



MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE

CLOSING BUDGET PRESENTATION 2025

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

DRAFT



HON. FAYVAL WILLIAMS, MP
Minister of Finance and
the Public Service

RESILIENT JAMAICA:
Strengthening Growth,
Securing Prosperity





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Salutations

Madam Speaker, let me again heap gratitude on all who reached out to me with their congratulations after my opening budget presentation. I deeply appreciate all of you! You give me strength!

Let me also, *Madam Speaker*, pause to acknowledge the media persons who traveled over hills and valleys to go to Tydixon to check out the district 'weh me come from' and to write a nice article about Tydixon and me.



Madam Speaker, I hope all the media persons who went to Tydixon stopped for a moment on their way there or back to enjoy the beauty of the Worthy Park Sugar Estate, located in the plains of The Vale of Lluidas, with its unending acres of sugar cane as far into the horizon as you can look.





Madam Speaker, this scene has always held me in awe, from my childhood days until now. But **Madam Speaker**, there are other memories. In my childhood, many hard-working men from Tydixon would wake up before cock crows and walk the five (5) miles, in the wee hours of the morning, from Tydixon to Worthy Park Sugar Estate to cut sugar cane in the boiling hot sun with dem cutlass. Many women did the same journey as well but to pick oranges. At that time, there were thriving orange groves. So, thank you to the media for your visit to Tydixon. 'De people dem whe me grow up wid sey dem luv de attention.' Additionally, your social media post highlighted and reminded me that my mother used to sell cornmeal pudding and potato pudding under a tree to school children at Tydixon Primary School.

Madam Speaker, with the little my mother made from selling cornmeal and potato pudding, she would faithfully put aside something, no matter how small, and it was that faithful putting aside of a little of the money she earned from selling cornmeal and potato pudding that allowed her to buy our school uniforms and a pair of Bata Shoes Store crepe (they call them sneakers now-a-days) for each of us children every year so that we did not have to walk barefooted to school and we did not have to wear the washed-out faded-out uniforms. **Madam Speaker**, it is the experience of putting aside something, no matter how small, that still lives on in me.

Madam Speaker, it is not where you begin. It is where you end!

I want to thank Mr. Vegas and others in social media, who understood the message of one-one-cocoa full basket, Rome was not built in a day, tek you han' tun fashion, who stood up in social media against the nonsense videos about \$2,000 Probox.

Madam Speaker, let me caution the Opposition and their supporters about how they talk about Probox. Currently, there are 23,423 Probox vehicle owners in Jamaica. So, be very careful that you don't disrespect Probox, which is made by Toyota, the largest car manufacturer in the world. It is a vehicle that has been around for about 20 years and has been a resounding commercial success for Toyota. It is fuel efficient and has a very good after-market. So, be very careful how you speak about Probox.

**Madam Speaker, it's not where you begin.
It is where you end!**

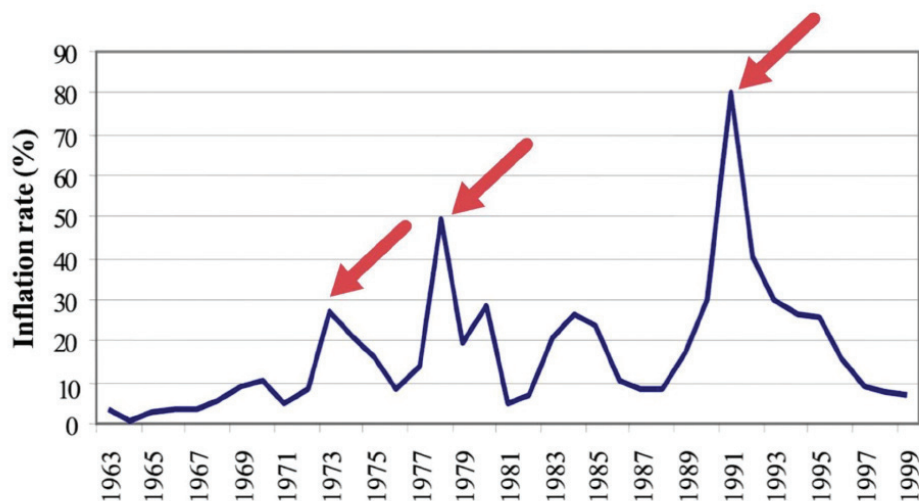
It's not where you start, it's where you finish!

Failed Policies of the Opposition – History Lesson

Madam Speaker, we have come to the closing hour of the Budget Debate for FY2025/26. Our Prime Minister, the teacher, the professor, the builder has given us a history lesson that should be required reading for all of us so that we do not repeat the failed policies of the Opposition, not the experiment with democratic socialism where everything is owned by Government, not the hyperinflation years of 1973 – 1991 with inflation ballooning to 80%



The Jamaican Inflation Experience Since 1963
Annual Inflation Rates
(1963 - 1999)



not FINSAC that cost us USD\$3.4 billion, not the freeing up of the foreign exchange market without adequate foreign currency reserves. Those are only some of the failed policies when the Opposition was in government that are still reverberating today, meaning the impact of the failed policies are continuing and still having serious negative effects. We are not making excuses, **Madam Speaker**. These failures are hard for our economy to

overcome. They are the equivalent of putting 100-pound weights on our athletes and saying to them, “run and win gold medals in Champs and the Olympics” – impossible, **Madam Speaker**.

So, **Madam Speaker**, when we remind people about history and the failed policies of the Opposition, it is to help them understand that we have not totally freed our economy of the drag on GDP growth that those failed policies still have up to today. FINSAC has been the biggest drag at a cost of USD\$3.5B at the time.

Madam Speaker, if we did not have FINSAC debt to deal with, think of how much better off we would be as a country. Think of all the resources we would have at our disposal to invest in economic growth.

National Housing Trust

The Prime Minister has made the National Housing Trust (NHT) a big part of his growth agenda that will continue to bring decent housing to all who are in need. My one word for the Prime Minister’s presentation is **BRILLIANT!** From beginning to end, **BRILLIANT!**



Promises, Promises, Promises

Madam Speaker, the Spokesman on Finance put forward promises, but no costing. The Leader of the Opposition put forward more promises as well, but no costing. They also came with their recounting of history. Sadly, it did not include FINSAC and the long-lasting drag that the home-grown financial sector collapse has had on the Jamaican economy, even to this day. Not a word was said about FINSAC in any of the two speeches, not an apology, not an acknowledgement. It was as if FINSAC never happened. **Madam Speaker**, they will be judged by the Jamaican people and the Jamaican businesses!

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spent a lot of time talking about NHT, the first proclamation he made is that he “...will stop the annual extraction of the \$11.4 billion from the NHT to fund the Budget.”

He said that he would set aside 1% of food import tax which would be \$2.5 billion per annum for the Agricultural Fund. He promised employers an increase in the Employer Tax Credit to 40% from 30%.

He also promised a National Disability Fund but no amounts were attached to that either.

He went to town decrying securitisation. ***“The Government is taking future revenues today, emptying the cupboard, not sound fiscal management,” he said.***

All told, between Opposition Leader and Spokesman, they made promises upon promises upon promises but did they give the Jamaican people any idea of how much those promises would cost and whether or not they would have to cut back on something to do what they are promising? NO!

The Opposition Leader said they are “united with fresh ideas and solid plans...ready to assume the mantle of government to deliver growth, opportunity and progress for all.” Let us see if indeed that would be the case.

Implied Budget of the Opposition

Madam Speaker, allow me to demonstrate to the people of Jamaica that the promises from the Opposition would create FINSAC 2.0.

You see, **Madam Speaker**, the Opposition put forward a lot of words with few figures but within all those pages and pages and pages of words is a budget, an Implied Budget! And, it is that Implied Budget that I would like all Jamaicans to understand because it has serious negative ramifications for our future!

The Opposition’s Implied Budget

So, **Madam Speaker**, let’s begin!

I will lay out side by side the Central Government’s Budget for FY2025/26 and the Opposition’s Implied Budget for FY2025/26 as well. These are the headings starting with **Chart #1**.


| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|  | | |

Chart #2

| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |




So, **Madam Speaker**, as I indicated last week, the Tax Revenue that the central government is projecting for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$949.5 billion. This is represented in Chart #2. The Opposition did not have any objection to that figure. They did not put forward any opinion as to whether or not that revenue figure is too high or too low. So, I am taking that as an implied acceptance and so I will put \$949.5 billion in their column as well.

Our tax revenues projections represent a 5.9% increase over what we collect for the Fiscal Year 2024/25 that is coming to a close. That is a little bit above inflation, nothing heroic. No wild assumptions. Plus, we already subtracted from the expected total revenues a total of \$9.176 billion which is the cost of our good news commitments.

Chart #3


| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |



In this **chart #3**, because our Tax Revenues that were presented in Parliament were adjusted for the cost of our give-ups, I have to add that to the Opposition's Implied Budget because after all our give-ups are not their give-ups. So we add back \$9.176 billion to the ledger on the Opposition's side.

In **Chart #4**, we move onto the next line-item in the budget, Non-Tax Revenues.


| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |



These non-tax revenues include the \$11.4 billion from NHT, asset sales, any share sale (for example Trans Jamaican). This is also where any distributions from public bodies would be and any securitisations. Now, **Madam Speaker**, do you remember how the Opposition Leader declared that he would stop extracting the \$11.4 billion from NHT and that securitisation is us taking revenues from the future to spend in the present and something about emptying the cupboard. Well, **Madam Speaker**, we can't put any of this non-tax revenues on their side of the ledger. We would offend them if we do!

Let's move on to **Chart #5**. The next line item is bauxite levy. We are projecting to receive \$812 million in bauxite levy and we will put that same amount of bauxite levy on the their side of the ledger as well.

| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |



I know the Opposition loves bauxite levy. They may even want to increase this number in their explicit budget because it was the Michael Manley-led government who, after all, took on the transnational bauxite companies and imposed the 1974 bauxite levy.

As the history was written, in May 1974, Prime Minister Manley announced that Jamaica would repeal previous agreements with the bauxite companies and impose a production levy on all bauxite either exported from or processed in Jamaica.

Madam Speaker, anyone can read the history books about how that turned out. Revere Bauxite Company closed its shutters little more than a year later on August 19, 1975.

Reynolds folded and left Jamaica in 1984.

Alcoa also temporarily closed its gates in Clarendon on February 6, 1985.

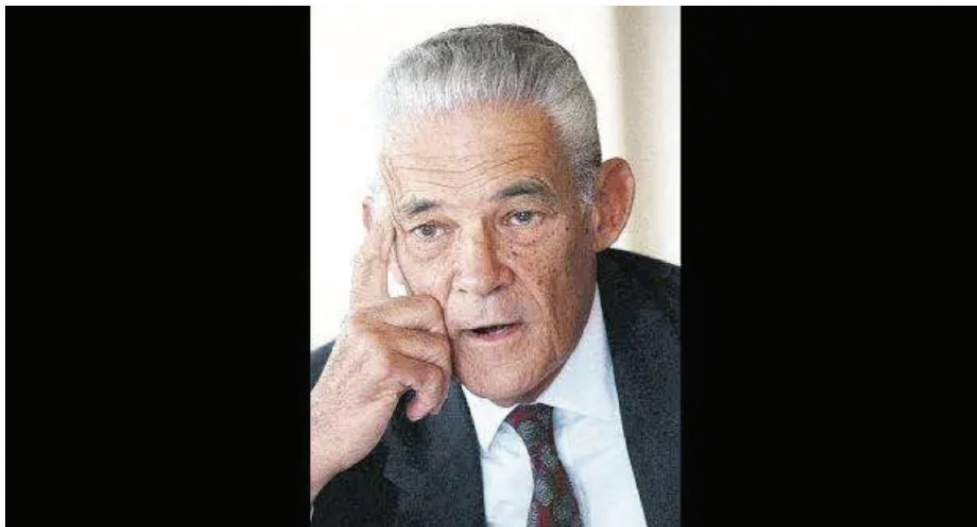
Yes, **Madam Speaker**, Jamaica did get increased earnings from the bauxite levy which went from US\$19.2 million in 1973 to a whopping US\$180 million in 1974. But the levy also moved the cost of Jamaican bauxite from being the cheapest to the most expensive worldwide.

The bauxite levy 40 years on: Who let the puss out of the bag?

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LANCE NEITA

May 17, 2014



MANLEY... announced the imposition of the bauxite levy on May 15, 1974

In an article entitled **“The bauxite levy 40 years on: Who let the puss out of the bag?”**, the author quoted Dr. Davis and economist Dennis Morrison as saying “that Jamaica has little to show from the bauxite levy, and that the country suffered through ill-fated projects and misspending of the bauxite levy funds which were lodged to the Capital Development Fund (CDF).”

The upshot of all of this is that the bauxite “companies began increasing their investments, not in Jamaica, in other bauxite-producing countries, and Jamaica consequently lost its position near the top of the ratings as a world-leading producer.” Another failed policy of the Opposition and as the bauxite industry left Jamaica so too

did the high-paying jobs. The Opposition Spokesman has some nerve talking about low-paying jobs now. It's your government's failed policy that sent the high paying jobs in the bauxite industry packing.

But, **Madam Speaker**, I digressed. Let's get back to the Implied Budget of the Opposition.

Chart #6 shows the Capital Revenue line but we are phasing out this line in the budget because it is incorporated elsewhere in the budget. So, let's move on to **Chart #7**.

| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |
| Capital Revenue | \$ - | \$ - |



Chart #7 – the next line item is Grants. We are projecting to receive \$5.9 billion, call it \$6 billion in grants. We will put that on the ledger of the Opposition as well.

| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |
| Capital Revenue | \$ - | \$ - |
| Grants | \$ 5,961 | \$ 5,961 |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 965,443 |

So, those are the revenue items. On our side, we expect to see Revenue and Grants of \$1 trillion, ninety-six billion and eighty-three million. On the Opposition's side of the ledger, they have an Implied Budget \$965 billion, four hundred and forty three million because they don't want any securitisation or NHT contribution or other

non-recurring revenues. They especially don't like securitisation. And they figure, if they speak badly against securitisation over and over and over and over and over and over again, Jamaicans will begin to think it's a bad thing because, after all, the Leader of the Opposition was a partner in a very big financial sector company and so he must know a thing or two about securitisation and if he says he does not like securitisation something must be wrong. Jamaicans, there is nothing wrong with securitisation! The global securitised market is massive, nearly USD 13 trillion. Research shows that:

- 73% of residential mortgage debt is funded by securitisation
- 16% of auto loans are funded by securitisation
- 27% of commercial real estate debt is funded by securitisation
- 7% of credit card debt is funded by securitisation
- 8% of student loans are funded by securitisation
- 40% of multi-family debt is funded by securitisation
- \$1.0 trillion of corporate borrowing is funded by securitisation.

"The securitisation market, while having roots in the late 18th century with debt securitisation, was really modernised with the structured financing of mortgage pools in the 1970s and has grown significantly since then." So, **Madam Speaker**, I believe the Opposition Leader can stop now trying to drum all the negatives into the heads of Jamaicans about Securitisation.

Chart #8 – We move now to the costing of the give-ups the Opposition announced.

| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |
| Capital Revenue | \$ - | \$ - |
| Grants | \$ 5,961 | \$ 5,961 |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 965,443 |
| Less: | | |
| Asset Taxes in FY2024/2025 | | \$ (8,364) |
| Revenue Give-ups | | |
| MSME - No corporate income tax; 1st year of 3 years | | \$ (11,353) |
| 1% of food import taxes | | \$ (2,500) |
| ETC (Employer tax credit) from 30% to 40% tax chargeable | | \$ (3,367) |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 939,859 |

Madam Speaker, the Spokesman on Finance said they would pay back the asset tax that is levied on the financial sector in five payments. First, **Madam Speaker**, the Spokesman on Finance would have to stop taking the asset tax before he can start paying back for what was taken, otherwise he will never finish paying back. So, an estimate for the asset tax give-up would be \$8 billion three hundred and sixty four million which we will minus off the revenues on the Opposition's side of the ledger. Additionally, the Opposition said that they would not require any corporate taxes from MSMEs for three years. That's a give up of \$11.4 billion, not for 3 years **Madam Speaker**, in the first year, **Madam Speaker**.

The Opposition also said they would take 1% of the taxes on the food import bill to put into a fund so that won't be available for the central government's budget. The Opposition's estimate is \$2.5 billion. I have no quarrel with that figure and so I will minus it from their Revenues. The Opposition also said they would increase the employer tax credit from 30% to 40% of tax chargeable. The cost of that give-up is \$3.4 billion. **Madam Speaker**, their Revenues & Grants would now be at \$939 billion eight hundred and fifty nine million after all those give-ups.

Madam Speaker, let's move on to the expense side of the ledger.

| | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | | |
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |
| Capital Revenue | \$ - | \$ - |
| Grants | \$ 5,961 | \$ 5,961 |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 965,443 |
| Less: | | |
| Asset Taxes in FY2024/2025 | | \$ (8,364) |
| Revenue Give-ups | | |
| MSME - No corporate income tax; 1st year of 3 years | | \$ (11,353) |
| 1% of food import taxes | | \$ (2,500) |
| ETC (Employer tax credit) from 30% to 40% tax chargeable | | \$ (3,367) |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 939,859 |
| Expenses | | |
| Compensation of Employees | \$ (495,799) | \$ (495,799) |
| Recurrent Programmes | \$ (359,375) | \$ (359,375) |
| Capital Spending | \$ (62,596) | \$ (62,596) |
| Sub-Total | \$ 178,313 | \$ 22,088 |

We are projecting that compensation of Public Sector workers including pensions, wage negotiations and items owed will be \$495 billion seven hundred and ninety nine million. I don't believe the Opposition would want to meddle with this number except to increase it if they believe they can. So, I will put that figure on their side of the ledger as well. We have to pay Public Sector workers.

Recurrent Programmes

Recurrent programmes are programmes such as PATH, school feeding, grants to our 1,009 schools, school transportation, books for our schools, supplies for the hospitals and health clinics, restorative justice programmes, child diversion programmes, grand gala and other Independence celebrations, Know-Your-Numbers programme, trucking of water, subvention to our universities and teachers' colleges, subvention to NSWMA for garbage

collection, payment for street lights and so on. You get the gist of what is in this figure of \$359.4 billion and every dollar of it is already allocated to something. This notion that there is all this discretionary money is just that a notion. Every dollar in the budget is allocated. The Opposition would be free to look at these programmes and decide which ones they are not going to do or which ones they will cut back on because those are the only decisions that are available. In the meantime, we will put the \$359.4 billion on the side of the ledger for the Opposition as well.

Capital Spending

Ok, let's go to capital spending. We are estimating that we will spend \$62.6 billion. We would love to spend more but we have to work within a budget. I will use the same figure for the Opposition. If they want to cut, keep or increase the capital spend, that is their prerogative.

We come to another tallying point. On the government side, after paying Public Sector workers and recurrent and capital programmes (not including interest on the debt and amortisation, we have \$178 billion three hundred and thirteen million left. The opposition has \$22 billion and eighty eight million left. But wait, **Madam Speaker**, there is a long list of other goodies that the Opposition promised.

| PNP Promises! Promises! Promises! | |
|--|--------------------|
| Raise standards in early childhood /primary - no allocation | \$ (1,000) |
| A daily lunch meal at primary & secondary for all children who need it | \$ (9,000) |
| A daily breakfast, thereafter (I assume next fiscal year) | |
| Transportation subsidy for 50,000 students over the next 3 years | \$ (428) |
| Commitment to special needs; funding is woefully inadequate -no allocation | \$ (1,000) |
| Electricity - renewable grids - no allocation | \$ (2,000) |
| \$1B to the creative industry | \$ (1,000) |
| One Full Scholarship for a university degree per family | \$ (31,500) |
| Gov will match the cost that a company invest in their workers | \$ (2,550) |
| Remove all taxes on laptops & tablets for student and teachers | \$ (350) |
| Cost of the PNP's Promises! Promises! Promises! | \$ (48,828) |

The Opposition promises to raise standards in early childhood/primary. There was no costing associated with this but I would not expect them to spend less than \$1 billion.

The Opposition promised a daily lunch meal at primary and secondary for all children who need it. The Government currently spends \$9 billion for 200,000 children to get a breakfast snack and/or a mid-day meal. It sounds like the Opposition would want to at least double this to 400,000 children and so that would cost them an additional \$9 billion.

The Opposition also promised a daily breakfast but they did say “thereafter” and so I take that to mean in the next fiscal year. So, I did not put a figure in the FY2025/26 Implied Budget.

Transport subsidy for 50,000 students over the next 3 years. In this upcoming FY2025/26, that would cost an additional \$428 million just using the current figures for the 7,500 children for whom the Government provides transportation. The Opposition also promised to increase funding for special needs but no one knows how much and so I don’t think they can invest less than \$1 billion.

Then electricity, they too want to tackle energy poverty and put renewable grid in the communities among other things. No cost was associated with this but I am going to put \$2 billion because when we announced our \$1 billion pre-paid meter, house wiring and inspection and \$4,000 credit per month programmes, the Opposition said that is not enough.

Then there is \$1b to the creative industry.

Now this one, one full scholarship for a university degree per family, \$31.5 billion. **Madam Speaker**, let me justify this \$31.5 billion. Let’s jump to **Chart #11**.

One Full Scholarship Per Family

| | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Number of households in JA | 967,000 |
| Number of students graduating from high school yearly | 35,000 |
| Cost of tertiary for the year | \$ 900,000 |
| Cost | \$ 31,500,000,000 |

The number of households in Jamaica is 967,000. A household is a proxy for a family and so, **Madam Speaker**, you can read this number as 967,000 families. Each year, from among these 967,000 families, we graduate 35,000 students from high schools all across Jamaica.

If you look at the number of families and look at the number of children, I think it is fair to say, **Madam Speaker**, that the 35,000 children who graduate high school come from different families. And given that this would be a full scholarship, there would be no need for student loans and so everyone would want to access this.

I then made the assumption that the cost of tertiary for the year is \$900,000. I am sure I am under-estimating the cost of tertiary but anyways, **Madam Speaker**, that would total to \$31.5 billion. **Madam Speaker**, I did this calculation more than once to assure myself that it was correct – \$31.5 billion annually, **Madam Speaker**.

Back to **Chart #10, Madam Speaker**, the Opposition promises to match the cost that companies invest in their employees. That would be \$2.6 billion and you can see the calculation.

| Training of Employees | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Average Per Worker | \$ 954 |
| Average Training Hours | 57 |
| Employed labour force | 1,417,000 |
| 7% of employed labour force gets training annually | 94,089 |
| Total Spent Per year on Training | \$ 5,116,360,766 |
| Opposition to fund 50% of training | \$ 2,558,180,383 |

Opposition - Remove all taxes on laptops and tablets for students and teachers.

Finally, **Madam Speaker**, on their list of goodies, the Opposition said they would remove all taxes on laptops and tablets for students and teachers at a cost of \$350 million. **Madam Speaker**, I am not one to boast but this Government, this Prime Minister Andrew Holness-led Government has invested \$8.2 billion in tablets, laptops, interactive panels, projectors and specialised equipment for special needs schools! And, **Madam Speaker**, at least \$1 billion is committed annually toward funding our **Technology in Education Policy**. There is no comparison, **Madam Speaker!**

| Devices | Quantity | Cost |
|---|----------|-------------------------|
| Tablets - PATH Students | 65,000 | \$ 1,300,000,000 |
| Laptops - PATH Students | 15,000 | \$1,125,000,000 |
| Tablets - Other Needy Students | 37,000 | \$ 600,000,000 |
| Tablets - Teachers | 26,000 | \$650,000,000 |
| Laptops - Teachers | 25,400 | \$2,286,000,000 |
| Laptops - High Schools | 15,000 | \$1,125,000,000 |
| Laptops - Primary Schools | 11,000 | \$660,000,000 |
| Interactive Panels - All Institutions | 995 | \$199,000,000 |
| Projectors - All Schools | 1,190 | \$214,200,000 |
| Specialized equipment - Special Schools | 1,738 | \$60,000,000 |
| Total Cost | | \$ 8,219,200,000 |

The Opposition Leader said they will negotiate package deals to provide teachers with free internet service as a tool of their trade.

Madam Speaker, this Government provides laptops, tablets, and other devices for students, teachers and classrooms. Since COVID in 2020, this Government has issued out, free of cost, to students, teachers and installed in classroom 198,323 tablets, laptops, interactive panels, projectors and specialised equipment for special education schools since we have been in government. To date, our spend on behalf of the Jamaican people has been **\$8.2 billion**. And each year, we make an allocation of at least \$1 billion to ensure we continue with our **Technology in Schools** programme: 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024- \$8.2 billion, and again in 2025 and on into the future. We are steadfastly and faithfully working for the Jamaican people!

Madam Speaker, since 2020, we have been rolling out broadband internet service to schools at no cost to schools. As of today, about 680 schools have free WIFI inside and outside of the classrooms and we are not done yet. Every school will have WIFI inside and outside. That's not a promise. That's a commitment and we back it up with an annual allocation year-in-year-out.

And, oh yes, **Madam Speaker**, how could I forget? We have 379 community wifis or hot-spots right across Jamaica. At last count, the Social Development Commission (SDC), the principal community organisation agency working with communities said there are 775 communities across Jamaica. So, **Madam Speaker**, if my math is right, that puts this Dr. Andrew Holness-led Government at 49% of communities across Jamaica with community WIFIs. Never before in the history of Jamaica has this happened.

Chart #15

| | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | | |
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |
| Capital Revenue | \$ - | \$ - |
| Grants | \$ 5,961 | \$ 5,961 |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 965,443 |
| Less: | | |
| Asset Taxes in FY2024/2025 | | \$ (8,364) |
| Revenue Give-ups | | |
| MSME - No corporate income tax; 1st year of 3 years | | \$ (11,353) |
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| Expenses | | |
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| Recurrent Programmes | \$ (359,375) | \$ (359,375) |
| Capital Spending | \$ (62,596) | \$ (62,596) |
| Cost of the PNP's Promises! | | \$ (48,828) |
| Total Rev & Grants less Exp & Promises | \$ 178,313 | \$ (26,739) |

Madam Speaker, bottom line, the cost of the PNP's promises is \$48.8 billion and I did not even put every single promise on this list. **Madam Speaker**, they are in the red when you add the cost of their promises. They would have trampled on the fiscal rules, the same ones they told us they codified in law!! **Madam Speaker**, you don't see red ink yet! Look at **Chart #16**.

| | Central Government's Budget FY2025/26 | Opposition's Implied Budget FY2025/26 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Revenues & Grants (\$'000,000) | | |
| Tax Revenue | \$ 949,494 | \$ 949,494 |
| Add: Gov's give-backs | | \$ 9,176 |
| Non-tax Revenue | \$ 139,816 | \$ - |
| Bauxite Levy | \$ 812 | \$ 812 |
| Capital Revenue | \$ - | \$ - |
| Grants | \$ 5,961 | \$ 5,961 |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 965,443 |
| Less: | | |
| Asset Taxes in FY2024/2025 | | \$ (8,384) |
| Revenue Give-ups | | |
| MSME - No corporate income tax; 1st year of 3 years | | \$ (11,353) |
| 1% of food import taxes | | \$ (2,530) |
| ETC (Employer tax credit) from 30% to 40% tax chargeable | | \$ (3,387) |
| Total Revenues & Grants | \$ 1,096,083 | \$ 939,859 |
| Expenses | | |
| Compensation of Employees | \$ (495,799) | \$ (495,799) |
| Recurrent Programmes | \$ (359,375) | \$ (359,375) |
| Capital Spending | \$ (82,596) | \$ (82,596) |
| Cost of the PNP's Promises! | | \$ (48,828) |
| Total Rev & Grants less Exp & Promises | \$ 178,313 | \$ (26,739) |
| Interest Payment | \$ (177,533) | \$ (177,533) |
| Fiscal Balance Surplus/(Deficit) | \$ 780 | \$ (204,272) |
| Net Other Inflows | \$ 2,946 | \$ 2,946 |
| Debt Due | \$ (162,746) | \$ (162,746) |
| Refinancing | \$ 158,442 | \$ - |
| Am't still owed | \$ (4,304) | \$ - |
| Own Resources | \$ 4,304 | \$ - |

We have an obligation to pay \$177 billion five hundred and thirty three million of interest payment. This is immovable!

Madam Speaker, on the Government side, we can make the interest payment and have \$780 million left as a fiscal balance surplus, a small surplus but a surplus and it sure beats the many years of deficit spending after deficit spending that the Opposition had when they were in government. Importantly, **Madam Speaker**, with our budget, we can go to the financial markets and borrow to refinance the \$162 billion seven hundred and forty six million of debt that will come due during FY2025/26. We will borrow less than is coming due!

On the Opposition side, their Implied Budget **CANNOT** meet the interest payment! They would run a huge fiscal deficit of \$204 billion!

Madam Speaker, the Opposition went partying with the rent money!!

Principal Payment

Madam Speaker, if they cannot make the interest payment, they certainly can't go to the financial markets to refinance the \$162.746 billion of debt that is due! This fiscal deficit that the Opposition would run with all the give-ups and goodies violate the fiscal rule. It would send a shock wave into the financial markets: those with money would run to convert their JMD to USD, the dollar would fly, interest rates would go sky high, bond prices would tumble, the balance sheet of the financial sector would be severely weakened, instantaneously, because they have large holdings in Government of Jamaica bonds and much of the bonds would be marked-to-market, meaning the financial sector would have to write down the value of their bond holding. Within no time, the Bank of Jamaica would have hiked interest rates to try to slow-down capital flight.

Madam Speaker, I am not exaggerating, it would be FINSAC 2.0.

Under the budget that the Gov has put forward, we can go to market and borrow \$162.746 billion to pay off that same amount of debt. It's called roll-over. We can do that because investors trust our budget. The Independent Fiscal Commission said our budget is credible and our budget is sustainable. We have indicated strongly that we will not 'run wid it' in an election year and we put forward a budget that when subject to interrogation is not a run-wid-it budget by any stretch of the imagination.

Madam Speaker, would we want to give everybody more? Of course. We would have loved to announce that Jamaicans would get the threshold up to \$2 million in 1 year and that we are going to help 40,000 persons in year 1 to get their pre-paid meters and that we have a longer period for the accelerated capital allowance and that the funds to DBJ are \$10 billion rather than \$2 billion. We would love to have announced those initiatives, those good-news things but we know that you would only feel good for a moment and then the swift pain of a budget deficit would follow. And so, **Madam Speaker**, remained faithful to our commitment that we would continue fiscal prudence despite this being an election year with its many demands!

So I say to the Opposition Leader and Spokesman on Finance, get off your high horse about securitisation. Call up NHT and tell them that you still really need that \$11.4 billion, and the no-corporate income tax for MSMEs, you should personally call up the head of the MSME alliance and apologise for getting their hopes up because you will not be able to do the 0% corporate income tax for 3 years. Then there is the 1% of food import tax and the employer tax credit, that is not going to happen either.

So, **Madam Speaker**, I believe we have given the Implied Budget a thorough interrogation and the two words I have for the Implied Budget of the Opposition are the following: "NOT CREDIBLE."

If the Oppositions want to refute this claim that their Implied Budget is NOT CREDIBLE, then let them put forward a Budget that can be interrogated, **Madam Speaker**!

National Water Commission

You will note, **Madam Speaker**, that I did not even ask the Opposition how they are going to implement the flat rate for water without bankrupting NWC. I have seen many "creative" ideas in social media about what persons would do to access the flat rate including registering their water meter in the names of their grandmothers. **Madam Speaker**, I will leave that for now.

The Rigours of Costing

This, I do know, **Madam Speaker**, the Jamaican people deserve more than promises and half-baked ideas without the rigour of costings.

As a country, as a people, we have matured in our thinking, **Madam Speaker**. And if it was not our parents or grandparents thinking that have matured, it is the thinking of their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren that has matured and to which they have the benefit.

And so **Madam Speaker**, I say to the Opposition, Jamaicans deserve answers as to what kind of a budget the Opposition would have in an election year.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition does not have to tell us right now in Parliament about their budget. They can think about it. The Opposition does not even have to tell us next week or the following week. They can take their time but, **Madam Speaker**, they sure need to tell us, the Jamaican people, what are the numbers in their budget **BEFORE** the polls open on election day whenever that day is.

Conclusion

So, I say to the Jamaican people, it is decision time!

You have seen us work on your behalf since February of 2016. We are not perfect and we don't always do the right things all the time. But we have a leader, a Prime Minister who has a good heart. He comes from among you, born and lived in a board house in Spanish Town. Do you ever wonder why he personally goes out and hands out the keys for the social houses built of block and steel even through there are so many other demands on his time? It's because he does not want another little Jamaican boy or girl to grow up in a board house and run the risk of being teased by another little Jamaican boy or girl who would say..."a bey...you an' yuh madda live in board house." He wants families to be able to hold up their heads, about their living conditions. No big unfinished Operation Pride schemes without proper sanitation.

In closing, **Madam Speaker**, I want the MSMEs to know that we would be delighted to have their representative at the table as we deliberate on the micro market. I also got word from DBJ – they sent me a long letter about various accommodations.

For all those who have written articles in the popular media and asked the question about the cost of our package, our give-up, our good news. It is \$9.2 billion and it is already accounted for in our budget.

Madam Speaker, Jamaicans do not want a government that will party with the rent money as the Implied Budget of the Opposition has shown. You can be assured that we will continue to be good stewards of the country's resources.

So, **Madam Speaker**, I say to all Jamaicans, it's decision time and as you weigh us in the balance, may you find us faithful.

Madam Speaker, all that we are and everything we have, resulted from our humble beginnings, one in a board house in Spanish Town and one from Tydixon who used to carry water on her head with a katta and walk to school barefooted many times. All that we are and all that we have, we owe it to Jamaica. We have no other place to go, **Madam Speaker**! And so I say again to all Jamaicans, it's decision time! Whom do you trust with your future?

Do you trust those who don't know what the financial cost of all the things they have promised or if they know, they still put forward an Implied Budget that is not sustainable and not credible, an Implied Budget that would cause another FINSAC? Whom do you trust with your future? It's decision time!

As I close **Madam Speaker**, I say to all Jamaicans “May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord cause His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His face towards you and give you peace.

God bless Jamaica, land we love.

We choose Jamaica.

Thank you, **Madam Speaker**!

DRAFT

