

Julian Robinson

Opening Remarks at 1st sitting of the Public Accounts Committee

December 15, 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen, Committee Members – good morning. Let me welcome you to the first sitting of the Public Accounts Committee for the term of this new Parliament.

Let me say at the outset that the central theme of my stewardship as chairman of this Committee will be accountability and the public's right to know how their taxpayers dollars are spent.

Many of the members will be serving on the PAC for the very first time and I wish to remind you of what our primary responsibility is, which is to focus on the control and protection of the public purse and the manner in which public funds have been used in the implementation of agreed policies.

We are serving in very serious times, when the world is fighting a pandemic and the economic fallout, especially for developing countries, like ours, is significant and ongoing. Already we have seen the contraction in various places and we are well aware that public resources are under pressure. Our job is vital to diligence and accountability in governance.

While we are all here representing specific constituencies and are from political parties, it is important that we approach the work of this Committee in a bi-partisan way. We should always have at the forefront of our minds that our primary focus should be the protection of the taxpayers' dollars and approach the deliberations from that perspective. I can assure you that this will be my approach and I will ensure that the integrity of the committee preserved in our deliberations.

Jamaica is depending on us to perform our duty from a position of truth, fairness and respect regardless of the issues before us.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TASKS OF THE PAC?

- A. Review reports of the Auditor General and any other report/matter referred to the Committee (Accounting Officers are called before the Committee to provide explanations for their stewardship of the funds allocated to their Ministries and entities/respond to the issues identified in the reports);
- B. Review the findings of their deliberations and draw their own conclusions based on the evidence gathered;
- C. Make distinct recommendations for corrective actions to be taken by MDAs
- D. Report their findings, conclusions and recommendations to the House
- E. Follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee. (MDAs can be called to reappear before the PAC as part of this process.)

The Committee focuses on:

- Whether spending objectives are or are not being achieved, that is, whether these are in line with the programmes for which they were intended;
- Whether there are clear lines of accountability;

- Whether there are excesses on approved expenditure;
- Whether waste and inefficient use of public money can be eliminated;
- Whether there are other ways of accomplishing these objectives at lower costs;
- Whether funds have been spent legally
- Whether the accounting and financial reporting systems are adequate; and
- Whether there is strict adherence to the established rules and guidelines