



Peter Bunting  
Member of Parliament  
for Central Manchester

# Central Manchester Member of Parliament's REPORT TO CONSTITUENTS

Issue No. 7  
Mar 2010

## DEAR CONSTITUENTS,

I am pleased to bring you my seventh MP's Report which normally would have been published in February 2010 and covered developments for the second half of 2009. However, because of significant developments in the first quarter of 2010, I felt that it was necessary to delay this issue by a month and include comments on recent developments.

## PARLIAMENT

### Taxation

The tax packages announced by the government in the weeks leading up to the Christmas Holidays, and the government's handling of this nationally significant matter, was unacceptable. The Opposition led peaceful protests against the taxation announcement and these yielded a roll back of the General Consumption Tax (GCT) on some items. The Opposition argued that the tax package and the country's medium term economic programme be fully ventilated in the Parliament before finalizing arrangements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). We are disappointed that the government had not sought a more transparent and consultative approach to this aspect of governance, especially for such a far-reaching issue, before signing off on the Letter of Intent.



Citizens protesting the gov't tax package in Mandeville

### The IMF Agreement and the Jamaica Debt Exchange (JDX)

The Government has conceded that, for the first time in our history, Jamaica has been unable to meet its payment obligations on our debt as it comes due and has therefore had to launch the JDX. The government essentially said to local holders of Jamaican debt that they needed to exchange their debt instruments for new instruments which would pay interest at a lower rate than what they had contracted for and which would repay their principal at a later date than what the Government had originally agreed.

While the global credit conditions contributed to Jamaica's unsustainable fiscal deficit, the Opposition pointed out that the major contributor was the Golding Administration's mishandling of the crisis and their general mismanagement of the economy. Since November 2009, the Bank of Jamaica has been making un-backed advances to the Government (what is commonly referred to as "printing money") in order for the Government to meet its housekeeping obligations. The market had lost faith in the Ministry of Finance's (MOF's) management of the fiscal affairs of the country and had essentially stopped lending money to the Government in the quantities required. In my presentation to Parliament on this issue, I compared our situation to a Chapter 11

bankruptcy where a corporation has to restructure its debt and reorganize its operations under court supervision. The sovereign equivalent of court supervision is the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Therefore, the Government had no choice but to enter an IMF Programme to attempt to restore confidence in the management of the country's economic affairs.

While the Government has been trumpeting the commencement of the IMF Programme and the conclusion of the JDX as a success, I cautioned that this is merely the beginning of the process and that until we pass the nine quarterly tests of the Programme and experience the social and economic consequences, then any celebration is premature.

## NATIONAL SECURITY

### 2009 was Jamaica's bloodiest year, surpassing the previous highest year for murder, 2005

Most of these record 1,680 murders were gang-related. The general crime situation worsened significantly with major crimes increasing by 17% over 2008. As Opposition Spokesman, I hosted a public forum in Cross Roads in October. The forum featured a distinguished panel of experts and audience feedback which provided useful input in our search for solutions. As Opposition Spokesman, I will continue to hold the Minister of National Security accountable for his management of the portfolio.

### Christopher 'Dudus' Coke Extradition Request

The JLP Administration has continued its inexplicable and inexcusable delay in signing the authority to proceed with the



Left: Bunting responds to questions at Crime Forum in Cross Roads. Right: Audience listen keenly

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request for the extradition of 'Dudus', whom the indictment has described as one of the world's most dangerous criminals. The Government has proffered one excuse after another for the non-compliance with our international obligations, with the latest being a question on the legality of the wire tap evidence in the indictment. On behalf of the Opposition, I have made the point that these determinations should properly be adjudicated by the courts and not by political appointees such as the Minister of Justice, especially in a case where the subject of the extradition has strong ties to the JLP.

The US Government has been scathing in its description of the Golding administration's handling of this matter and states "Jamaica's delay in processing the U.S. extradition request... highlights the potential depth of corruption in the government."

## CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT

In September, we were proud to open the doors of the Anna Miller Basic School in Knockpatrick, with an enrolment of 52 students and a staff complement of three. This school represents an investment of approximately 10 million dollars from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) allocation to our constituency over two fiscal years. This project highlights the shared vision and non-partisan commitment of the CDF Unit, the Office of the Prime Minister and your MP, to early childhood education and development. My special thanks go to the CDF Unit and the Jamaica Bauxite Institute who also contributed funds to the project.

### Education Grants

Between August and September, we delivered two million dollars in education grants to 325 applicants from schools and tertiary institutions. The grants assisted with uniforms, books, stationery and fees for needy students.

### Community Beautification

In December, we undertook a constituency wide Community Enhancement Programme via the Manchester Parish Council, beautifying several key areas, to the tune of approximately three million dollars. Happily, the Council was able to access seasonal labourers from our constituency, who welcomed the employment. Roadways and verges were bushed and cleaned, and bus stops were painted to increase visibility and safety for road users. Special emphasis was placed on the environs of the Mandeville Courthouse, a historic town landmark.

With the halving of the CDF allocations (from \$40M to \$20M) to MPs for 2009-2010, we have had to adjust our schedule of projects. We proceeded on a smaller scale with some, and postponed others to the upcoming financial year. Although we are at the end of the fiscal year we are awaiting the final \$3.45 million of the reduced CDF allocation.

### George's Valley Football Tournament

We had another successful staging of the George's Valley/Peter Bunting Corner League Football Competition in September. The teams from Sweden Street and Hopewell played a lively final at DeCarteret College, with Sweden Street emerging the champions and claiming an \$80,000 prize. Congratulations to all the teams, officials, sponsors and supporters who made this 20 year-old competition a success.

### Closing

The redundancy of the final 750 Kirkvine workers is scheduled for the end of March 2010, and this will intensify the constituency's economic challenges. A major hardware distributor has been recently placed in receivership reflecting the downturn in economic activity. Notwithstanding the challenges, let us all demonstrate our resilience and our commitment to helping those in our constituency who are most vulnerable and worst affected.

Sincerely,



Left: MP with school founder Ms. Anna Miller (centre) and a teacher.  
Right: Moveta Munroe, CDF Director



One of several bus stops painted and roadways bushed in December.



MP Bunting and Councillors greet Corner League Football Champs