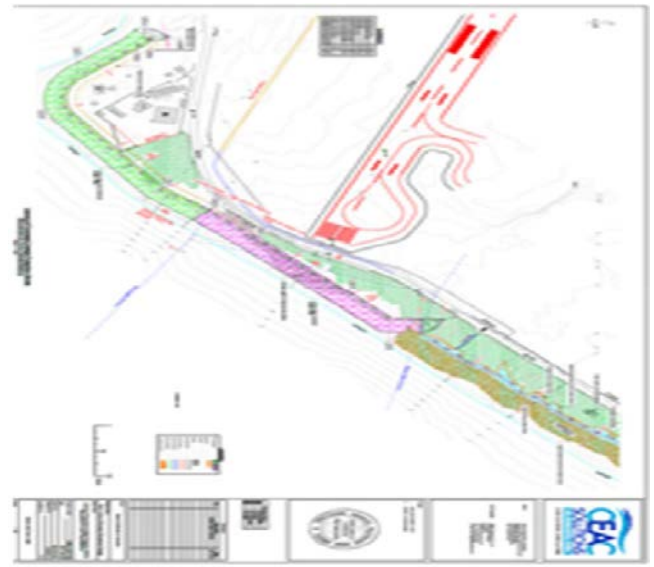
These projects, which include Check-in Hall Expansion, Immigration Hall/Pre-Board Screening Expansion, Car Parks and Roadways Expansion, Solar Implementation Expansion (Phase 3), will significantly increase and improve the airport's capacity and passenger experience at the SIA.

For its Solar Implementation Project, the MBI having already installed 3 Megawatt (MW) of solar plants (Phases 1 and 2), is now in the process of installing an additional 3 MW solar plant. This project started in January 2024 and is slated for completion by December 2024. Madam Speaker, when complete, the total solar energy supply will be 6 MW representing 60% of SIA's Energy Demand. ***This is how we Fuel Jamaica's Energy growth in Aviation!***

Norman Manley International Airport Projects

Several major projects are currently being implemented at the Norman Manley International Airport (NMIA) to meet regulatory and operational requirements. These include:

- **The Runway Overlay** – These works commenced in May 2024, it is projected that these will be completed by July 2024, at an estimated cost of US\$6M.
- **The Runway Extension** – This project is to be funded and implemented by PACKAL. The works are now estimated to cost US\$60M and are scheduled to commence in September 2024 upon conclusion of the Amended Concession Agreement, for completion in three years by September 2027.
- **NMIA / Port Royal Road Shoreline Protection Project** - This project is funded by the AAJ at a cost of J\$658M and is geared towards the protection of NMIA and the runway from destruction caused by wave action associated with hurricanes or such events. The project commenced October 2021 but was paused in mid-2022 due to cost fluctuation issues on the construction and related sectors. With the resolution of these issues work re-commenced in February 2024 and is scheduled for completion by August 2024.



Madam Speaker, we continue to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth Everywhere*** in the Aviation sector, with works on several of the nation's aerodromes including:

- **Vernamfield** – A total of US\$34M has been allocated in the budget for land acquisition at Vernamfield during 2025/26 to 2027/28 Financial Years (FY) as a prerequisite to the implementation of the Vernamfield Lite upgrade project.
- **Lionel Densham Aerodrome**- The Ministry of Finance and the Public Service gave its approval to pursue further developments of a proposed J\$100 million project to acquire and upgrade the Lionel Densham Aerodrome in St. Elizabeth. This included inter alia the provision of a business plan by the owners of the aerodrome. Having received the business plan, the proposal is now being finalized by the AAJ for submission to the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service.
- **Holland Bamboo Airstrip** - The acquisition by lease of the Holland Bamboo airstrip is to be done to facilitate reactivation of that airstrip. This will make possible, airlift to local residents, and tourism attractions in the area, such as Appleton Estate, and YS falls. The AAJ is now taking preliminary steps to secure the property.
- **Ken Jones Aerodrome** - The AAJ is in the process of undertaking an analysis of the further expansion and development potential for the Ken Jones Aerodrome, in Portland. This is with a view to providing greater airlift capability for Eastern

Jamaica in response to increased tourism development being anticipated.

- **Tinson Pen and Negril Airports**

Madam Speaker, the AAJ has been pursuing steps to fulfil the announcements made by the Prime Minister during his budget speech in 2023 viz:

- **Tinson Pen Relocation to NMIA:** The AAJ has been engaged in a consultation process with the Port Authority of Jamaica and the National Works Agency to develop a plan for the relocation of the Tinson Pen operations to the NMIA. PACKAL has been engaged to provide this plan which will inform the overall relocation exercise.
- **Negril Airport Development:** Consultants have been engaged by the AAJ to undertake a Master Planning exercise for the upgrading and development of an international airport at the Negril domestic aerodrome. The plan is expected to be completed by July 2024.

FUELLING JAMAICA'S AVIATION REGULATION & SERVICE

Madam Speaker, the Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority (JCAA) holds a crucial mandate encompassing aviation safety oversight, air navigation services, economic regulation, advisory roles to the government, and fostering air transport development. The JCAA remains steadfast in its commitment to enhancing safety and security through infrastructure upgrades and system advancements.

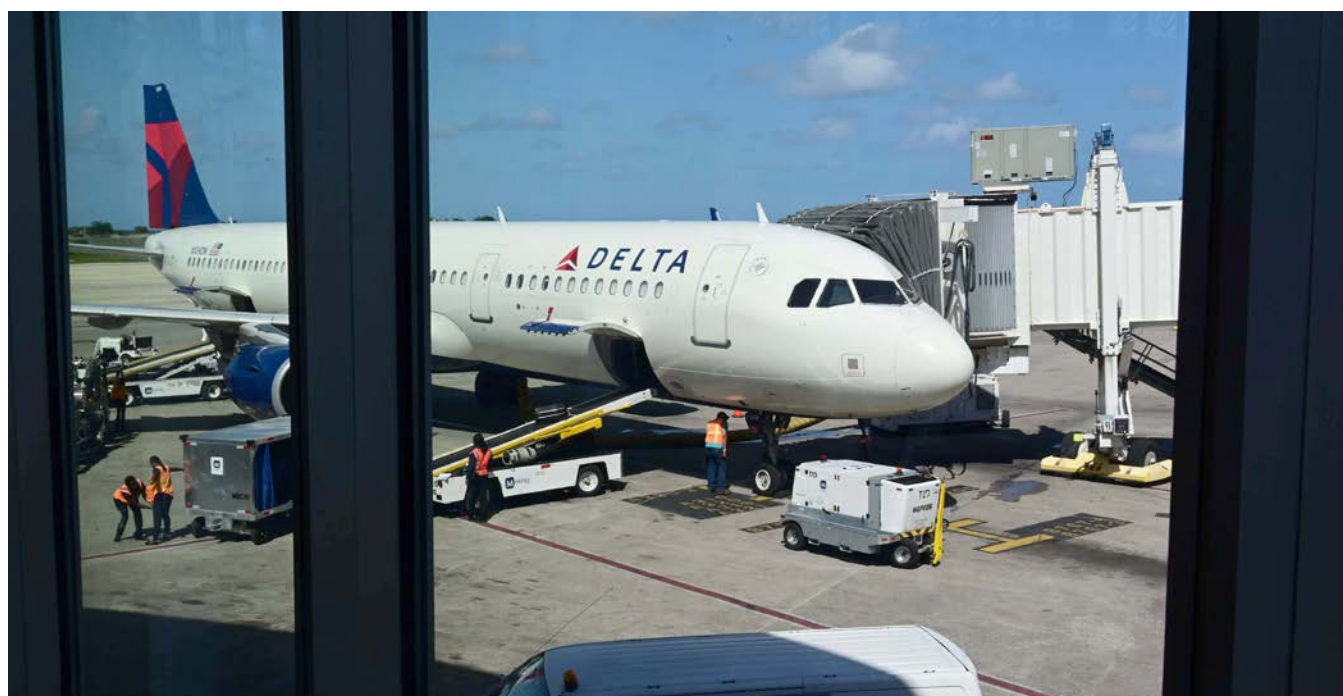
Critical to this mission are ongoing capital programmes and projects which include the following:

1. **New Instrument Landing System (ILS)**
 - the procurement of a new Instrument Landing System (ILS) is in progress and the works are slated to commence later this month for completion by January 2025. This will cost approximately US\$1.3M.
2. **Air Traffic Flow Management and Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast (ADS-B) (Ground-Based)**
 - these two systems will be implemented later this fiscal year. The Air Traffic Flow Management project is being undertaken to fulfill the requirements of ICAO's Global Air Navigation Plan (GANP) and will contribute to the effective management of capacity and demand in Jamaica's airspace, improving efficiency and quality of travel for the flying public, while reducing fuel-burn;

and the Automatic Dependent Surveillance - Broadcast (ADS-B) (Ground-Based) will enable aircrafts to determine its position via satellite navigation and periodically broadcast that information to facilitate tracking.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry recognizes the need to modernize the aviation sector, and so following a review the 2015 audit of the JCAA as well as reviewing the results of the 2024 audit just concluded; it is also very important to point out that the country has lost its Category 1 status, so the Ministry will be implementing measures to modernise the legislation, operations, and systems of the entity and soon I will be taking to Cabinet some recommendations on how best to address these challenges.

Madam Speaker the strides in ***Fuelling Jamaica's Growth Everywhere*** is further driven by the gains in the maritime industry.



MARITIME AUTHORITY OF JAMAICA

The Maritime Authority of Jamaica plays a pivotal role in developing shipping and regulating matters concerning merchant ships and seafarers. Its functions encompass a wide array of responsibilities, including ship registration, seafarer certification, safety regulation, and maritime training standards.

In the Fiscal Year 2023/2024, significant milestones were achieved in both its developmental and regulatory roles. Notably, Jamaica's successful re-election to Category C of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council during the 33rd Session of the Assembly in London stands as a testament to our nation's commitment to international maritime governance. This achievement reaffirms Jamaica's pivotal role in shaping

global maritime policies and regulations, reinforcing our international standing in the maritime space.

Moreover, the establishment of a ship repair facility, the Floating Drydock - **"JAMDOCK"**, marked a pivotal moment in enhancing our maritime infrastructure and facilitating vessel maintenance and repair operations. This facility, located at Harbour Head in Kingston Harbour, has already demonstrated its capacity by accommodating the repair of several vessels, bolstering our maritime services sector and fostering economic growth.

Furthermore, the efforts in bunkering, including the welcoming of Shell LNG, the first LNG bunker operator in Jamaica, underscore our commitment to sustainability and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the shipping industry.



In tandem with developmental endeavours, the Authority's regulatory efforts have been unwavering. Through rigorous inspections and oversight, we have ensured compliance with safety and environmental standards on both Jamaican and foreign-flagged vessels.

For the fiscal year 2024/2025, several major objectives and initiatives have been outlined to further enhance Jamaica's maritime sector. These include legislative developments to govern maritime activities, and continued efforts to support the decarbonization of international shipping.

The Maritime Authority of Jamaica remains committed in its dedication to fostering a safe, sustainable, and prosperous maritime sector. Through collaboration, innovation, and strategic planning, we are poised to navigate

the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, ensuring Jamaica's continued prominence on the global maritime stage.

Madam Speaker, I now seek to enlighten this Honourable House on the work being done to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth*** in the land transport sector.

JAMAICA URBAN TRANSIT COMPANY LIMITED

The Jamaica Urban Transit Company Limited (JUTC), Madam Speaker, despite facing challenges, remains the cornerstone of our public transportation system in the Kingston Metropolitan Transport Region (KMTR). The JUTC grapples with a number of factors affecting its fleet, however, this government has given the commitment to replenish and modernize the fleet, using cleaner energy types



i.e Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) fuelled and electric buses.

Since August 2023, the fleet of the JUTC has been increased with the addition of 71 new buses. This comprised 50 buses (45 diesel and five electric Ankai buses); one electric and 20 CNG Golden Dragon buses. We are working Madam Speaker to reduce the commuter misery index by lowering their wait time.

Another 300 buses are being procured using our own money from the Consolidated Fund. This procurement will be done in three phases:

- **Phase 1 is the purchase of 100 CNG buses which are expected to arrive by July 2024, right in time for the start of the new school year!**
- Phase 2 is to initiate the procurement of an additional 100 CNG buses by the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2024/25.
- Phase 3 is the acquisition of the final 100 buses in Fiscal Year 2025/2026, for which the energy mix is to be determined

Madam Speaker, once we are finished, this will be the first major purchase of buses since 2012, when Cabinet gave approval for the purchase of 230 buses by way of a loan agreement..

JUTC REFURBISHMENT

The JUTC undertook a life-cycle cost analysis which indicated that another means of augmenting the fleet cost-effectively is the refurbishing of buses that are nearing their end of life to operate mainly on the hill routes.

It is currently refurbishing eight Golden Dragon Buses; Madam Speaker, all eight buses will be

ready for the beginning of the school year in September. The company will be engaging in further procurement with respect to the remainder of buses that are suitable for refurbishing.

It is important to note Madam Speaker; the refurbishment of the Golden Dragon buses comes with a warranty option of two years versus only one year should we purchase new units.

Madam Speaker, this is the first time the JUTC has embarked on mid-life refurbishment of its fleet. The refurbished buses will now be more efficient, safe and comfortable for commuters.

Cashless Fare Collection System

Madam Speaker, in recognizing the imperative to modernize fare collection the JUTC in 2013 introduced the option for payment using the SmarterCard fare collection system which has seen reduction in losses due to farebox leakages and has improved service to commuters. The JUTC is seeking to enhance this system and has embarked on a procurement process for the development of a comprehensive 360 solution to address the needs of both commuters and the company.

Montego Bay Metro and Rural Parishes

However, Madam Speaker, our focus is not only on the KMTR. A recent review of the operations at Montego Bay Metro was conducted and several options for revamping and expanding its operations were proposed. The most feasible option to ensure the people of Western Jamaica receive the much-needed improvement in transportation services, in the

shortest possible time, is to look at redeploying existing assets, as well as to infuse management and technical support in the organization.

Once the arrangements are settled, the intention is to deliver service between Montego Bay and Falmouth, Sav-la-Mar, Lucea and other rural townships in western rural parishes.

I have also instructed the management of the JUTC to extend services to St. Thomas, Linstead and Williamsfield no later than September of this year. This is to ensure that rural commuters get the benefit of the reduced fares offered by the Government of Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, the JUTC under the guidance and with the support of the Ministry will continue to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth*** by

providing efficient, reliable, and equitable solutions for public transportation in Jamaica.

Rural School Transportation System (RSTS)

Madam Speaker, it is also this Government's intention to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth*** through the implementation of the Rural School Transportation System (RSTS). This is a priority programme aimed at ensuring the provision of an accessible, safe, reliable, efficient, affordable, and welcoming mode of transportation for students in the rural areas. It is recognized that students living in and attending schools within the KMTR benefit from the service of the JUTC and other sub-franchisees, which is heavily subsidized by the GOJ; however, our citizens living in rural parishes across the island are not equally provided for.



The Ministry acknowledges the hardships faced by our citizens in rural parishes across the island and is currently engaged in determining a mechanism to bring some relief to the cost of commute with specific reference to students in the first instance. The intention is to cause a significant reduction in the cost of transportation in rural areas, again reducing their misery index.

It is estimated that households in rural Jamaica spend more than J\$17B annually for transportation for students to access primary and secondary education. The poverty alleviation component of the RSTS is designed to remove this financial burden from the poorest and most vulnerable households.

To achieve this objective, it is estimated that an annual subsidy of J\$10.623B will be required

to adequately provide the RSTS, the actual implementation of which is expected to be private sector driven. We have received the support of the Ministry of Education and Youth for this initiative and will now engage with the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service to fund its implementation.

Madam Speaker, I will not rest until this Rural School Transportation System is up and running and serving our nation's children.

JAMAICA RAILWAY CORPORATION

Student Passenger Rail Service

The Jamaica Railway Corporation (JRC) initiated a pilot student-passenger rail service project on January 10, 2022, providing secure and economical transportation for students from Old Harbour and Linstead to Spanish Town.



This service aims to extend transportation to students attending schools in and around Spanish Town, with efficient communication channels established with parents, schools, and students. Since its inception, the service has served 136,724 passengers, with an average daily usage of approximately 500 students, highlighting its importance and growing demand. Despite impacting the JRC's cash flows, the Ministry will assess the project with a view to establishing a sustainable programme.

Commuter Rail Service

The Corporation is currently in discussions with a private company to broaden the commuter rail service to transport over 5000 workers daily from Old Harbour and Linstead to Angels, St. Catherine, supporting the upcoming BPO investment in Angels. Partnerships with private companies indicate potential revenue streams expansion for the JRC.

In addition, as the Government continues to explore options for delivering a safe reliable, comfortable and affordable public transportation service, we intend to take a serious look at the reintroduction of rail service between Kingston and St. Catherine in the short term for both passenger and freight rail services.

Madam Speaker, whilst not pre-empting the review, the re-introduction of rail service between Kingston and St. Catherine can potentially:

- ease congestion on our roads in the KMTR especially during peak hours

- handle the movement of a larger volume of commuters in quicker time than buses, taxis and private motor cars
- deliver a safe, reliable, comfortable and affordable transportation experience to hundreds of thousands of commuters
- result in significantly reduced carbon emissions as more commuters choose to travel by trains
- drive economic development in St. Catherine as businesses exploit cheaper more reliable options for moving goods.

Rail Excursions

Excursions hosted by the JRC on Emancipation Day and National Heroes Day provided opportunities for public engagement and nostalgic experiences for rail enthusiasts. Plans are underway to make these excursions annual events.

Additionally, the JRC continues to offer private excursions to schools and community groups, enriching the education curriculum and providing unforgettable experiences for participants.

ISLAND TRAFFIC AUTHORITY

Madam Speaker, the Ministry received the structure of the ITA in July 2023 and actions are now being taken to have the entity fully staffed to carry out its mandate. In the meantime, the staff who were previously employed to the ITA within the Ministry have been seconded and the Road Traffic Appeal Tribunal has been appointed.

The ITA has also completed the certification of thirty driving instructors through its collaboration with the HEART/NSTA Trust. These drivers were provisionally certified by the ITA but have now received full certification, through the national training agency. We congratulate these graduates on their achievement!

ROAD TRAFFIC ACT

Madam Speaker, this legislator caused the Road Traffic Act (RTA) to be promulgated in 2018 and its regulations in February 2023, bringing the RTA in most of its provisions in force in February of 2023. It is to be pointed out however that since I assumed responsibilities for the Transport Portfolio in May of 2023, I was given the mandate by the Prime Minister to

review the RTA and to have it fully implemented. This is still a work in progress.

My Ministry has engaged the services of a Legal Reform Consultant to assist with the review of the RTA and has set itself the end of this month – June to complete the examination and consultation with key stakeholders. It is important to point out that the rule of law on our roads must be adhered to so there will be no watering down of the legislation. Every effort will be made to bring the remaining provisions of the Act into force.

Let me hasten to point out that only yesterday (June 3, 2024) the Cabinet approved the revisions to the Child Restraint Provisions and those will be coming to Parliament in short order. The Island Traffic Authority, like



the Police and the Transport Authority are being equipped to effectively carry out their responsibilities under the Act.

We are aware of several concerns that have been raised as it relates to the anomalies, and these are apart of the reviews being carried out. We also invite any other interested parties with concerns to submit it to the Ministry immediately as our review period ends as I said before June 2024.

TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

If I could turn your attention to the Transport Authority Madam Speaker, in the past year, the Authority has made significant strides in modernizing the regulatory framework for land transportation. Collaborative efforts with the Ministry have led to amendments

to the Transport Authority Act. While the Transport Authority (Amendment) Act was passed in 2022, we are awaiting the enactment of the corresponding regulations to fully implement the modernized framework. These amendments will expand the Authority's powers and functions, including varied expiration dates for road licences, enhanced enforcement capabilities, and the establishment of a Public Passenger Vehicle (PPV) Drivers' Register by the end of this fiscal year.

Moreover, to bolster enforcement and compliance activities, the Transport Authority has recruited 50 additional inspectors and collaborated with the Jamaica Constabulary Force under a programme called ***"Operation Streamline"*** to ensure adherence to transportation laws.



Madam Speaker it is to be noted that in the past four weeks under this programme the Transport Authority has seized over 200 motor vehicles with over 1500 prosecutions being undertaken for various offences including failure to renew road licences that expired on March 31.

We are committed to ensuring that PPV operators adhere to the laws of the land; through the enforcement of the recently enacted Road Traffic Regulations, 2022; and public engagement efforts promulgating a culture of lawfulness. A greater responsibility is bestowed on PPV operators who are entrusted to transport the nation's most valuable assets – our people. The lawlessness Madam Speaker will NOT continue!

The Authority has also prioritized upgrading and expanding facilities to increase access to services. The implementation of the Transport Authority's Digital Transformation Project, led by Amber Innovations, seeks to digitise the licensing, operations, and legislative processes. Phase 1 - covering Licensing and Route Management was successfully implemented in February 2024.

In collaboration with JUTC Madam Speaker, a total of **16 NEW ROUTES** will be offered to the PPV sector. Five of those routes will be stage carriage routes which will operate under a sub-franchise from the JUTC and will be for the use of coaster and minibuses only. Operating through Half-Way-Tree and terminating in Downtown Kingston, these routes will originate from;

- Shortwood

- Barbican
- Duhaney Park
- WhiteHall
- WhiteHall and Havendale
- Harbour View

The remaining 11 routes will be offered to taxi operators who have also been requesting additional routes to provide improved service to the public. These routes will be distributed throughout the Kingston Metropolitan Transport Region.

The Transport Authority Madam Speaker has commenced work that will allow for persons applying for Road Licences and Commercial Carriage Licence to obtain their red plates directly, rather than first purchasing a white plate and then upgrade. This move will help to improve the overall efficiency of the system.

In response to numerous calls supported by an emerging knish in the PPV sector the Transport Authority has embarked on a review the licence categories, the intention is to introduce a new VIP licence category for the contract carriage sector. To usher in this new license type, amendments will have to be made to section 61(5) of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Regulation 2000.

AGED VEHICLE POLICY

Madam Speaker, to assist the PPV operators retool and upgrade their fleet, My Ministry will reintroduce an aged vehicle policy. This policy will allow for existing PPV operators to import motor cars up to 10 years old and buses up to

20 years for use in the PPV sector. In order to ensure that the vehicles are used for their intended purpose, a three-year lien will be placed on the vehicles by the Trade Board.

In order to support the PPV sector by providing affordable and accessible loan offerings, my Ministry will collaborate with the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service to establish a revolving loan fund for our PPV operators. I am pleased to advise that discussions are far advanced on this matter, and we should be able to make an announcement in the ensuing months.

Further, coming out of the work of the Public Transport Operators Steering Committee, my Ministry will be engaging the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service to review and revise the relevant sections of the Motor Vehicle Insurance (Third Party Risk) Act. The aim of this review is to increase the minimum limit and provide additional coverage to the insured.

RIDE HAILING SERVICES

Madam Speaker, it is imperative that I speak

to the Ride Hailing Services. As a government, we are aware of the increasing popularity in the use of technology to engage personal transportation services. This government is not opposed to this; however, we are adamant that ride hailing services must operate within the ambit of the law. We have sought to engage with ride hailing providers both locally and internationally to streamline their operations within the regulatory regime.

Madam Speaker, I want to publicly state that the only provider that has indicated their willingness to operate within the legal framework is UBER. The Transport Authority will be meeting with local ride hailing entities this week in this regard, Madam Speaker INDRIVE remains outstanding. I would like to also point out that in addition to the governments concern about safety and security in this environment there are issues relating to undercut in the market where they charge lower fares, the impact on tourism, the economy in general and the threat of Money Laundering and Terrorism. Madam Speaker, this is dangerous territory.

FUELING JAMAICA'S ENERGY SECURITY



FUELLING JAMAICA'S ENERGY SECURITY

Madam Speaker, the Energy Portfolio of the MSETT continues to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth Everywhere*** by supporting Energy Policy Administration, Security, and Supply to ensure a modern, efficient, diversified, and environmentally sustainable Energy Sector. Consequently, several key priority initiatives have been undertaken to promote and provide for the sustainability and prosperity of the Energy Sector.

The Policies and Support Policies

National Energy Policy (2009 – 2030) Reviewed and Updated

In this regard, Madam Speaker, the new National Energy Policy (NEP) 2024-2050 and the associated 3-year Action Plan, which have benefitted from wide stakeholder consultation, have been completed. These seek to ensure that all Jamaicans have access to an energy supply that is secure and reliable, cost-effective, and affordable, low-carbon and environmentally friendly.

The Ministry is now preparing the Policy and the 3-year Action Plan along with the other associated Policies for Cabinet's approval so that they can be promulgated together.

Other Policies

Madam Speaker, the Ministry developed the National Electric Vehicle Policy and the National Energy Efficiency & Conservation Policy and

Guidelines for Public Buildings and Facilities specifically for schools and health facilities with the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Both were tabled in this Parliament on June 30, 2023.

- **The National Electric Vehicle Policy** – aims to boost electric vehicle usage, cut emissions, and improve energy efficiency through phased measures like raising public awareness and promoting alternative vehicle choices. By 2030, it targets 12% of private car owners, 16% of public transport operators, and aims for the Government's entire fleet to go electric by 2050.
- **National Energy Efficiency & Conservation Policy and Guidelines for Public Buildings and Facilities** – The Energy Efficiency and Conservation (EEC) Policy and Guidelines for Public Buildings and its accompanying Implementation Plan, developed with the support of International Donor Partners were approved by Cabinet in June 2023. This aims to champion responsible energy usage in public buildings, in particular schools and health facilities.
- **National Nuclear Energy Policy** - The MSETT is conducting ongoing research on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and international nuclear energy policies. Research was also completed on legislative requirements and standards from other

countries to aid in drafting Jamaica's Nuclear Energy Policy. In January 2024 the Ministry became a bilateral partner with the Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of Small Modular Reactor Technology (FIRST) to provide technical support to Jamaica that are consistent with the highest international technical nuclear standards for nuclear security, safety, and non-proliferation. This is in addition to the established relationship with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that is providing the appropriate guidance and support within the international context, insights from capacity building sessions will aid the development of Jamaica's Nuclear Energy Roadmap.

- Additionally, the **National Renewable Energy Policy, National Energy Efficiency & Conservation Policy for the Private Sector, and the National Energy-from-Waste Policy** - shaped by input from energy stakeholders, are currently being reviewed prior to public consultations, in line with Government's policy development protocols.

FUELLING JAMAICA'S ENERGY DIVERSITY

Madam Speaker, the **Electricity (Auxiliary Connections) Regulations** and the **Electricity (Wheeling) Regulations** are currently being finalised for submission through the Legislative process.

Non-Technical Loss Reduction

Among the Ministry's priority initiatives is the Non-Technical Loss Reduction. In August

2023, with support from IDB and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) a National Electricity Loss Reduction Plan was completed. The Plan, supported by the Energy Loss Independent Report of 2022, outlines a comprehensive strategy to address electricity theft. In 2023, losses totalled 27.8%, of which 80% were attributed to theft, with the remaining 20% resulting from technical losses. The strategy outlines ten key initiatives costing US\$74.5M, with projected benefits of US\$440M over ten years; suggesting a simple payback of just under six years. The MSETT plans to establish a National Task Force to work at reducing losses to 12.3% by 2035.

Rural Electrification Programme (REP)

In May 2023, portfolio responsibility for the REP was returned to the MSETT and the Ministry continued with the arrangements that have been in place since 2020 with the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) to ***manage the planning and implementation of design and execution of housewiring and pole line requests from start to finish***. Funding for the execution of the programme is provided from the budgetary allocation of the Ministry and requests for intervention are usually routed through the Ministry to the JSIF.

The programme has to date received funding support to a value of J\$845M to support the implementation of the housewiring and pole line functions in selected urban and rural communities. This is to ensure improved access to legal electricity, empower rural community development and improve community safety and security. The achievements under this programme have been significant and impactful.

Madam Speaker there have been challenges but with perseverance to date we have seen housewiring completed for **2,403** houses in **19** communities with procurement in progress for a further **700** houses to be wired during the 2024/25 fiscal year. Under the Pole Line Extension component, **13** communities have projects approved by the JPS and are now in active implementation. A total of 6.7 kilometers of pole line extensions are being implemented.

The implementation of this programme, despite the challenges, has presented opportunities to adopt and refine the processes. Among the best practices which will improve implementation going forward are:

- Community engagements that see the JPS doing pre-contracts with residents prior to homes being wired, thus ensuring they can be connected quickly, and reduces the likelihood of residents having homes wired, then not becoming regularized after.

- Expanded community meetings with the key stakeholders for their “buy-in” prior to project implementation has reduced the level of resistance to become regularized.
- Pre, during and post engagement with the communities through the project implementation, to be done so any challenges/missed impact of the project can be ascertained.

The project is now well entrenched, with significant demand for support across multiple communities. The strategic partnership that now exists with JSIF and JPS augurs well for the project and further involvement of the JPS could in fact lead to the programme being significantly scaled up to support additional communities.

Among the rural communities there is a particularly huge unmet demand for pole extensions, whilst within the urban areas, the need is largely for housewiring support.



Petroleum Pricing

In 2023, despite the impact of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the post-pandemic high inflation pressures and supply-chain issues consumers enjoyed some reprieve in petroleum prices of some 18% reduction.

This positive performance continued, however with the recent Israel-Gaza war the cost of petroleum products has increased significantly thereby driving up the cost of electricity not only for Jamaica but for the entire globe. Nevertheless, the Jamaican people have shown great resilience and have pivoted their energy consumption patterns to contain the effects through energy efficiency and conservation practices.

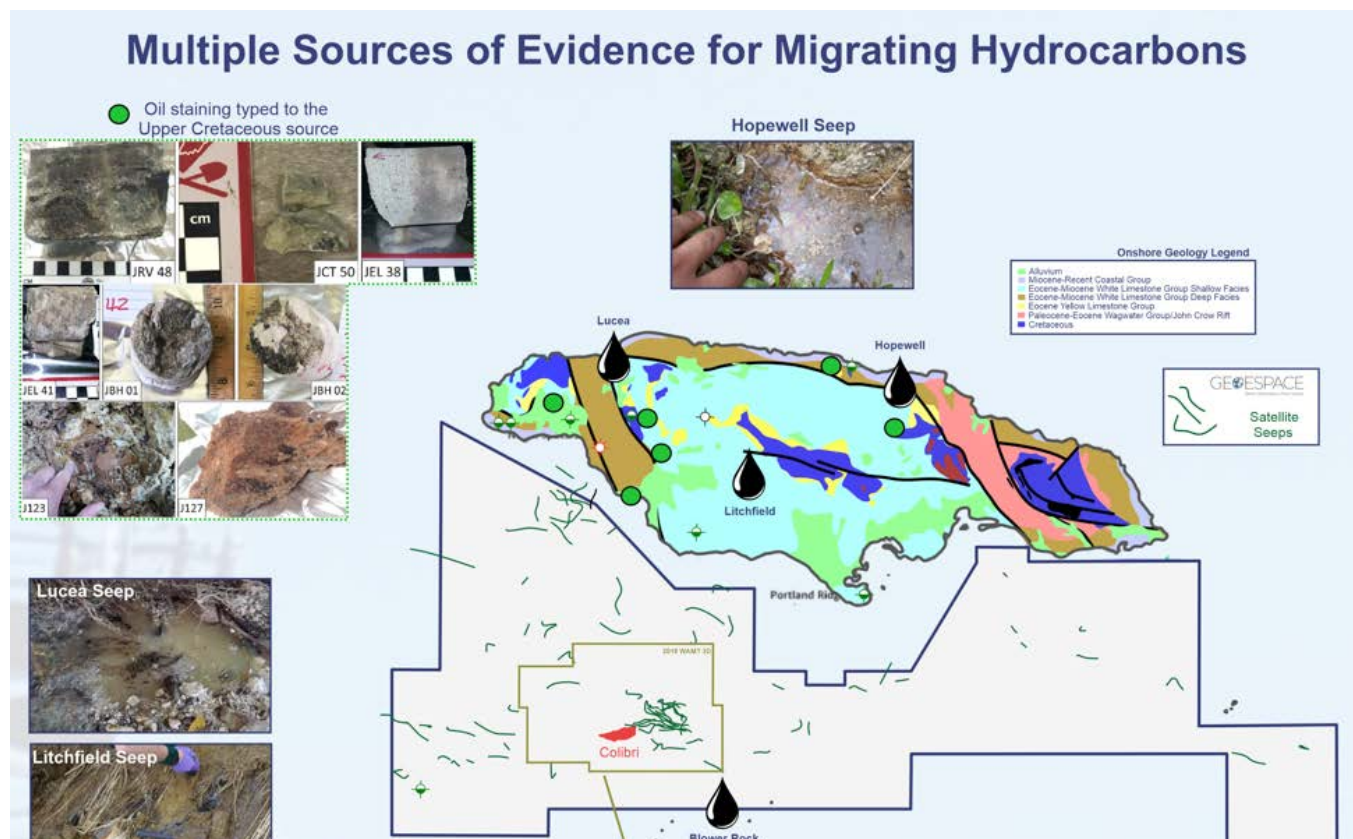
The reality is, the past energy world with cheaper oil no longer exists and unfortunately,

is unlikely to return in the short to medium term. And this is why this government has ensured that we look to achieve 50% renewables by 2030.

It is to be noted Madam Speaker, that the World Economic Forum's 2023 Energy Transition report has given Jamaica an above average rating for taking steps to reduce its carbon emissions footprint by guiding the transition from Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) to Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Renewable Energy (RE).

Oil and Gas Exploration

The GOJ through this Ministry has granted a 2-year extension of the **Oil and Gas Exploration Production Sharing Agreement** with United Oil and Gas (UOG). This 2-year extension which expires in January 2026,



sees an aggressive work programme that will significantly de-risk identified oil and gas prospects off the south coast of Jamaica. The programme includes surveying of the sea floor with a specialized vessel to retrieve samples to test for the presence of oil/gas. Currently, work is being done to secure the necessary environmental permits through the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA). This survey is expected to be completed at the end of this calendar year.

Integrated Resource Plan 2 (IRP 2)

Madam Speaker, the MSETT has also finalised the second Integrated Resource Plan (IRP 2) which will outline the roadmap to achieving 50% renewables by 2030. The draft IRP 2 was presented to the various stakeholder groups and feedback was received. The submission will now be presented to the Cabinet for consideration and approval.

Generation Procurement Entity (GPE) - Request for Proposals (RFP)

The Generation Procurement Entity (GPE) launched a Request for Proposals (RFP) process a year ago.

On April 5, 2024, the GPE received 12 bids (including an alternative one) for 482.03 MW. This represents a remarkable opportunity for the renewable energy landscape in Jamaica and another step on the path to clean energy transition in the country.

The GPE is currently evaluating bids and the awardees will be announced in the next months.

Additionally, the GPE is expected to publish the second RFP this fiscal year for a capacity of up to 168 MW.

171.5 MW Power Plant Replacement

In January 2023, the Cabinet approved the Policy Position that retiring fossil fuel generation plants should be replaced by mature renewable energy.

Consequently the JPS plans to replace its retiring 171.5 MW of fossil fuel generation with mature renewables in keeping with the GOJ's policy position. Once installed this will significantly increase Jamaica's renewable energy capacity, bringing it to approximately 30% of grid installed generation capacity.

The Government Electrical Regulator (GER)

The Government Electrical Regulator (GER), established under the Electricity Act, 2015, has made considerable progress since its inception on November 1, 2021. It has licensed **290** Private Electrical Inspectors representing an over **1300%** increase when compared to the previous regime, where there were only **20** Electrical Inspectors. In addition, there are now **1676** Registered Electricians across all 14 parishes. Consequently, for Fiscal Year 2023/24 the GER was able to register **20,665** customers through the GER Portal and some **28,935** inspections were conducted and submitted.

For the Fiscal Year April 1, 2023, to March 20, 2024, the GER conducted over **3506** compliance reviews of the electrical installation works

done by registered electricians and certified by private licensed electrical inspectors. This represents an increase of **14%** from the previous year.

These compliance reviews are aimed at ensuring the quality and standard of electrical inspections by electricians and inspectors are maintained.

FUELLING JAMAICA'S PETROLEUM SUPPLY

Madam Speaker, I now turn your attention to Petrojam Limited. I am pleased to announce that Petrojam has fully recovered from the fire that damaged sections of the refinery in March of this year.

During the Period January to December 2023, Petrojam supplied 11.79 million barrels of products to the local and export markets.

This was realized from a mix of refining and importation of finished petroleum products.

Contribution to Tourism – Sangster International Runway Project:

In fact, Madam Speaker, in 2023, Petrojam supplied 5,000 barrels of the special grade asphalt needed to pave the upgraded runway according to international standards at the Sangster International Airport during their improvement works over the past years.

Petrojam is also tipped to supply the asphalt needed for the upgrade of the runway at the Norman Manley International Airport. This project is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of the 2024/25 Financial Year.

Furthermore, during the calendar year approximately 50,000 barrels of asphalt were supplied to pave the South Coast Highway.



Contribution to the Local Manufacturing Sector:

In support of the local manufacturing sector, Petrojam installed facilities at and commenced supply of approximately 12,000 barrels of LPG to the Red Stripe Plant on Spanish Town Road in 2023.

January to December 2023 export sales volume was 5 million barrels. This equates to approximately US\$520 million in export earnings. Additionally, Petrojam is actively pursuing opportunities to supply players in the region with Fuel Oil and Asphalt.

Anticipated Developments/Outlook 2024

The main strategy Petrojam will be pursuing for FY 2024/2025 is the improvement of operational efficiency. Areas of focus include:

- Oil loss
- Crude processing
- Plant reliability
- Risk Management
- Environmental protection/energy conservation

Project to Install Facilities to Convert Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) to Asphalt

Madam Speaker, the project to install facilities to convert Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) which will result in an estimated increase in asphalt production

from 4,000 barrels per month to approximately 19,000 barrels per month, is scheduled for completion in the 2nd quarter of FY 2024/25.

This project aims to reduce the excess HFO produced by installing facilities to use HFO from storage to produce asphalt for export and local demand. This project is necessary as there has been a fallout in the demand for high sulphur fuel oil (HSFO) and, the low sulphur crudes currently being processed cannot produce enough asphalt. However, the project will allow continuous production of Asphalt irrespective of the type of crude being processed.

Jamaica Aircraft Refuelling Service (JARS)

Petrojam supplies the Tinson Pen Aerodrome and the Ian Fleming International Airport through Jamaica Aircraft Refuelling Service (JARS). JARS commenced supplies of Jet Fuel to American Airlines at the Ian Fleming Airport in February 2024.

2024/25 Projections

Projected profit for the fiscal year 2024/25 is forecasted at US\$9.07M. Projected 8.41 million barrels (23.05 kilo-barrels per day) of crude will be refined to meet the sales projection with the remaining barrels supplied from imported petroleum products and blend stock. These are ways in which the Energy Sector is ***“Fuelling Jamaica’s Growth Everywhere.”***



FUELLING JAMAICA'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS GROWTH



FUELLING JAMAICA'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS GROWTH

Madam Speaker, the Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport continues to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth Everywhere*** through strides in the telecommunications landscape through various initiatives and programmes.

One such initiative being undertaken by the Ministry, with the support of United States Trade and Development Agency, the Office of Utilities Regulation and other government entities, is the project to enhance access to emergency communications response. In the previous Financial Year, a design of the proposed consolidated Emergency Communications Centre was completed, with the view to collocating the emergency call taking activities of the Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Jamaica Fire Brigade. Once internal reviews are complete, the Ministry expects that the project will move into the implementation stage of colocation arrangements and technology integration for both entities. Phase One of the implementation should see the integration of call taking and dispatch in the Kingston Metropolitan Areas with the intention to expand this across the island.

Also, as we move towards implementation, amendments will be made to the Telecommunications Act to facilitate the transition. Whilst many amendments may be required, focus will be placed on addressing misuse of emergency communication response services and enhancing the regime to identify the location of callers to 119 to ensure that

emergency services can be accurately dispatched to the desired location.

FUELLING GROWTH – REDUCING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

E-Learning Jamaica (e-LJam), possibly one of the most under recognized resources under our belts, continues to support the mandate of bridging the digital divide, with special focus on the education sector, by enabling teachers, and students to participate in the digital learning environment. For the 2023/24 fiscal year, this was reflected through the “Own Your Own Device” (OYOD) programmes and the “Tablets in Schools” (TIS) project.

Under the TIS Project:

- 15,000 laptops & locks were delivered to High Schools, Teachers', and Community Colleges and 60 interactive panels to High Schools across the island.
- Nine Braille Machines were donated to the Salvation Army School for the Blind and 220 desktops for special needs schools were distributed, as at March 2024.
- 1,100 projectors for all public educational institutions were distributed as at March 31, 2024.
- Specially configured desktops, laptops and tablets will also be provided to 15 special needs schools islandwide this fiscal year.

Through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and the Social and Economic Recovery and Vaccine (SERVE) programme vouchers were provided to non-PATH students island-wide to acquire devices. In the last Financial Year, 200 more students benefited from this project, bringing the total beneficiaries to over **4,000 students**.

Similarly, under the OYOD Teachers' Voucher Programme, an additional 11,500 teachers received vouchers to acquire laptops and to date over **25,000** teachers have received vouchers valued at over J\$2.3 billion.

With the implementation of the Jamaica Data Protection Act (DPA), 2020, e-LJam has partnered with tertiary institutions to provide training to members of the education sector to support their compliance with the DPA. With support from University of the West Indies

(UWI), eLJam trained over 1,000 Principals and Senior School Administrators in Data Protection Fundamentals. The Company also partnered with the University of Technology (UTECH) to train 100 Data Protection Officers from the school system. A further 100 teachers were trained in the use and application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom in collaboration with the UWI.

Planned Programmes FY2024/2025

Going forward, Madam Speaker, the planned initiatives will see the infusion of over 13,226 technological devices being procured and delivered at all levels of the public educational sector, including 15 special needs schools. This will include laptops, desktops, projectors, tablets, interactive panels, and STEM/STEAM tool kits. The company will continue to support



the National Broadband Project, the objective of which is to provide reliable internet connectivity to all public schools.

It will also continue to provide support to capacity building through workshops and seminars, in areas such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). An AI teaching and research laboratory at the Mona Campus of the UWI will also be established in partnership with the faculties of Humanities and Education and Science and Technology.

FUELLING JAMAICA'S GROWTH THROUGH INTERNET ACCESS

Madam Speaker, as we are aware, the Universal Service Fund (USF), is charged with a mandate to bridge the information gap by providing internet access to all. For the 2023/2024

Financial Year, the entity remained fuelled to respond to the growing needs of Jamaicans. Its projects therefore included:

Connect Jamaica (Public Wi-Fi) and Community Wi-Fi

To bolster internet accessibility in public spaces, inclusive of parish capitals, major towns, historical sites, and resort areas. **Five new public Wi-Fi hotspots** were rolled out in the 2023-2024 Financial year, namely:

1. Albert Town, Trelawny
2. Browns Town, St. Ann
3. Linstead, St. Catherine
4. Buff Bay, Portland
5. Old Harbour, St. Catherine



With these new sites added, there are 29 Connect Ja. sites available islandwide.

The scoping and design activities have commenced for an additional five public Wi-Fi hotspots, which are slated for implementation during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

These sites are:

1. Expansion of the Cecil Charlton Wi-Fi facilities in Mandeville, Manchester
2. Crossroads, and its immediate environs covering Slipe Road, Half Way Tree Rd, sections of Marescaux Rd, Torrington, in Kingston
3. Port Royal, Kingston in partnership with TEF and UDC
4. Highgate Square covering the Market, Health Centre, and its environs in St. Mary
5. Portmore Resilience Park in partnership with UDC covers over 26 acres in St. Catherine.

Madam Speaker, this will see the total complement of 34 public Wi-Fi hotspots deployed as of March 2025. To date, **100%** of our major townships have been outfitted with Public Wi-Fi facilities meaning more Jamaicans have access to free and reliable internet.

Additionally, the 2023-2024 fiscal year saw the successful implementation of the 4th Community Wi-Fi hotspot implementation. The introduction of these hotspots will bring Community Wi-Fi penetration to 315 communities across the island at a cost of J\$572,291,000.00.

The USF has successfully executed the launch ceremony for 230 of these sites across all constituencies.

Notably, scoping works have commenced to implement an additional 63 Community Wi-Fi hotspots across the island representing the 6th site per constituency. These sites are expected to be commissioned during the 2024-25 fiscal year. As a result, the Fund is expected to have successfully implemented 378 hotspots by March, next year. Madam Speaker, this is how we continue to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth***.

Fuelling Jamaica's Telecommunications Growth Through Partnerships

- **JUMP by Flow partnership**

The USF signed a Funding Agreement with Cable & Wireless Jamaica Limited to support the JUMP by Flow pilot, totalling J\$13M. The Jump Programme aims to provide a free HP Chromebook, subsidized broadband connectivity to households, and digital literacy and skills training, to vulnerable and unconnected citizens registered on the PATH programme. The USF's commitment is to undertake training-related costs during the six-month pilot.

- **Ministry of Local Government and Community Development**

J\$12.3M has been allocated to procure devices for use across 10 Municipal Corporations in a bid to strengthen their digital security framework and thereby enhance their technological capabilities to be onboarded

on the National Broadband Initiative (NBI) infrastructure.

- **Ministry of Education and Youth/ Early Childhood Commission**

Discussions have commenced with the Ministry of Education and Youth/ Early Childhood Commission to digitise the Jamaica School Readiness Assessment. Through the partnership, the Fund is expected to expend approximately 70 million dollars.

Technology Advancement Programme (TAP)

In keeping with the ICT literacy and digital skills development thrust, the entity embarked on plans to implement cohort III of the Technology Advancement Programme in the 2023/24 financial year. During the 2023-24 F/Y, the

Fund has expended approximately \$157 million to support the successful implementation of the programme. Notably, the Fund provides participants with a fortnightly stipend of J\$25,000.00.

As of March 31, 2024, the USF TAP III programme has successfully engaged a total of 240 participants, comprising 139 commuting and 101 residential participants.

The TAP IV, slated to commence in January 2025 for one year, aims to continue the Coding Training with a new cohort of 200 participants. This decision is based on the successful outcomes of previous cohorts trained by the Amber Group, which have demonstrated significant skill development and employability. The continuing demand in the technology sector underscores the need for such training. Moreover, the initiative aligns with national



technological competency and innovation objectives, representing a strategic investment in building a robust, tech-savvy workforce to enhance the country's economic growth and global competitiveness.

USF ICT Clubs in Schools

The Fund continued its thrust to bridge Jamaica's information gap by exposing young persons to information and communication technology (ICT) thereby fostering an environment to develop an appreciation for ICT external to the regular ICT curriculum. To this end, the 'USF ICT Clubs in Schools' programme was developed, partnering with key stakeholders in the ICT landscape. These include Jamaica Technology and Digital Alliance, Digicel, FLOW, Ministry of Education and Youth (MOEY), eGOV Jamaica Limited, e-Learning Jamaica Company Limited, the University of the West Indies, and the University of Technology, Jamaica (UTECH).

To date, 16 schools have established their ICT club. Of note, the first of many USF ICT Club Conference and Pinning Ceremony was held on November 10, 2023, engaging over 500 participants. It is envisioned that 25 schools will establish their ICT Club during the 2024-2025 F/Y, with a goal to establish 100 clubs across Jamaica.

Provision of ICT devices

- **Digital Resource programme**

Access to technology and the internet has become increasingly important for education,

with many schools and universities relying on digital resources and tools. To this end, the Fund launched its Digital Resource programme. By equipping students from low-income families, the programme will help to bridge the digital divide and ensure that all students have equal access to educational resources. During 2023-24 F/Y, 630 tablets were distributed to students across the island.

- **ICT Devices for individuals and organisations**

The Fund further provided an additional 73 ICT devices to citizens across Jamaica who had expressed an immediate need for this support. Furthermore, 21 organisations were provided with ICT devices to enhance their technological capabilities. Recognising the growing need for such assistance, the Fund aims to continue this support during the 2024/25 F/Y year, aiming to assist at least 25 individuals and 12 organisations.

Fuelling Jamaica's Growth through Improved Telecommunications Services

SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Madam Speaker, in the fiscal year 2023/24, the Spectrum Management Authority (SMA) demonstrated improved customer-oriented service and achieved remarkable performance in its core operational activities, meeting or exceeding key performance indicators. SMA facilitated the growth of the wireless communications industry by promptly processing over 200 spectrum licences. Additionally, it collaborated with the Jamaica Customs in processing detention notices and

type approving equipment to protect incumbent services from harmful interferences.

Increased access to ICT services and the improved quality of those services cannot be overstated. We are aware, that 5G mobile services, which deliver faster and more reliable broadband speeds are being rolled out in many other jurisdictions in this region and Jamaica cannot afford to lag behind the rest of the world.

Madam Speaker, 5G mobile services are extremely beneficial not just for urban business and consumer needs, but also to support the national priority of increasing the availability of reliable, cost-effective connectivity, especially to rural communities. This is one area that the Covid-19 pandemic exposed a critical need, particularly for rural Jamaica and Jamaicans in rural communities have a demonstrated the capacity to be as creative and productive as anyone in the digital world and they deserve to be served with reliable mobile broadband services like anyone else.

In the new world of the Internet of Things (IoT), 5G enables wireless hi-speed connectivity in many more places, such as streetlights, appliances and even motor vehicles. It provides support for more connections and higher speeds. 5G can help with applications like monitoring air quality, traffic, and energy use, as well as smart parking, crowd management and emergency response. It can also support city-wide video surveillance and traffic cameras, as well as secure internet access for residents. 5G can improve communication between people and in factories and can support more

connected devices in any given area. 5G can also offer improvements in latency, connection density, and energy efficiency compared to 4G LTE and can also increase connection density which is useful in dense areas like urban settings so mobile operators can improve the quality and reliability of their service.

Madam Speaker, low-band spectrum, that is, spectrum below 1000MHz in the spectrum frequency range, is needed to cost-effectively deliver 5G mobile broadband services. Jamaica's inventory of low-band spectrum designated for International Mobile Telecommunications (IMT) in the National Frequency Allocation Table (NFAT) is fully exhausted, with the last allocation in the 700Mhz for commercial services being made in 2021. Without additional low-band spectrum, the most cost-effective spectrum for our hilly terrain, Jamaica would be severely restricted from moving forward into the 5G world. Proactively, for almost two years the SMA and the Ministry have undertaken a diligent, considered, and exhaustive exercise to remedy the lack of available low-band spectrum. Following similar developments in other markets most notably the United States, the team at the SMA and MSETT identified the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) 614-698 MHz band (600MHz) spectrum as suitable for mobile broadband services and resolved to access this spectrum block in furtherance of the national interest. This spectrum block was designated for Digital Terrestrial Television Broadcast Services (DTTB) and was currently being utilized by a DTTB operator in Jamaica.

The exercise to repurpose the 600MHz band from broadcast to IMT broadband

services commenced in September 2022 with an exhaustive industry-wide consultation process led by the SMA with the assistance of international and experienced consultants. Twenty-two months of due diligence followed with studious consideration of the various consultant reports, options, factors and guidelines, and the required important work and detailed submissions to make the required change to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Radio Regulations, Article 5 (the international table of frequency allocations). This culminated at ITU World Radio Conference (WRC-23) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in November 2023, with Jamaica successfully included in footnote 5.308A, ratifying the designation of the 600MHz spectrum block as IMT broadband spectrum.

The 600MHz spectrum block is now officially designated for mobile broadband in the National Frequency Allocation Table (NFAT) and an initial 40MHz of 600MHz spectrum is being made available to mobile network operators by way of a public auction and Information Memorandum (IM) for an initial 15-year license. This will leave an additional 30MHz of spectrum that can be made available to the market at the optimal time. The Public notice of the IM and availability of the spectrum was published in the daily newspapers on May 28th and 29th 2024, with a repeat publication on June 2, 2024.

The license terms and conditions will stipulate that mobile broadband services utilizing this block of spectrum must be deployed speedily and extensively in underserved areas of Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, it should be noted that by way of the Information Memorandum, an initial 40MHz of 600MHz spectrum is being made available to mobile network operators for an initial 15-year license. This will leave an additional 30MHz of spectrum that can be made available to the market at the optimal time. In addition, the license terms and conditions will stipulate that mobile broadband services utilizing this block of spectrum must be deployed speedily and extensively in underserved areas of Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, 5G is coming to Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, allow me to emphasize the significant benefits that will be derived from the conclusion of this important exercise which we anticipate in the next few weeks.

First Madam Speaker, the efficient and optimal use of our scarce and valuable spectrum resources will be facilitated in the best public interest – the expansion of broadband services, especially to our rural communities where it is most needed. Mobile operators have been requesting this availability of new low-band spectrum for some time and we have answered their call. Now they must ensure the quality and reach of mobile broadband services befitting the level of creativity and ingenuity of Jamaicans.

Second, by joining the world of 5G, Jamaica sends an important signal that we are open and ready for business with the very latest in technology, that can facilitate the Internet of Things and applications that can transform lives, increase productivity, and enhance the national security of Jamaica.

Third, this new inventory of low-band spectrum will add significant and unanticipated revenues to the coffers of the Government of Jamaica, both initially with the allocation of the initial 40MHz, and any subsequent allocation of the remaining 30MHz when the SMA and Government of Jamaica determines the time to be right.

Madam Speaker, while the benefits to the people of Jamaica include significantly improved mobile broadband service and increased access to hi-speed internet connectivity, it has been a very complex and challenging exercise because unlike previous spectrum auctions, this spectrum is in use by a DTTB operator. This required special planning and thoughtful consideration given the implications for the incumbent and their customers. The extensive

time taken to reach this important juncture was important to tick all the boxes and ensure full compliance with the laws, regulations and policy direction that best serves the needs of the Jamaican people. But we wish to assure them that we shall continue to treat their investment, operations and customers with fairness and respect as we move towards finalizing this important exercise in the nation's best interest.

Madam Speaker, Science is critical to the numerous advancements we will witness in the foreseeable future. The achievements of the past year provide a strong foundation for continued progress, and the objectives of the upcoming year align with the broader national agenda for increased resilience, innovation, and environmental responsibility.

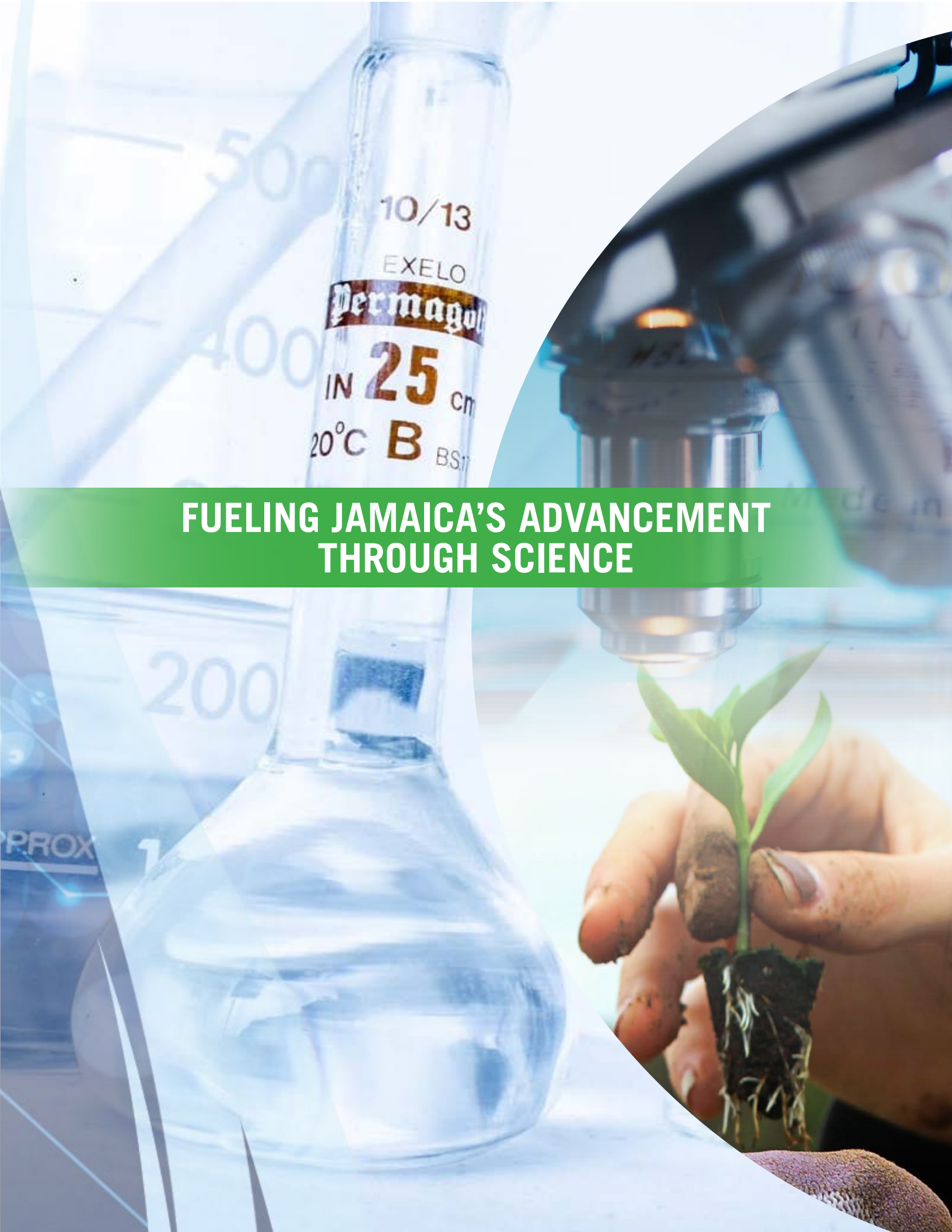
WHEN YOU THINK OF EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT
OF RADIO FREQUENCY...

Think
SPECTRUM!

Spectrum
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY

SHAPING YOUR FUTURE

The advertisement features a man with curly hair, wearing a light blue shirt, looking upwards with a thoughtful expression, his hand resting on his chin. Surrounding him are several icons representing radio frequency and communication: a red antenna, a blue television set, a red mobile phone, and a blue mobile phone. A green and yellow wave emanates from the man's head, passing through the icons. The background is a light gray with a subtle grid pattern.

The background is a collage of scientific imagery. On the left, a graduated cylinder is partially visible with markings for 200, 400, and 500. In the center, a volumetric flask contains a clear liquid. On the right, a hand holds a small green seedling with dark soil at its base. A microscope is also visible in the upper right corner. A green horizontal band with white text is superimposed over the center of the image.

FUELING JAMAICA'S ADVANCEMENT THROUGH SCIENCE

FUELING JAMAICA'S GROWTH THROUGH SCIENCE

The Gamma-Irradiator

Madam Speaker, following supply chain related issues on the manufacturer's side, the project to install the Gamma Irradiation facility will be completed in June 2024. Madam Speaker, when this is commissioned, it will be the first Gamma Irradiation facility in the English-Speaking Caribbean. This facility will be integrated into two major international IAEA Technical Cooperation Projects that are of vital concern to the country.

In collaboration with the Scientific Research Council (SRC), we will use gamma ray treatments to enhance the production of two of our most sought-after produce - ginger and coffee - and the eradication of the West Indian Fruit Fly to bolster food security.

The new ginger and coffee lines will be made resistant to and/or tolerant of the deadly pathogens that affect them, thereby refuelling the niche markets of our world renowned and highly valuable Jamaican ginger and coffee.

Empowering MSMEs Through Support

Madam Speaker, the Analytical Services Department (ASD) of SRC stands as a beacon of support, having completed an impressive **13,918 analyses**, spanning various sectors, including water and wastewater, food, cosmetics, non-sterile pharmaceuticals, and environmental samples. These meticulous analyses have played a pivotal role in ensuring

that Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) consistently meet stringent quality standards and regulatory requirements in the local and international markets, thus facilitating their entry into the market and propelling their growth.

Meanwhile, the Food Product Development Unit (FPDU) has emerged as a driving force behind the success stories of more than 30 clients. Through the creation of 49 unique products, spanning a spectrum from tantalizing sauces and beverages to exquisite essential oils, the SRC has not merely empowered MSMEs but has ignited a fire of innovation that ripples through the economy.

Moreover, the SRC Food Pilot Plant has emerged as an epicentre of innovation, churning out and packaging over 230 diverse food products for 67 clients. These offerings encompass a rich tapestry of exotic items such as coffee pepper jelly, Otaheite apple BBQ sauce, herb-infused honey, and lavender lemonade, as well as staple sauces, jams/jellies, and beverages. These products have found their way onto shelves, providing MSMEs with market-ready solutions, expanding their reach, and creating job opportunities.

The SRC's advanced support and technology have not only propelled MSMEs toward manufacturing high-quality products that effortlessly comply with regulatory standards but have translated into tangible outcomes,

including the creation of job opportunities and the strengthening of industry linkages. In doing so, the SRC continues to play a pivotal role in fostering economic development, creating opportunities, and fostering a vibrant and thriving business ecosystem.

Madam Speaker, as you can see, we are Fuelling Jamaica's Growth through Science!

Mapping of Jamaica's Science, Technology, and Innovation (ST&I) Landscape with Global Approach (GO-SPIN Model)

Through collaboration among the MSETT, National Commission on Science and Technology (NCST), Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific,

and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Jamaica has become the 13th nation globally to assess and map the local Science Technology and Innovation landscape through the recent completion and validation of the first draft of the Country Profile.

This, Madam Speaker, is critical to the implementation of the National ST&I Policy which was tabled in the House in February 2022.

Re-Establishment of the Hazard Laboratory Waste Ad Hoc Committee (HALWAC)

Madam Speaker, the efforts to clean-up years of hoarded chemical waste in government owned facilities and academic institutions has been revitalized and the disposal of certain



Representatives of UNESCO GO-SPIN ST&I Mapping Capacity Building Workshop, which was held at the PCJ Auditorium.

classes of chemical waste from these facilities is being actively pursued.

To this end, the NCST, in collaboration with ICENS, University of the West Indies (UWI) and the Bureau of Standards, conducted a training workshop for laboratory managers/technicians in government laboratories on September 22, 2023, on the characterization of unknown chemicals, and safe methods for handling and disposal. This has led to a demand for more guidance and training and requests for a similar programme to be implemented for secondary schools. The Ministry will therefore be exploring this option this fiscal year.

Advancing STEM Education and Science Popularization:

In harmony with Jamaica's Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) policy, SRC is dedicated to advancing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education and science popularization. We recognize the pivotal role that STEM plays in driving innovation, fostering scientific curiosity, and preparing the next generation for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Madam Speaker, the initiatives led by SRC, including National Science & Technology Month 2023, were instrumental in promoting STEM awareness and inspiring the Jamaican populace to embrace the transformative power of science and technology. These efforts align seamlessly with the vision articulated in my Sectoral Presentation last year, which emphasized the need to unlock limitless possibilities and fuel growth through STEM.

PRIORITIES/OBJECTIVES FOR 2024/2025

As we continue to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth Everywhere*** Madam Speaker, ensuring ethical and proper governance of emerging technologies to ensure responsible and inclusive development in the scientific field is critical. Strategic priorities reflect the dedication to fostering sustainable development, supporting entrepreneurship, and nurturing the next generation of innovators and scientists. This will be done through:

- 1. Targeted Organization of Jamaica's Scientific Landscape** - With the GO-SPIN Country Profile nearing completion and ongoing efforts to familiarize key stakeholders with the goals and objectives of the National ST&I Policy, focused initiatives will be developed to address identified gaps. These initiatives aim to enhance the organization of Jamaica's scientific community, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and cross-functional engagement.
- 2. Enhancing Research and Development (R&D) Investments** through fostering collaborative efforts among academia, industry, and government agencies. This will ensure that our nation remains at the forefront of scientific innovation, driving economic growth and competitiveness.
- 3. Support of STEM Education and Expansion of Science Education Initiatives by the SRC;** this will secure a skilled workforce for the future, in addition to attracting and retaining talent to support

“new science age” being birthed in Jamaica. Science education programmes will be expanded to support this drive to create and retain a culture of scientific excellence.

4. **The National Medal and Innovation Awards** will be hosted by NCST in its role of enhancing a “Technology Enabled society” and to foster a culture of innovation to increase the base of wealth, during Science and Technology month in November 2024.
5. **Establishment of a Technology Commercialization Sub-office** – SRC, to further support the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jamaica

and enhance business development, will collaborate with the Development Bank of Jamaica and the Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce to establish a dedicated Technology Commercialization Sub-Office. This office will catalyze the transforming of innovative ideas into commercial ventures, facilitating technology transfer, and fostering economic growth. It will play a vital role in nurturing entrepreneurship and innovation, contributing to the economic prosperity of Jamaica as ***we continue to fuel Jamaica’s growth.***



Dr. Olive-Jean Burrowes, Executive Director, National Commission on Science and Technology (L) congratulates Dr. Andre Gordon on receiving a citation accompanying the National Medal for Science & Technology. Looking on are Dr. Natwaine Gardner, Principal Director, Science Portfolio, Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport; Dr. Parris Lyew Ayee Jr., Board Chairman for the Scientific Research Council and Dr. Charah Watson, Executive Director, Scientific Research Council.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I assumed duties with a determination that this Ministry would make a lasting impact on the lives of the Jamaican people, and we will not be daunted by the enormity of the task. I have outlined a comprehensive vision for the advancement of these critical sectors

and reaffirm this government's unwavering commitment to advancing the Science, Energy, Telecommunications, and Transport sectors, as we continue to ***Fuel Jamaica's Growth Everywhere.***

Thank you.

LOOK OUT BEFORE YOU STEP OUT

- **USE PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS;**
- **STAND ON THE SIDEWALK OR AT THE SIDE OF THE ROAD UNTIL IT IS SAFE TO CROSS;**
- **LOOK RIGHT, LOOK LEFT, LOOK RIGHT AGAIN AND ONLY CROSS IF THE ROAD IS CLEAR;**
- **DO NOT USE THE PHONE WHILE CROSSING THE ROAD;**
- **DO NOT ALIGHT FROM A VEHICLE ON THE SIDE TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC.**



...Fuelling growth everywhere

ROAD SAFETY AWARENESS