

Address
Dr. the Honourable Andrew Wheatley
Minister, Science, Energy and Technology
Mobile Post Office Launch
August 12, 2016

Salutations:

- **Mr. Michael Gentles, Post Master General**
- **Mr. Marcus James, Chairman Postal Corporation of Jamaica**
- **Mrs. Hyacinth Hartley, Jamaica Post Regional Coordinator**
- **Honourable Shahine Robinson, Member of Parliament, North East St. Ann**
- **His Worship the Mayor, Councillor Desmond Gilmore**
- **Rev. Mario Reid, Steer Town New Testament**
- **Ms. Trudy Antonio, Master of Ceremonies**
- **Specially invited guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Heartiest greetings to you all.

It is a pleasure for me to be in the beautiful garden parish of St. Ann. A parish that has produced some of the Jamaica's finest who have blazed a trail of glory and excellence and have brought tremendous recognition to this country.

Commendations are in order for the Post and Telecommunications Department on the launch of its Mobile Post Office which is expected to serve over 50 communities.

This move comes at an opportune time, especially with the closure of several postal facilities which has led to residents travelling many miles to other postal divisions in order to send and retrieve mail.

This is a bold and important initiative which is in keeping with the Department's modernization plans as well as its mandate of ensuring access to affordable postal services for all Jamaicans.

I know this will redound to the benefit of the communities and especially pensioners and the aged who depend on the postal service for its many offerings.

Jamaica's Postal Service

The Postal service has enjoyed a rich and vibrant history in this country, being at one instance, the only means of communicating internally and with the outside world. In fact, it was one of the earlier ways of sending remittances into the country.

Jamaica became the first British colony to have a Post Office way back in 1671, a time when the sugar industry enjoyed increased growth. Since then, the sector has evolved considerably and now boasts a network of 283 post offices and 267 postal agencies across the island.

I am pleased to see that these days, the role of the postal service is not just limited to sending and receiving mail, but the Department has diversified its offerings over the years to include: **bill payment and internet cafe services** and **PATH and NIS payments**.

- Additionally, 68 Post Offices have been connected to the Island wide Broadband Network via a partnership with the Universal Service Fund (USF)

The postal service in the digital age

One of the significant challenges facing the postal service is the digital age. Technology has enhanced and evolved connectivity and communications considerably.

As a child, it was a joy to get a letter from the Post Office, especially when it came via air mail from England or America. Today, we have the capacity to converse and see relatives, friends and business associates via ICT platforms such as Skype and Facebook within seconds.

While this has significantly enhanced our lives and our business processes, the Postal sector has had to contend with this technological revolution as well as a burgeoning courier industry which have eaten away considerably at its revenue and profit margins.

Incorporating technology, Meeting the Challenges

Even with the advances in telecommunications technology, the post office is still relevant in today's society. Therefore, we have to find innovative ways to diversify and modernize the sector in an effort to compete with a fast paced world and the growing demand of customers.

I have taken note of several modernization and revenue generation measures which the department has implemented and proposed in order to remain competitive. Initiatives such as:

- **ZipMail** which incorporates the use of technology to capture digital signatures upon delivery as well as allowing persons to track the movement of items online.
- **Counter Automation** which allows for less contact time at the counter while facilitating a wider range of postal and value added services

- **Online Postal Shop** which will sell several authentic Jamaican commemorative and collectors' items via an online platform and
- **E-Commerce**

I am pleased with the incorporation of technology to support and stimulate a strong future for the Department. Technology, as we know, is an enabler of economic growth and development and as Technology Minister, you have my full support and that of the Government of Jamaica.

Closing

Ladies and gentlemen, the postal service has come to a critical juncture in its development and you have done well despite the challenges which exist. I encourage you to embrace the changing times and to respond innovatively thereby ensuring the viability of the Department.

I hope that this Mobile Post Office will meet and exceed your expectations and that you will reap great rewards as you aim to enhance service delivery and efficiency. I urge the residents who will benefit from this service to utilize the postal system as it is there to serve you.

Thank you.