



Presentation by

Senator the Honourable Mark
Golding
Minister of Justice

*Signing of Contract for commencement of work on
Justice Square Phase II*

**Tuesday 3 December, 2013
4:00 p.m.
Ministry of Justice,
Large Conference Room**

Salutations/Protocol

- Members of the Media
- Special Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon.

Justice Square represents an important investment for this Ministry, the Government and, most importantly, the people of Jamaica. It is essential that while our laws are strengthened and modernized, so too must the physical infrastructure of the court system be enhanced and developed to bring about the requisite improvements in the delivery of justice. However, this is particularly challenging as the country goes through a process of realignment of its public finances to achieve long term fiscal sustainability.

On its completion, the former NCB building in Justice Square will house seven (7) additional courtrooms, four (4) additional judges' chambers, and two (2) additional chambers for the masters in chambers of the Supreme Court. The building will also house the Supreme Court Civil Registry, the Registry for matrimonial matters,

holding areas, two witnesses' rooms, a police post, and support areas for the full staff complement required to service the judicial activities in the building.

The Justice Square project is a part of the Reform Policy Agenda of the Ministry to achieve fair and timely case resolution and improved access to justice. The development of Justice Square around the Supreme Court building on King Street has long been on the drawing board and I today am confident that the finishing line of the current phase is near, as today we sign the contract to complete this phase of works.

I want to thank our contracting partner MLO Construction for the work they have done to date. Phase one was signed on February 23, 2011, and we can state that we are reasonably satisfied with the work done to date and the level of professionalism they have brought to the project. We expect to see this continue throughout the life of the contract we are about to sign.

I trust you will find aesthetic pleasure in the completed facility, and that litigants, judges, counsel and court staff will enjoy the improved

working environment that it will afford. I charge all users of this complex, when it is completed, to treat it with due respect and care. Be mindful that the halls of justice should be orderly and fit for purpose. We should all do our part to maintain the facilities for future generations.

I wish to take this opportunity to mention that the Ministry of Justice in recent times has also been involved in other capital projects to improve access to justice services across Jamaica. With some \$410 million being allocated for construction works by the Ministry of Justice in this Fiscal Year's Estimates of Expenditure, we are in the process of conducting infrastructural work on Magistrate Courts in Black River, Buff Bay, Morant Bay and Santa Cruz.

We have also completed the renovation of a new location in Montego Bay which is providing much more commodious accommodation for the Montego Bay Legal Aid Clinic, and we are excited that it will shortly also become the home for the new Western Civil Registry of the Supreme Court.

Demolition work is being completed as we speak at 2 Hagley Park Road, which is intended to be the new home of the Traffic Court as well as the Ministry of Justice, and will save the public purse tens of millions of dollars that is now being spent annually on renting office accommodation for the Ministry.

We will continue to push for funding to undertake additional capital works to improve our justice system, until all our dilapidated court buildings across Jamaica have been upgraded to adequate standards, so that our judiciary, magistracy, litigants, counsel and court staff can operate in appropriate conditions which are conducive to efficiency.

These improvements, along with the procedural and other reforms that we have been implementing and will continue to push through, will assist the reduction of our much-commented on backlog of cases to a manageable volume, and herald a new day when citizens who use the courts can feel confident that their matters before the court will be disposed of in a timely manner.

I thank you.