



LEADER OF THE
OPPOSITION

MARCH 15
2022

MARK J.
GOLDING

THERE IS
POWER
IN THE
DREAM

2022 BUDGET DEBATE PRESENTATION



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“

Madam Speaker, I thank God for the mercy and grace he has bestowed on our nation and for keeping us safe through a tough year.

”



Salutations

In representational politics, we cannot do it alone! We rely on the support and love of many to get us through and achieve our goals.

To my beloved parents, who guided me in this life. To my dear wife, Sandra, our children, and extended family, I am grateful for your care and love.

To my colleagues on this side, I thank you for the support and your steadfast commitment to the people of Jamaica.

To my colleagues on the other side, although we disagree on many issues, I enjoy our debates and hope that we will continue to have a vibrant but respectful Parliament.

To the great team at the Office of the Leader of the Opposition, the party leadership and workers, I appreciate your hard work and dedication to our country.

To my beloved constituents of South St. Andrew, you are the wind beneath my wings.

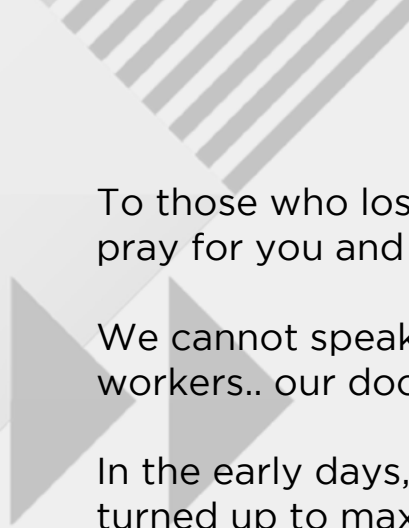
I thank outgoing Councillors Marcia Neita and Neville Wright for their years of tremendous service, and our Councillor Candidates Sarah Marshall and Louise Newland for their energy and commitment to the people.

To the Hon Speaker, and to Madam Clerk and your team, I extend sincere gratitude for your work in this parliament.

To all public servants - Thank you for your dedicated service to the people of Jamaica.

It has been a tough two years, as we have dealt with the ravages of the COVID. We have seen much suffering and death.

We mourn the loss of each person who died from COVID and other causes over the last year.



To those who lost loved ones, I extend deepest sympathies. We continue to pray for you and for the souls of the departed.

We cannot speak about COVID-19 without acknowledging our frontline workers.. our doctors, nurses, porters, police officers and soldiers.

In the early days, when we knew very little about COVID-19 and the fear was turned up to maximum levels, they put their lives on the line in service to the health and wellbeing of our fellow citizens.

The Good Book tells us that “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

I know I speak for everyone in this House when I say we owe you a debt of gratitude. You are true patriots and heroes.

We also have to acknowledge the people of Jamaica, who played such a vital role in the fight. You altered your habits, deferred your plans, changed work schedules; but above all, you cared for each other.



Overview of the **2022/23 Budget**

“It has missed the mark.”

When the people of Jamaica tuned in to watch the budget presentation last week they were anxious to hear solutions, the plans and programmes to take us out of the unprecedented crisis we are facing.

What they got was pure theatre... Parliament became a Pantomime.

If the people wanted drama, they would go to Little Theatre or Centre Stage.

The people want real answers to the problems facing them.

The Minister of Finance says we are doing well. That is a fantasy.

Who are the “we” of which he is speaking?

Not the people in my constituency, not the people in East Rural St Andrew or the people in South East St Elizabeth.

Only a few well connected are making money and living well.

Many Jamaicans are living from hand to mouth. They can't pay the bills, they are feeling the burdens of an economy pressured by two years of COVID-19 and now the Russia/Ukraine conflict.

That is their reality.

There is no balance in society. This is a deeply unequal society divided into the haves and the have nots.

This budget will perpetuate, and indeed worsen, that inequality.

The pandemic has severely impacted the world economy, and Jamaica was not spared.

After suffering a decline in real GDP of over 10% in 2020, we have not yet recovered the lost ground.

The main economic legacy of the pandemic has been a spike in inflation.

This is caused by various factors including increased world demand for goods versus services, supply chain disruptions affecting world trade, and geopolitical tensions affecting world commodity prices (including oil and gas).

The reality is that Jamaica is now facing a major onslaught from the effects of the war in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed on Russia.

Russia is a major oil and gas exporter, and the price of oil has rocketed to over US\$100 per barrel.

JPS has already warned of higher electricity costs.

JPS has called for a national response and is suggesting that the Government suspends the taxes on fuel and the GCT on electricity sales, to give paying customers some relief.

Motorists, taxi drivers and other transport operators are already seeing massive increases in the cost of gas at the pump. Last Thursday our Shadow Spokesperson for Finance, MP Julian Robinson, in an excellent and revealing presentation, showed that the ex-refinery price of gas has increased by 60% in the twelve months to February 2022.

He also showed the massive hikes in basic food prices over the last twelve months. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia will make things worse for Jamaicans.

Russia and Ukraine are major producers of grains.

The prices of wheat, corn and other grains are flying through the roof.

Ukraine and Russia are also major suppliers of agricultural fertilisers and chemicals to the world. This means that food production around the world will be seriously affected.

Sadly, the high inflation that consumers have endured over the past year is going to get worse.

Jamaicans will face higher prices for basic food items, electricity and transportation. This tidal wave of higher prices will flow through to other items as well.

Mothers won't be able to feed their children. More children will face hunger and malnutrition. Even those who are working won't be able to make ends meet. For the working poor, their minimum wage will not stretch far enough to cover the price increases.

Very dark days are ahead for our people. The country is on the brink of a deep crisis but this budget has very few real solutions.

It is clear that this budget was put together without a strategic response to protect Jamaicans from the economic fallout of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

It reminds me of the budget of March 2020, which did not account for the impact of Covid-19, and had to be substantially overhauled by a supplementary budget two months later.

While the budget is based on a fantasy, the Jamaican people live in reality.

They have to face the crisis head on, as they try to feed their families and pay their bills.

At this time, reality demands that the **Government "Cushions the Crisis"** and gives our people some ease from the heavy burdens.

There is nothing in this budget that will give protection to the people who need it most.

The Government has not protected the people from what they are facing. This budget has no meaningful provisions to protect them from the onslaught.

We demand that more be done to ease the burdens on the Jamaican people. **The Minister of Finance is more worried about appeasing credit rating agencies and the capital markets than providing relief for the suffering people of Jamaica.** The Jamaican people must be our priority.

Minister make the people your priority and **cushion the crisis.**

We can always recover lost ground in our efforts to lower debt when the crisis is over.

Last week Tuesday, the Minister beat his chest and colleagues on that side beat their desks as he announced that there will be no new taxes.

**“ The Jamaican people
must be our priority.**

**Minister, make the people
your priority and Cushion
the Crisis.”**



I say to the people of Jamaica...Do not be fooled by the hype.

The Government plans to collect \$99 Billion more in taxes in this coming year.

That is an increase of \$99 Billion in taxes from the people. Imagine, this is happening in a year when many have not recovered from the Covid recession, and many more are facing hunger and sufferation from the affects of the war in Ukraine!

\$99 Billion more in taxes! That is unconscionable at a time like this!

We believe that the Government must rearrange the budget, and find a way to give some of this \$99 Billion back to the people. Help thepeople to survive this world crisis that is overcoming us.

The Minister says he plans to use \$2 Billion to reduce the impact on some transport operators. He is yet to tell us how this will work. It was a promise that was clearly made “on the fly”, with no details. He is also promising a mere \$750 million for care packages.

Of the \$99 Billion dollars in additional taxes, all he is giving back in this crisis is \$2.75 Billion.

At a time like this, when sufferation is on the land, and the people are close to the brink.

That \$2.75 Billion is a mere 0.1% of GDP. That is one-tenth of one per cent. It is a drop in the bucket. It is not enough to meet the needs of our people... the impact will be minimal.

More children will suffer... they will go to bed hungry with just a little sugar and water to wet their lips.

The elderly will suffer, too. Many of them have very limited funds and have already cut back significantly. Many are eating only one meal a day, if they get that. Even the fit and the strong are suffering.

Electricity and water affect every aspect of life of our people. With those going up, the people are facing lick after lick after lick.

Cushion the lick, Minister.

Cushion the Crisis, Prime Minister.

Last week, the Minister of Finance tried a thing with a tune from Anthony Red Rose, but he got the lyrics wrong. Well here it is, right back at you, Minister. Cyaan seh mi neva did a warn you.

It is you who need the warning, Minister Clarke, not me. Cyaan seh mi neva did a warn you, Minister! You control the purse strings! Don't hold them so tight at a time when the our people are suffering and the society is on the brink.

You are not addressing the crisis!
You have no plan to protect the Jamaican people!
Cyaan seh mi neva did a warn you and the Government - continue to behave this way and you will be riding for a fall.
You must hear the cries of our people ..They are hurting. They are afraid. People are increasingly upset and angry.
Rain a fall, but the dutty tough. Pot a cook, but the food nuh nuff.
A hungry man is an angry man.
Act now!
Cushion the Crisis.
Recast the budget.
Address the cries of the people.
We on this side are recommending that the following benefits need to be substantially increased in this fiscal year.

- **PATH Benefits**
- **Poor relief**
- **The amount spent on social pensions for those who are not receiving NIS or public sector pensions.**

Inflation, especially the cost of basic food items, is taking away their ability to survive. These are our most vulnerable people. They need and deserve protection from the Government at this time of raging inflation.



Excessive
fiscal
conservatism.

I realize that some of these absolutely essential measures, to give our people a break, will come at a fiscal cost. The Government ran a fiscal surplus of 0.3% of GDP this year, and is budgeting to do the same in the coming fiscal year. The plan is to reduce the public debt as rapidly as possible, to 60% of GDP by March 2028.

It was the PNP administration that began the process to reduce the debt. In fact, our administration did the heavy lifting to get the debt down. We are fully committed to achieving the target of 60% of GDP. We are fully committed to fiscal prudence. Our track record proves it.

The last PNP Administration reduced the public debt from 147% of GDP to 115% of GDP in just four years. We strengthened the Fiscal Responsibility Framework, with laws that make the budget and the fiscal programme of the Government much more transparent.

Perhaps most importantly, we passed legislation and implemented administrative changes to overhaul the country's tax collection system. The JLP Government has reaped the fruits of those transformational reforms. Tax revenues have increased rapidly since 2016, outstripping inflation and nominal GDP growth and without the need for any net new tax measures.

Dr. Peter Phillips, as Finance Minister, was Gleaner Man of the Year in 2015 for these monumental achievements. I am honoured to have worked closely with him to deliver the legislative reforms that have put Jamaica on a sound fiscal path for the future.

But, as the Most Hon. Portia Simpson-Miller often says, a responsible Government must balance the books while balancing people's lives. The public debt is now below 100% of GDP, and GDP is recovering from the effects of the pandemic. We believe that Jamaica can afford to slow the pace of debt reduction and use those resources to help our people get through these most difficult times.

On the other hand, the negative social impact of continued excessive fiscal conservatism will do lasting damage to our society. I would support additional expenditures of at least 2% of GDP to address these critical needs facing the society.

It is time to focus on helping our people. It is not the time for excessive fiscal conservatism.

The Government is playing with fire, by leaving vulnerable populations unprotected in this vortex of high inflation and the unbearable cost of living.

With real GDP growth of 3.5% projected for the coming fiscal year, this expenditure would not worsen the debt to GDP ratio. On the other hand, it would also begin the process of addressing some of the major social deficits that cause our low national productivity, and our dire problem of violent crime.

The **Charade** about new Bank Notes.



One thing I love about the Jamaican people is their ability to identify a “poppy show”. Many saw the unveiling of the new bank notes for what it really was.. a distraction from the real issues that affect them.

It was another fantasy.

How do new bank notes help our people, who are trying to survive day by day, living from hand to mouth?

How is it relevant, at a time like this?

It will do nothing to help the people ride out the storm. As one man told me, “it won’t put one more dumpling in the pot”.

Aside from all the silliness of the unveiling of the new bank notes, the approach reflects a deeper issue of arrogant governance.

The Government chose not to consult with the Opposition on the new design for the notes, even though it involves powerful symbolism affecting some of our great political leaders. Creating new bank notes is not just a family matter. It is much bigger than that.

No consultation. You just bring it here last Tuesday, with a bag of hype. That is not how to build a better understanding. That is not how you promote togetherness. That is not how we work together. That is disrespect.

And yes, we know the Prime Minister wants his mentor Mr. Seaga on a bank note. No problem – if you say a \$2,000 note is needed, that’s fine! Put Mr. Seaga on the \$2,000 note, but leave Michael Manley on the \$1,000 note.

You changed it without consulting with us. You changed it without any attempt to reach consensus. That approach will not last the test of time. You say you are doing this out of love, Minister. But love must be based on truth, respect and understanding. Your approach in this matter has none of that.

We know the reality, and the people know the reality. The hype and gimmickry won’t fool them.

They know their history. The reality, that must be faced, is that there is further truth and reconciliation needed to heal our society, when it comes to the Manley/Seaga period.

In the 1970s, Michael Manley was trying to build a better, more equal, fair and just Jamaica, for all the people. He was especially concerned about the masses who were marginalized and oppressed by a colonial system which the JLP had left untouched after independence.

In this period of the 1970's, the country got free education. The PNP under Michael Manley gave us the National Housing Trust, and built thousands of houses for low-income families. The Manley Government gave women the right to equal pay and the right to maternity leave.

He gave workers the right to redundancy pay and notice pay. He gave the workers access to an Industrial Disputes Tribunal when their rights are violated. He made everyone lawful, nuh bastard nuh deh again, whether their parents were married or not, so they could get their inheritance and "step up inna life" as equal citizens of this country.

He was an international champion in the fight against the racist Apartheid regime in South Africa, and for a better deal for Third World countries like Jamaica.

He gave the masses of this country a place in society, so that everyone a smaddy, nuh care where you born and grow. Many professionals and business people are where they are today because Michael Manley pushed open so many doors in the 1970s.

From our perspective, in that era the other leader did his best, with the help of outside forces like the CIA, to destabilize Michael Manley's efforts. Jamaica paid a heavy price, as nearly 1,000 of our people were killed in the resulting political violence. The economy was severely damaged by capital flight, hoarding and the hostile propaganda of the conservative media.

All of that was about turning back progress. Michael Manley never lost faith in the Jamaican people. And we on this side will always have faith in the Jamaican people, and we will always have their back. Stop distorting and revising history, Minister Clarke.

I'm sure that your own family were beneficiaries of what Michael Manley did for Jamaica.

**Give Consumers,
Motorists &
Transport
Operators
a Break.**



The Fiscal Policy Paper of February 10, 2022 states that the budget is based on a projected average oil price of US\$67.50 per barrel. Since that time a war in Eastern Europe has pushed oil prices to well over US\$100 per barrel. Approximately 40% of the price of gas in Jamaica is made up of various taxes, of which the ad valorem SCT is a major component.

Our Spokesperson on Finance, MP Julian Robinson has called for the hedge tax on fuel to be returned to motorists. The hedge was imposed to buy price insurance to protect the public from high gas prices. While the Government continues to collect the hedge tax, it has not been used for that purpose since 2016. The Government has been pocketing this money.

I support our Spokesperson's call and I want to go even further.

We are proposing that for the duration of the inflation crisis, the Government caps the ad valorem SCT on fuel at US\$67.50 per barrel, and also at the equivalent for LNG, so that oil prices above that do not result in higher taxes on fuel.

Consumers need a break on their electricity bills.

Motorists need a break at the pumps as the price for gas is at historic highs. Taxi and bus operators need a break. Their costs have eroded the viability of their operations. They are now pressuring the Government for a fare increase. Higher transportation costs will affect other prices in the domestic economy. This is the people's reality, not fantasy.

Capping the ad valorem SCT on fuel at US\$67.50 per barrel will take some of the pressure off consumers, motorists and transport operators.

To us, it would be a meaningful response to the devastating increases in electricity prices and transport costs due to massive increase in the price of oil. Since the Government has not budgeted for a windfall in taxes on oil prices above US\$67.50, capping the tax at that price will not adversely affect the budget.

Provide a Real Increase in the Tax Threshold for Online Purchases.

With the explosion of the internet and access to online shopping, consumers are able to buy personal items from overseas, and have them shipped to Jamaica. These are items not produced in Jamaica.

This has spawned a new industry of firms that bring those goods to Jamaica for online shoppers. But unless the items are less than US\$50 (J\$7,500) in value, duties and taxes are charged on the value of the purchase. The duties and other taxes on goods valued at over US\$50 are burdensome on consumers who shop in this way to achieve greater value.

I am calling on the Government to increase the tax-free value from US\$50 to US\$150 on imported personal items that are brought into Jamaica like this. It will make a tremendous difference to consumers who are seeking to reduce their cost of living by using the new opportunities that modern technology and logistics have made possible.

And for the Jamaicans overseas who send home barrels with food and other essentials to help their families here to survive, reduce the cost of clearing the barrels at the wharf. I propose that it be reduced by 50% for the coming year, from \$6,500 to \$3,250.

Remove Tax on Learning Devices.

Online teaching is still part of the education system, even though face-to-face classes have resumed. The Government's programme of free devices, while welcome, was limited in scope, and has not adequately covered those in need. Many parents cannot afford the cost of tablets or laptops, and their children's education continue to suffer.

That is reality, not fantasy.

It is immoral, and bad policy too, for the Government to be collecting taxes on devices needed by children to access their education. We once again call on the Government to remove all taxes from these devices to make them more affordable and lessen the cost to parents.





**The Society
needs
Fundamental
Change.**

Now here is another reality, one which is deep and which all of us need to pay attention to. Jamaica has so much potential. Our people are naturally talented, entrepreneurial and resilient. We shine wherever we go around the world, in every field of endeavour. Yet here at home, so many are performing way below our true capacity.

Our society was built on fundamental inequality, coming out of our history of slavery and colonialism. Sadly, even as we approach 60 years of independence, Jamaica remains a very unequal society.

Just recently, the Governor-General pointed out that 1/6 of all Jamaicans go to bed hungry every night. That is approximately 500,000 Jamaicans. That is reality, not fantasy.

We can, and must, do better. The society needs a national effort to change these conditions for the hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans who live on the margins, who are barely existing.

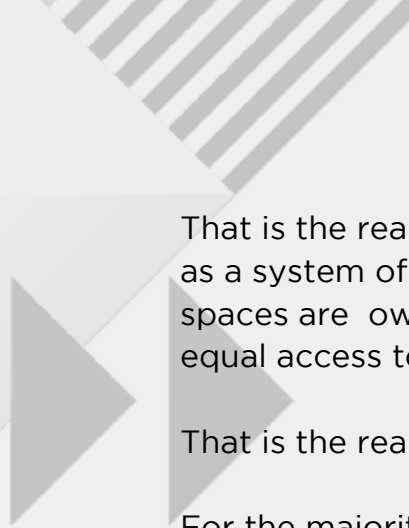
For that to happen, we must face reality. We must honestly look at what is ailing Jamaica, why so many of our people suffer and can't afford the basics while a few live in the lap of luxury.

One place to start is our education system.

There is a wide gulf in performance between traditional secondary schools and many non-traditional schools, leaving too many of our youths disillusioned and with blighted prospects to make it as productive citizens.

In health care, if you get sick and don't have money or support from family and friends, "dawg nyan yuh suppa". The so-called free health care is another illusion, another fantasy, because if you get sick and you don't have money, forget it. No diagnostic tests, no surgical implants, and nothing but the most basic medication.

In the legal system, if your rights are trampled on, without money in your pocket, there is no justice. If you are lucky enough to have publicity around your case that may give you a chance to get justice. There is no effective legal aid system for civil cases, where you seek the aid of the court to protect your rights.



That is the reality for the majority of our people. Our economy has evolved as a system of enclaves. The best commercial, agricultural and recreational spaces are owned and available to the privileged. The majority do not have equal access to opportunity and for them life is always a struggle.

That is the reality.


For the majority of Jamaicans, prosperity under the current system is but an illusion to be pursued but never attained.

Indeed, with so much unfairness and frustration in our country, the use of “Prosperity” as a political slogan has brought the word into disrepute.

No wonder, it seems to have been retired to the same place as “you can sleep with your doors and windows open”.

To put our people on a path to real progress, we need a new national spirit in the land.

We need to pull on each other and power a new Jamaican Dream where everyone has a stake and there is equality of opportunity.



THERE IS
POWER
IN THE
DREAM

The Jamaican Dream is to change our society fundamentally. It will create conditions where everyone can achieve a reasonable quality of life. Where everyone, and not just the few, can truly say “Jamaica Nice”.

As Stanley & the Turbines said, “I’m dreaming of a new Jamaica; a land of peace of love”.

The Jamaican Dream is of a society in which it does not matter where in this country you are born and raised.

It does not matter which school you attend or what accent and intonation you speak with.

It does not matter what your skin tone or the texture of your hair is.

All that matters are your values, attitudes, and your willingness to put in the required effort and work that will yield success in life.

That is the Jamaican Dream.

The Jamaican Dream is not a fantasy.

It is a positive and progressive vision of a brighter future for all Jamaicans, not just for the few.

It is a Dream of Hope. A Dream of Justice.

And there is Power in the Dream.

Imagine a society which is characterised by fairness and justice for all our people. Where the system does not treat any Jamaican as more worthy of respect or dignity than another.

Where the system makes every possible effort to ensure that each Jamaican has a fair chance to access the opportunities for a good life.

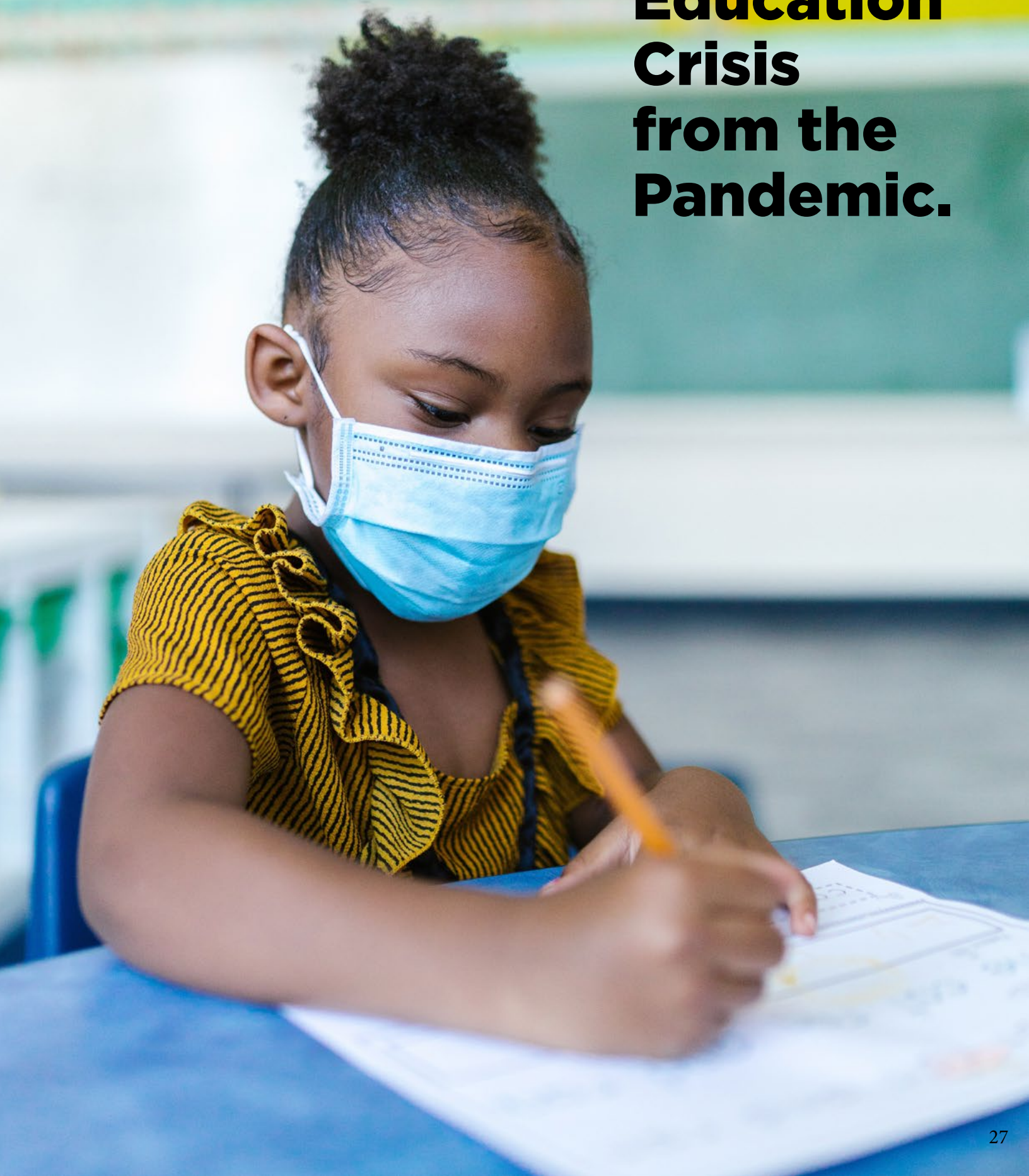
Together we can Power that Dream. Together we can build that new Jamaica.

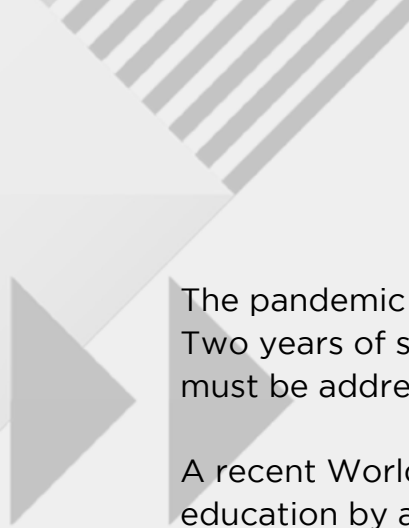
The People’s National Party under my leadership is committed to building a society that embraces the Jamaican Dream. It is a dream rooted in equality, social justice, and a deepening of our country’s democratic processes.

We believe in creating the conditions to unleash the drive of every Jamaican who has ambition and wants to make a good life.

Today, I will share some of our ideas to bring to life the Jamaican Dream for all our people.

The Education Crisis from the Pandemic.





The pandemic has exacerbated the weaknesses in Jamaica's education system. Two years of school lockdowns created a devastating learning loss crisis that must be addressed with urgency.

A recent World Bank study pressed for an increase in the expenditure on education by at least \$2.4-\$3.9 Billion per year for the next two years. It says Jamaica must finance urgent programmes to restore the terrible learning loss suffered by our children who were deprived of education for two years during the pandemic. If this is not done...the cost to our country over the long term is estimated at \$848 Billion!

MP Julian Robinson spoke on this last Thursday. I support, and wish to reinforce, what he said. Instead of focusing on making two years of sixth form mandatory, the Government must invest in addressing the serious deficits in early childhood development and primary school education. Those are the foundations of our education system.

This budget does not provide anywhere near the level of increased annual expenditure needed.

There is no comprehensive and well-funded programme to tackle the crisis in early childhood and primary education.

I regard this as a fundamental dereliction of duty.



**Invest in Improving
Early Childhood &
Primary Education.**

The recent report of the Orlando Patterson Commission is very troubling. It shows that in 2019, a third of Grade 6 students could not read. 56% could not write; and 57% could not extract information from simple sentences.

The report states that “At the end of primary school, the majority of students remain illiterate and innumerate, and most leave secondary school with no marketable skill.”

All of us in this Parliament must take stock and do something. We are facing a crisis.

Global evidence has found that investments in early childhood education are among the most effective interventions in national development.

A recent World Bank study shows that government expenditure on early childhood education per-student in Jamaica (7% of GDP per capita) is significantly lower than all other comparable countries.

We know that the poorest segments of the population are more likely to benefit from public investment in education at the primary level. The evidence is that the higher up the education system you go, the percentage of children who attend school falls.

This poor allocation of resources has negative outcomes which flow throughout the education system.

A large proportion of Jamaican students do not achieve minimum learning standards.

In 2018, only 65% of Grade 4 students acquired mastery in numeracy, and only 47% of students who sat Math CSEC were able to pass it (and many students were not considered competent to sit the exam). Jamaican students are performing below their peers in other Caribbean countries.

For Jamaicans, education is the path out of poverty.

Education and training increase productivity and competitiveness within the economy and help Jamaica achieve sustainable growth and development.

Our national productivity and competitiveness are being held back, because we are not providing our children with the fundamental needs of good education and health.

As the World Bank puts it - “The low level of human capital can mainly be explained by the low quality of education.”

The next PNP Administration will make significant investments in early childhood development and primary school education (including teacher training). We must ensure that all Jamaican children achieve age-appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy and critical thinking by the end of Grade 6, and that adequate provision is also made for children with special needs.

Former Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller often told us...start them right, make them bright.

There is no better way of utilising resources than investing in our people, and in particular our children, so that they can achieve their full potential and fulfill the Jamaican Dream.

Education is the engine that will power the Jamaican Dream.



**Access to
Higher
Learning.**

Tertiary education should be more accessible especially for young people from low income families.

The State, and not the student, must bear the risk of employment creation. Students should not have to fear borrowing to fund their education. We must make changes to the Student Loan Bureau (SLB) so that it will make funding more accessible and attractive.

The next PNP Government will reconfigure the loan structure used by the SLB. We will cap monthly payments at a reasonable percentage of their actual income. We must ensure that student loan payments are manageable for young graduates.

The Minister of Finance announced last year that only one guarantor will be required by the SLB, going forward. That is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough.

Many students from low-income homes cannot find an acceptable guarantor so that requirement excludes them.

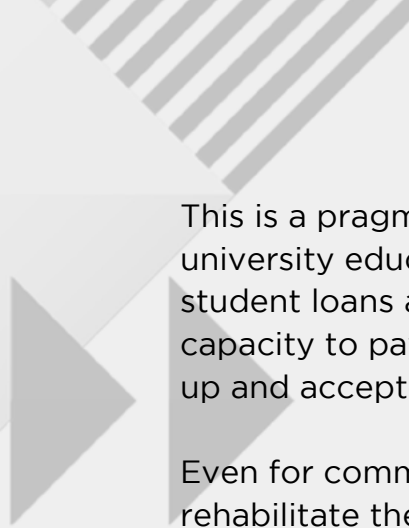
When the Public Accounts Committee last looked at the SLB, it found that the amounts recovered from guarantors are quite small in the scheme of things. This tells us that the retention of the requirement is not necessary for the sustainability of the institution.

The next PNP Government will abolish altogether the requirement of finding a guarantor to access student loans.

We will give students a chance to build their careers without the mental stress and financial pressure.

We will help them to “step up inna life”, and participate in the Jamaican Dream. Many students have been hit hard by the pandemic. I am proposing a “Fresh Start” programme where the SLB forgives say \$7.5 Billion in student accrued loan interest and penalties.

This would cost the SLB nothing additional, as these amounts have already been provided for over the last 5 years or so as an expense in the SLB’s annual income statement. A “Fresh Start” would remove the bad credit rating from these students, giving them a chance to build a better future as they step forward in their adult lives.



This is a pragmatic and humane approach. Many students, anxious to get a university education, earn a degree and improve their prospects, borrowed student loans and agreed to loan repayments that have just been beyond their capacity to pay, even with the best will in the world. Many have now just given up and accepted their lot.

Even for commercial lenders, it is usually better to work with a borrower to rehabilitate them, often with concessions on both sides, rather than take a hard line which causes them to throw up their hands.

A man wearing a yellow hard hat and a high-visibility vest is looking upwards in a factory or industrial setting. He is holding a clipboard. The background is blurred, showing industrial structures and lights.

Training the Workforce.

Jamaica has huge gaps in vocational training. 60% of the labour force does not have any form of certification. This means that the majority of our workforce is not qualified for anything other than poorly-paid jobs in sectors that keep labour costs low in order to compete internationally.

Clearly, the country's vocational training institutions have been under-performing, and need substantial transformation and expansion.

Under the next PNP Government, there will be a well-funded national programme to provide opportunities for vulnerable youths.

We must give them a chance to become productive citizens, through mentorship, training, remedial education and job placements. We must help to develop them by reinforcing life skills, building their self-esteem and a sense of citizenship.

Saving Our Youths.

The truth is, the school system has failed hundreds of thousands of vulnerable youths. We cannot continue to ignore them and expect the security forces to suppress the resulting chaos in the society.

As Jimmy Cliff sang, we must “treat the youths right or you’ll be playing with dynamite”. Too many of these youths leave school and all they have to do is go on the corner with nothing constructive to do. Too many end up yielding to the temptation to seek a way out through the gun. That is the dynamite of which Jimmy Cliff sang.



I have said it before, and I say it again. We need to fill the gaps left by teenage pregnancy, single parent homes, the culture of violence and the reality of persistent poverty.

There is no way to build the Jamaican Dream unless we tackle these issues by a bold and comprehensive national policy. We must provide opportunities for vulnerable youths to get another chance to become productive citizens.

We must provide access to training, mentorship, remedial education and job placements; we must reinforce life skills, and build their self-esteem and sense of citizenship.

Jamaica must engage and reset the lives of unattached youths, to lead them away from gangs and guns and put them on a path to productivity and success.





**Creeping Signs
of **Autocratic**
Rule.**

The Jamaican Dream embraces freedom and democracy.
The Jamaican Dream does not tolerate exclusion of the vulnerable.
It does not tolerate arrogance by those in authority.

And most of all it does not tolerate the abuse of state power.
The Jamaican Dream does not tolerate school children being excluded from school because they wear locks as part of their religious beliefs.

The Jamaican Dream does not tolerate a lawful ganja industry which keeps out the small farmers who built the Jamaican brand of herb...the same small farmers who were brutalised and suffered from a century of oppressive anti-ganja laws.

As Minister of Justice I developed and pushed through the legislation in 2015 to decriminalise ganja and create a lawful ganja industry. My goal was to liberate and empower the people, not to keep them out of the significant economic opportunities the industry is creating.

The Jamaican Dream requires them to be facilitated in every possible way, by active state intervention. They must become part of a lucrative, innovative and dynamic industry for medicinal and therapeutic cannabis.

The Jamaican Dream will not permit a Prime Minister to make orders creating criminal offences without Parliamentary oversight.

It would never tolerate Parliament giving such extraordinary powers to one man, on a lie that the offences would only attract tickets with modest fines. In fact, one year later there is no ticketing system.

Without the promised ticketing system, we saw ordinary Jamaicans being locked up because they could not pay heavy fines, sometimes \$200,000, for being on the road during the curfew or for not wearing a mask in public.

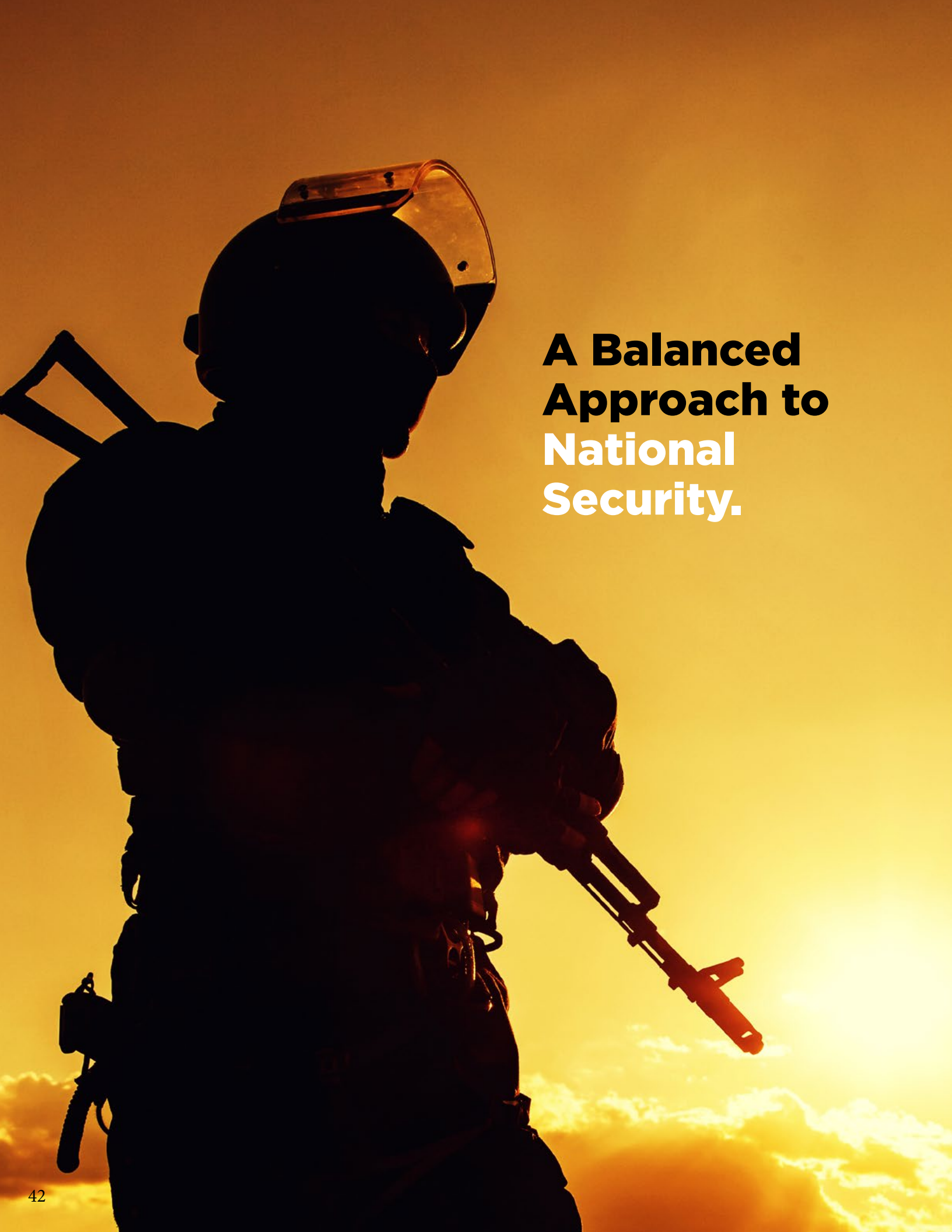
But champagne birthday parties for political activists on no-movement days carried no legal consequences.

These double standards are unjust, and they anger the Jamaican people.

The Jamaican Dream promotes one rule for everyone no matter where you come from.

The Jamaican Dream does not force a youth man in custody to apologise on camera to the Prime Minister for daring to speak out against restrictions on their freedoms during the pandemic.

That kind of abuse is a feature of dictatorships, not Jamaica land we love. We “bun a fire” on those kinds of oppressive policies. There is no place for autocratic rule in the Jamaican Dream.



**A Balanced
Approach to
National
Security.**

The Jamaican Dream will never permit the Government to use states of emergency as an ongoing tool of policing. A state of emergency is the last resort under the Constitution. Its purpose is to protect the country from an existential threat to our constitutional order and our democratic way of life.

A state of emergency allows regulations which remove basic rights, in particular the right of access to the court if you are locked up by the security forces.

The removal of those rights allows the security forces to detain anyone they choose. It casts a broad net, into which the innocent, and those lacking connections and influence, can find themselves incarcerated for extended periods. They have no access to a court for the protection of their rights.

Too many innocent young men have had their lives interrupted and blighted because they have been swept up in a state of emergency. That is unjust.

Jamaica's terrible and chronic problem of violent crime requires an effective and proportionate response.

As we have said before, we believe that only a balanced approach, using both crime control as well as crime prevention measures, will lead to a long-term reduction in violent crimes. We believe that community intervention and targeted resources are essential to achieve sustained violence reduction.

The Peace Management Initiative must be revamped, revitalized and made to work in all the hot spots across the country. Equip the teams to intervene in conflicts on the ground and avert escalation into a spiral of reprisals. We have seen too often how reprisals kill and maim the innocent, including our precious children. The next PNP government will train and empower 500 violence interrupters across Jamaica, to help to maintain calm and good order in these communities.

A balanced approach is essential to social harmony and crime reduction. It cannot be achieved through oppressive laws that trample on the rights of the people. From the enforcement perspective, what is required is spear-fishing that targets dangerous criminals - the violence producers; not casting a wide net that entangles both the good and the bad.

The Government must fashion legislation that allows known violence producers to be taken off the streets, so that an effective case for prosecution can be brought against them. The procedure should have proper checks and balances to ensure that reliable intelligence, not suss and gossip, is the basis for their detention.

If that basic standard of justice is met, I will support legislation that enables us to target and effectively deal with the vicious purveyors of criminal violence who are taking so many lives and destroying so many families. They are sapping the national will and our collective hope for the future. They are killing the Jamaican Dream.

We did it before and we will do it again!

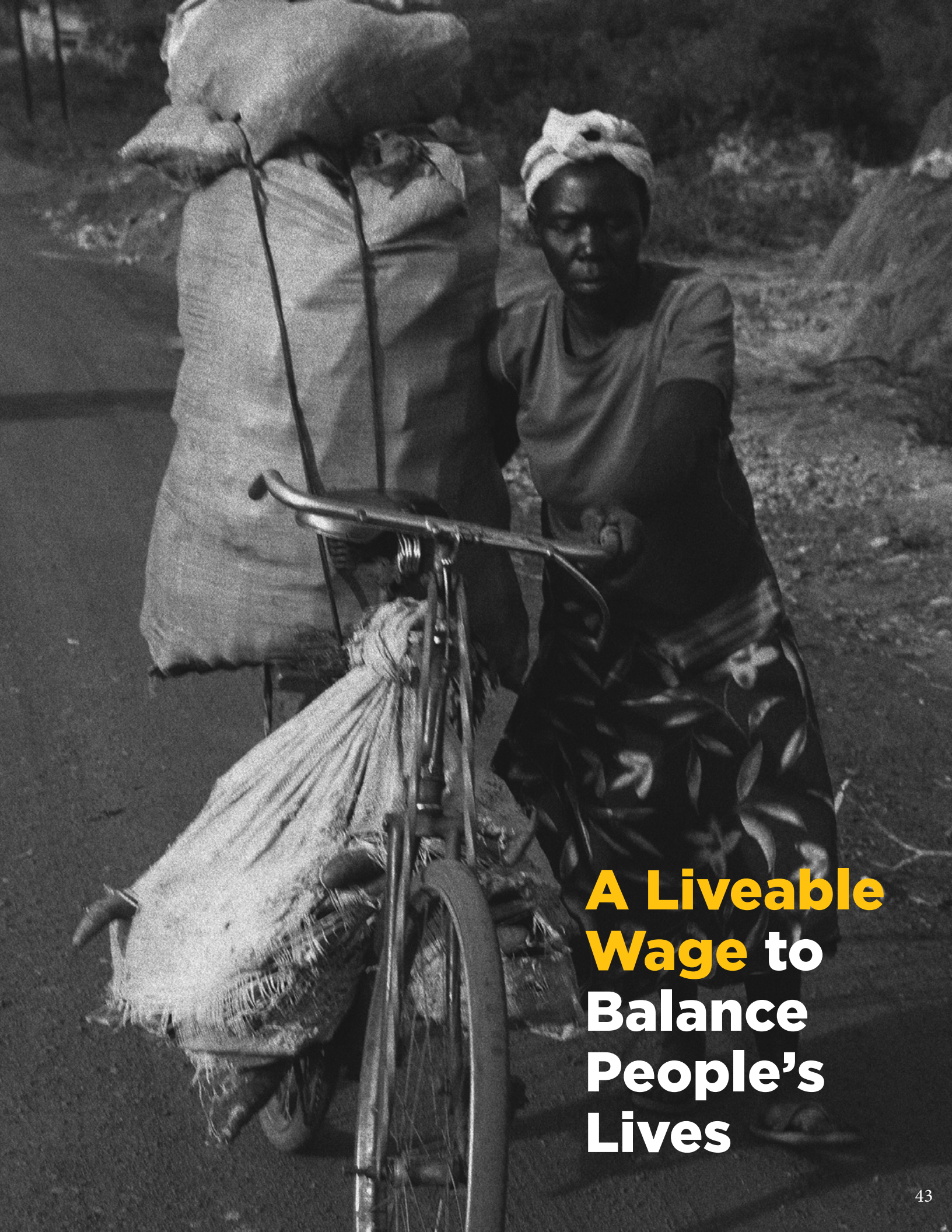
In our last term in office, programmes like Unite for Change and the Peace Management Initiative helped to bring the murder rate down. We took it down to over 20% lower than it has been during the past six years of this Government.



It is curious that since the 25th January, when I called out the Minister and put the Commissioner on probation, we have seen the lowest rates of murder in six years. What has changed?

The existing tools of law enforcement, including the Zones of Special Operation in areas under siege from violent criminals, are being made to work, as we always said they could.

Indeed, since I made that call, the approach has been far more effective than repeated periods of states of emergency from 2017 through 2021.



**A Liveable
Wage to
Balance
People's
Lives**

The minimum wage does not reflect the actual cost of living. Low wage earners, especially families with children have borne the brunt of the economic fallout Jamaica has seen over the last two years. They are barely surviving. Too many children are going to bed hungry. That must be addressed with policies which put the people at the centre of national development, and uplift those who need help. That is what we must do to build the Jamaican Dream.

The pressure on families will not be eased by the latest \$2,000 increase which takes the minimum wage from \$7,000 to \$9,000. Accumulated inflation from 2018, the year of the previous increase, is approximately 23% to March 2022. Moreover, as was graphically displayed last Thursday by MP Julian Robinson, basic food items and fuel, which particularly impact the vulnerable population, have seen price increases that far exceed the overall inflation rate.

There are massive increases in the price of chicken, rice, flour, bread, cooking oil, corned beef; and don't mention saltfish, because that is now a luxury item. \$2,000 after four years does not adequately respond to the dire situation faced by low wage earners. It provides no buffer for the continuing high inflation that is raging.

We will establish a liveable minimum wage, so that people are able to feed and look after their family. That is what the Jamaican Dream demands.

The arguments against a livable wage surround fears that some employers may cut the number of workers. It is also felt that costs to the State for out-sourcing arrangements will increase to accommodate higher wages.

However, many ignore the great benefits to society from requiring a liveable wage across the board. It will improve the standard of living at the base of the society, reduce child poverty, reduce inequality, build social cohesion, stimulate aggregate demand and promote inclusive economic growth.

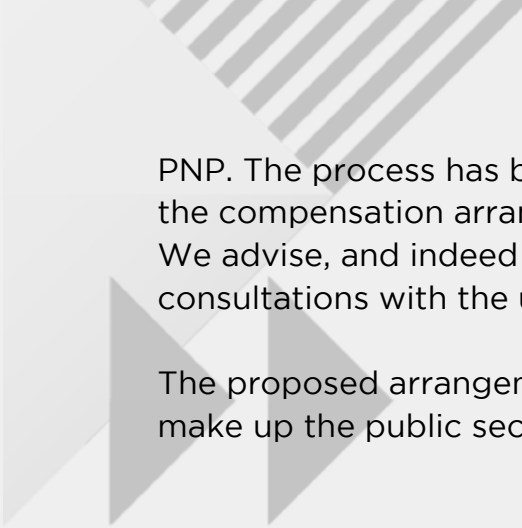
We believe that \$12,000 dollars should be the basic minimum wage to be implemented now. It should be reviewed annually to account for inflation.

The next PNP Government will implement an annual increase in the minimum wage to at least keep pace with the cost of living, until the process to determine a liveable wage is completed.

We will protect the workers of this country.

We will put in place the policies to build the Jamaican Dream.

The transformation of the public sector to make it more efficient began with the



PNP. The process has been slow. We are pleased to see that the restructuring in the compensation arrangements will begin this year.

We advise, and indeed demand, that the Government has full and transparent consultations with the unions which represent public sector workers.

The proposed arrangements must be fair and equitable for all employees who make up the public sector. Let us not try to fix one problem and end up creating

**Defending
our Workers
for a Stronger
Economy.**



The PNP has a track record of defending workers and enacting important pro worker legislation:

- It was the PNP that established the Industrial Disputes Tribunal to provide greater access to employment justice for workers.
- The PNP ensured that workers who are unjustifiably terminated or made redundant have clear rights to fair compensation with the Employment Termination and Redundancy Payments Act.
- It was the PNP that ensured that women and men earned the same pay for similar work with the Employment (Equal Pay for Men and Women) Act.
- It was the PNP which ensured that pregnant women get time off work to have their babies, without losing pay and benefits with the Maternity Leave Act. And;
- The PNP gave workers the right to negotiate more flexible work arrangements with employers, without losing benefits with the Employment (Flexible Work Arrangements) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act.

We believe that it is in Jamaica's long term interest to promote a more equitable and mutually beneficial relationship between capital and labour.

A balanced and cohesive society and an inclusive economy, which are key elements of the Jamaican Dream, demand that workers be protected and their rights respected.

The next PNP Government will pursue a series of reforms to ensure greater fairness at work, improve industrial harmony in the country, and increase productivity and competitiveness in our economy:

Fixed-term Contracts :

The prevalent use of fixed-term contracts, with the illusion of independent contracting but no real independence are of concern. Too often, they have become mechanisms to sidestep the basic guaranteed package of worker rights and benefits. This is not fair to workers. It also deprives social protection systems such as NIS, NHT and HEART of significant funding, and this will cost the State heavily in the long run.

These mechanisms need to be examined by the social partners and properly organised for the benefit of all.

The next PNP Government will bring legislation to eliminate abusive contractual arrangements which circumvent employee rights, and ensure the equal treatment of workers, regardless of the legal form of their contracts.

The demise of the Sugar Industry:

The sugar industry has gone through a severe and painful decline since the preferential trade arrangements ended. In communities across Jamaica where the sugar industry was once the major employer, living standards have fallen dramatically, with a stunning rise in violent crimes and criminal gangs.

Sadly, once peaceful rural areas which have become hotspots for violent crimes are those where the sugar industry used to be the main employer. Arrangements for the social and economic transformation of these communities have been ad hoc and inadequate. A recent disgraceful example was the forced removal of long-term residents of Innswood sugar lands. It is a stain on us that the Government removed them from the only home they have known to facilitate a sale to private developers.

They were treated like second class citizens, without proper relocation arrangements being put in place. That matter is ongoing and remains unresolved. There must be a reckoning for the abuse of the poor and marginalised. This is not the Jamaican Dream.

We will establish a Commission to examine the situation faced by communities in former sugar areas, and develop a comprehensive plan for the economic revitalization of those areas. The objective is to provide new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for the displaced sugar workers, cane farmers and their families to earn an honest living and to live in dignity.

Joint Industrial Councils:

We would like to see Joint Industrial Councils established in industries where there are high levels of employment but no common standard for working conditions, and no union representation.

The security guard industry, the tourism industry, and the global services industry (BPO) are cases in point. While some employers in these industries have made strides in introducing enlightened employment practices, others lag behind in the areas such as pension benefits, medical benefits, vacation leave and maternity leave.

Joint Industrial Councils provide a mechanism for addressing these issues in a cohesive way, for the long-term benefit of the industry and the overall economy.

Employee Share Ownership:

We passed legislation in 1993 to provide incentives for the establishment of Employee Share Ownership Plans (ESOPs). A special unit was established within the tax department to facilitate ESOP applications. Several companies made use of the legislation, and in due course this created substantial wealth for their employees at all levels, from the bearer and janitor to the CEO.

I wish to honour the late Dr. Paul Robertson, under whose ministerial leadership, the Government Printing Office was divested to a company, Jamaica Printing Services. It is 100%-owned by the workers. The company is still operating, nearly 30 years later, providing printing services for the State.

Unfortunately, the momentum of the ESOP programme was not maintained. We are committed to reviewing and simplifying this legislation. It is important that we resume the promotion of employee share ownership as part of a deliberate strategy to broaden ownership in the country. It will enhance the Jamaican Dream to have workers sharing in the ownership of the enterprises for which they work. I have first-hand knowledge of the benefits of this enlightened policy. DB&G, a company of which I was one of the founders, established an Employee Share Ownership Plan for our staff. As the business grew and prospered, many of them became millionaires. That is an example of the Jamaican Dream in action.

Infrastructure & Housing.



Low-income communities in Jamaica suffer from poor infrastructure and a lack of the basic amenities for modern living. Substandard living conditions contribute to negative social behaviours and persistent poverty.

In building the Jamaican Dream, these communities can no longer have second class status when it comes to basic amenities like street lighting, garbage disposal and water/sewage infrastructure.

Investing in these communities will be an important complement to the reduction of violent crime in our country. We all know that social neglect contributes to the lifestyle and attitudes that result in youths turning to badness and the gun. The next PNP Government will work with the people within these communities to transform them by investing in their basic infrastructure and amenities.

Jamaica nice, but not for everybody.

For many, it nuh nice at all. Life too hard. We must fix this.

Much of the housing stock in low-income communities are not fit for decent and comfortable living.

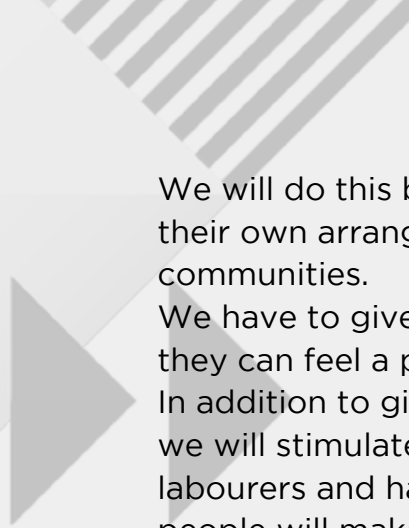
Many who live in these substandard conditions are single mothers and the elderly. 81-year-old Aunty Pauline's roof leaked so badly, she had to move into a room with just some zinc and no protection from the rain and cold.

16 year old Laquanya Brown lives in a tenement yard which houses many families but has only one bathroom that is barely functioning. She is not safe from those who want to harass her. She hates the conditions in which she lives but she has no choice.

It nuh right. It is our duty to protect the elderly and the vulnerable. Our people deserve better.

The next PNP Government will implement a programme called OPERATION SHELTER to help persons living in deplorable housing conditions. We will help residents renovate and upgrade the dilapidated housing stock in inner city and rural communities.

We will provide resources to help them fix leaking roofs, restore crumbling walls and rotten floors. If they don't have a bathroom, we will help them to build one.



We will do this by assisting them with the purchase of materials, while they make their own arrangements for the tradesmen and labour from within their communities.

We have to give our people a sense of dignity, achievement and progress, so that they can feel a part of building the Jamaican Dream.

In addition to giving our people comfortable and more secure living conditions, we will stimulate the local economy in these communities. Local tradesmen, labourers and hardware merchants will benefit from the investment that the people will make in upgrading their homes.

We will find a way to build more affordable housing.

Jamaica's boom in real estate development has left out those who can only afford to start small. The Government must be the architect of creative and proactive policies that incentivise and encourage developers to provide low-income housing to this chronically underserved segment of the market.

Some recent efforts by NHT have been mentioned, but much more needs to be done. We will incentivize developers to invest in building affordable housing for low-income earners. It will take a strategic approach by the Government, in collaboration with the private sector and the National Housing Trust, restoring it to the purpose for which Michael Manley gave it to the people of Jamaica.

The next PNP Government will also implement changes to ensure that the National Housing Trust refocuses on its core mandate of delivering housing solutions to those Jamaicans who cannot otherwise buy or build houses, which is why Prime Minister Michael Manley established that great institution in 1975.



Food Security.

Sustainable recovery also means that food security must be high on the agenda. This entails a robust agricultural policy.

I endorse what MP Julian Robinson said last Thursday about tackling praedial larceny. Organised crime is involved in this nefarious business of stealing livestock from local farmers and taking it to Haiti to purchase guns that are brought back here. The penalties for praedial larceny must be steep. It must be brought under the Proceeds of Crime Act so that the profits from robbing our farmers can be taken from the criminals.

We must also improve farm roads, irrigation and storage systems. We must encourage greater flows of capital into agro-processing. We must assist exporters to penetrate new markets and protect our valuable national brands. We must incentivize productive relationships between well-capitalised mother facilities and small farmers to improve their production techniques, transfer technology and generally





support their development.

The pandemic has shown that our economy must be made more resilient to external shocks, and Jamaica has tremendous potential to develop as the agricultural powerhouse of the Caribbean. I note that Caricom is promoting an increase in regional trade, with an emphasis on food security. Jamaica can and should lead the way in achieving this, as part of building the Jamaican Dream.

There has been talk about issuing permits for imported chicken parts as a response to the rising price of locally-grown chicken, which has been caused by the spike in the cost of inputs (especially feed). The imported chicken receives massive subsidies from their Government. Importation when there is no shortage of local supply will unleash unfair competition against the local industry, including many thousands of backyard growers.

Undermining local producers cannot be good policy.

I am calling on the Government to provide subsidies to reduce the cost to farmers for fertiliser, seeds and feed for chickens and other livestock, for the duration of the current spike in inflation.

Rather than giving up revenue by allowing imports which will unfairly compete with thousands of small farmers, give our farmers a break on their input prices, to make locally grown chicken more affordable to consumers. This can be managed by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Consumer Affairs Commission, with the aid of the public, to ensure that the benefit of the subsidy is passed through to consumers.



**A Business-friendly
Bureaucracy.**

Building a strong economy to power the Jamaican Dream requires that our bureaucracy supports and assists rather than intimidate and hinder entrepreneurs who are willing to undertake business risks. That is only possible by granular attention to detail.

The public sector is required to operate by adhering to procedures and rules that are embedded in laws, many of which are no longer fit for purpose. They need to be either removed or modified so that the bureaucracy helps the economy to move forward rather than being a drag on productivity and competitiveness. This is not a new concept. We have been saying it for years but it requires determination and sustained attention.


When I was Minister of Justice, significant progress was made in this area. We created the super-form to enable someone starting a business to get all the required government registrations at the same time in one application. We introduced the Asycuda system to digitise Customs services at our ports.

However, the effort has stagnated and is no longer a priority. Too many areas interfacing with the bureaucracy remain slow, frustrating and inefficient. I am committed to making significant and sustained efforts to change this. When we encourage formalisation of businesses it must be supported by a transformation which makes the real-life experience a good one.



Climate Change & the Environment.





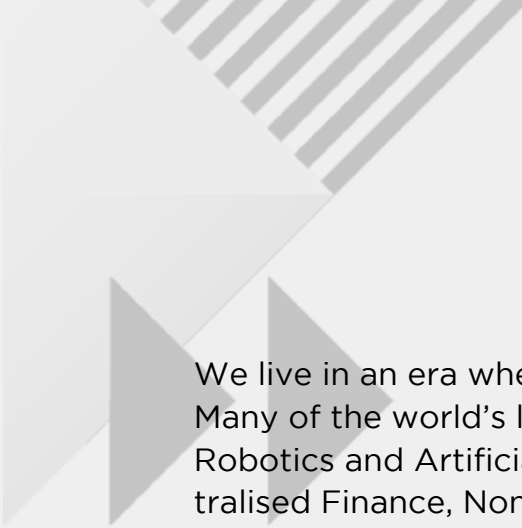
In the era of emerging climate change, depleting water resources and food insecurity, charting the course for sustainable recovery must involve a new level of commitment to environmental protection.

Jamaica must preserve ecologically sensitive national assets like the Cockpit Country, other aquifers, our coastal areas and river systems. We cannot continue to subordinate our long-term survival at the altar of ill-advised short-term gains. We cannot permit investments which are incompatible with environmental sustainability.

NEPA, now ensconced in the ministry tasked with promoting faster levels of economic growth, must become a more independent regulatory body. Its enabling legislation must be updated to provide effective punishment for environmental violations.

Digital Transformation.





We live in an era where technology increasingly dominates economic activity. Many of the world's largest businesses today did not even exist 15 years ago. Robotics and Artificial Intelligence, and new buzzwords like Web3, Decentralised Finance, Non-Fungible Tokens and the Metaverse, will continue to disrupt and supersede existing industries. Billions of dollars of capital are being poured into the development of commercial opportunities leveraging these emerging technologies.

As the world goes increasingly digital, Jamaica must not be left behind. We need to ensure our own digital transformation. In the 1970s the Government took on electrification through a massive programme that has brought that essential utility to nearly the entire population of our country. We will do the same for broadband internet.

Technology provides so many new opportunities to drive efficiency, and the internet has become an indispensable source of knowledge and commerce facilitation. Jamaica must make the required investment to bring broadband to every community, if not every home, at an affordable cost.

We are told by the Government that the process has started, but it is moving slowly and one is yet to feel its impact. This must be supported by ensuring that our human capital is empowered to leverage the multifaceted benefits. The national curriculum and resources available to schools and vocational training institutions must support digital transformation.

We must produce a generation of young Jamaicans who are on par with their peers across the world. They must be equipped and ready for the workplace and entrepreneurial opportunities that will come with this level of national preparedness for the 21st century economic realities. They will help to power the Jamaican Dream, for their generation and generations to come.

The Foreign Exchange Market.

The foreign exchange market is critical to the Jamaican economy. The value of the US Dollar, in particular, significantly impacts prices of just about everything in Jamaica, and drives inflation expectations among the business community.

This market is dominated by authorised dealers and cambios, who have been given the privilege by the State to operate as the exclusive intermediaries in the buying and selling of foreign exchange. It is a very lucrative business for them.

But it is too easy to make super profits in a repeating cycle, buying and holding the US Dollar in a depreciating market, and then selling the long position as the financial quarter-end approaches, only to repeat the process when the Jamaican Dollar temporarily revalues from the flurry of excess selling. That gravy train is not why these intermediaries were given the exclusive privilege of trading foreign exchange.

The time has come to impose market conduct rules on the foreign exchange market, as was done in the markets for stocks and bonds in 1993 when the then PNP Administration passed the Securities Act.

That was before the current foreign exchange market fully emerged, and the gap must be filled. Authorised dealers in foreign exchange should not be allowed to favour themselves over their clients in the market.



There also needs to be greater transparency in the market, so that bids and offers are filled in an orderly and principled way, as is already the case for trades over the Jamaica Stock Exchange. Before the Pandemic, we were told that this was coming. The Bank of Jamaica needs to expedite it.





The Cultural & Creative Industries.

The entertainment sector has been dealt a body blow by the pandemic, and we support its reopening now, buttressed by appropriate public education about responsible behaviours to reduce the risk of viral transmission. Last Thursday, MP Julian Robinson presented an insightful constructive analysis of the deficiencies in the Jamaican State's response to the opportunities presented by Jamaica's incredible talents and strengths in the Cultural & Creative Industries.

While several attempts have been made over the years, there is no doubt that the rigid bureaucratic approach that characterises the Jamaican State has not, thus far, synchronised effectively with the more informal and dynamic nature of these industries. Indeed, Jamaica's worldwide recognition and respect as a source of influential and loved forms of popular music has emerged in spite of, rather than because of, the Jamaican State.

The PNP Opposition is committed to finding solutions to enable these industries to provide new opportunities for our youths to create livelihoods out of their natural talents.

A clear and comprehensive developmental policy to support growth in this sector is needed, and the various agencies of the State which play disparate roles that impact these industries need to be coordinated in furtherance of that policy. The wide range of cultural and creative practitioners must be fully engaged in the development and roll out of the policy.

Critical areas that must be addressed include access to finance, education and training, and international marketing support. Innovative solutions must be found, with the State playing a catalytic role to fill these gaps for our people, and to encourage the institutional private sector to invest in these opportunities.

Modernizing Our Constitution.

Jamaica's sense of nationhood will be enhanced by constitutional reforms that will encourage a more accountable and constructive political culture and practice in our democracy.

We need these reforms to help to rekindle public confidence in the political system, and fire up the imagination of our Jamaican people as to what we can achieve with a good and honest government.

There are of course the low hanging fruits of building our sense of nationhood by becoming a republic with a Jamaican president as our head of state.

We can create greater access to high quality justice by acceding to the appellate jurisdiction of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), which has developed a strong track record, becoming the first court in the region to be accepted into the International Consortium for Court Excellence.

I am ready and willing to work with the Prime Minister to deliver rapid progress on these long outstanding reforms.

Another low hanging fruit is to restore the convention, initiated by Prime Minister Bruce Golding and continued by Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, of having the Opposition appoint chairmen of the various committees within the House of Representatives.



That convention helped to ensure greater accountability and transparency as well as providing oversight of the Executive branch of government through the committee system.

When Prime Minister Holness abrogated that convention after the last general elections, it was a retrograde step for our democracy. It was rightly criticised by the Opposition and by civil society.

The supposed justification for that backwards step was to improve the performance of those parliamentary committees. That has proven to be an illusion. Many of the committees have hardly met. Unsurprisingly, the posture of the chairmen from the Government side has not furthered the objective of bringing greater accountability and transparency in providing oversight of the Executive.

I am once again calling for the restoration of the convention of having the Opposition appoint chairmen of the various committees of the House of Representatives. It avoids the clear conflict of interest of having the Government chair the committees that are intended to provide accountable and transparent oversight of what the same Government is doing.

I have also tabled, nearly a year ago, an Impeachment Bill to bring greater accountability in relation to parliamentarians who violate the fundamental behavioural standards of their office.

This initiative came out of the constitutional reform consensus achieved between both sides of the aisle from the era of former leaders Patterson and Seaga. An earlier version of the Impeachment Bill was tabled by former Prime Minister Bruce Golding in 2011. I am calling on the Prime Minister to send my Impeachment Bill to a Joint Select Committee so that it can benefit from wide stakeholder reengagement and review.

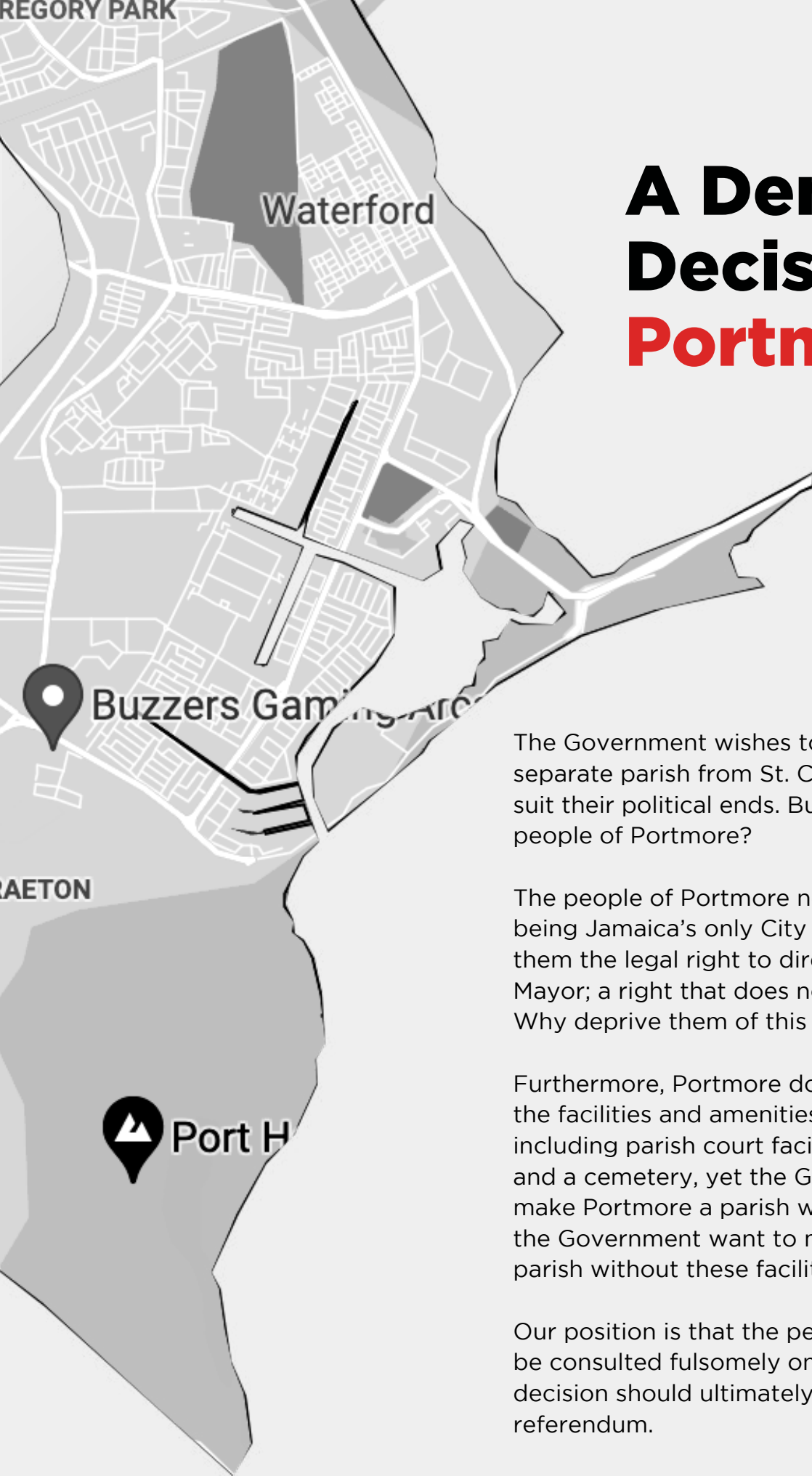
We must pass it into law, so that the public no longer has to endure witnessing the presence of those whose conduct has brought Parliament into disrepute. I also believe that our existing constitutional arrangements have embedded an adversarial political culture that does not support the process of nation building and achieving our key developmental imperatives, including those I have already mentioned.

I am therefore in favour of reforms which force our political class to develop and accept the skills of consensus building, a process which will in itself help to build a more tolerant and loving society in Jamaica.

For example, the Senate should be expanded to include independent members who are jointly appointed by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. They must include representatives from key constituencies in our society, such as the churches and the diaspora. Other key officeholders for sensitive posts, including the composition of the three critical Service Commissions, should also be jointly agreed appointments.

After all, our national motto is “out of many, one people”, and our constitutional arrangements can help us reflect this aspiration in our actual political discourse and practice.

If we embed the process of achieving consensus in more of our constitutional arrangements, it will help us to build a more cohesive political culture, rather than promote the fractious tribalism. That tribalism has resulted in the political class being regarded as part of the problem, rather than the solution to our national development challenges.



A Democratic Decision **for** Portmore.

The Government wishes to split off Portmore as a separate parish from St. Catherine because it would suit their political ends. But will this benefit the people of Portmore?

The people of Portmore now have the benefit of it being Jamaica's only City Municipality, which gives them the legal right to directly elect their own Mayor; a right that does not apply to parishes. Why deprive them of this right?

Furthermore, Portmore does not have many of the facilities and amenities that parishes have, including parish court facilities, a hospital, a market and a cemetery, yet the Government is rushing to make Portmore a parish without them. Why does the Government want to make Portmore the only parish without these facilities?

Our position is that the people of Portmore must be consulted fulsomely on any such move, and the decision should ultimately be theirs via a referendum.

Closing

The brilliant actress Lupita Nyong'o said - **“No matter where you're from, your dreams are valid”**.

The Jamaican Dream is for all of us.

From Trench Town to Norbrook.

From Granville to the Montego Bay Freeport.

From Mocho to Cherry Gardens.

We are the land of Marcus Garvey, Miss Lou and Bob Marley.

We are the land of Herb Mckenley, Donald Quarrie, Usain Bolt, Shelly-Ann Frazer Pryce and Elaine Thompson.

We are the land of so many other great icons who we draw on for inspiration and courage.

The Jamaican Dream is of a society in which it does not matter where in this country you are born and raised.

It does not matter where you go to school.

It does not matter how you look or how you talk.

It does not matter if you have money or connections.

All that matters are your values, attitude, and your willingness to work and achieve success in life.

That is the Jamaican Dream.

The Jamaican Dream is not a fantasy.

It is a positive and progressive vision of a brighter future for all Jamaicans.

Let us come together with purpose and build this nation. Together, let us make the Jamaican Dream of equality of opportunity, justice and progress for all a reality.

Let us truly live the powerful words of our motto... “out of many, one people”.

It will take leadership with integrity. Leadership the people can trust.

Leadership that cares for the people, and puts their interest first.

Leadership that can and will achieve the Jamaican Dream.

A Dream of Hope. A Dream of Justice.

A dream of One Jamaica!

There is Power in the Dream.

**May God bless you all, and bless
Jamaica land we love.**



**MARK J.
GOLDING**