

SPEECH BY
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MINISTER OF WATER, LAND, ENVIRONMENT
AND CLIMATE CHANGE
AT THE
HANDING OVER CEREMONY
FOR THE
THORNTON WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM
ON THURSDAY MARCH 26 2014
@ 11:00 A.M.
THORNTON SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH
THORNTON, ST. THOMAS

Greetings and Salutations.

I want to start off by saying how pleased I am to be here with you this morning, as we commission the new and upgraded Thornton Water Supply Completion System; the Thornton Golden Valley Water Supply; and the Thornton Water Supply Booster Station & Storage Tanks.

I realize that I am not the main speaker this morning, and so I will be as brief as possible...no matter how long it takes.

I must say that I have had the good fortune of being invited to participate in several commissioning events for water supply schemes in communities across the island, and I can tell you each one has special meaning for me, not only because Water is one of my portfolio responsibilities, but because I recognize the importance of water to the sustainable development of our rural communities.

Indeed, water is a very empowering resource. By providing our communities with a safe and reliable source of water, we are equipping them with the potential to attract new business and improve on existing ones.

This in turn will help to increase employment opportunities and development within our rural communities. It is my hope that this water supply scheme will provide similar opportunities for Thornton and all its residents.

As the National Water Commission's slogan so aptly states, "Water is life". My Ministry is determined to renew our efforts and commitment toward expanding and improving the potable water supply network throughout the island. As our agencies continue to work hard to increase the availability of potable water for all Jamaicans from 73% to 85% by 2020, we are also improving the quality of life for all the citizens of this country.

This project was a joint undertaking between the Jamaica Social Investment Fund and the Caribbean Development Bank's Basic Needs Trust Fund, in partnerships with The Jamaica Agricultural Society of Thornton.

I must pause here to commend the JSIF which has been doing outstanding work in bringing water to some of our rural communities across Jamaica.

I must also commend you, the residents of Thornton for the work that you have put in on your water supply scheme from the very beginning. Now that it is completed, I expect you to take even greater interest in its maintenance so that you will continue to have water.

We are currently observing the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" which runs from 2005 to the year 2015.

Unfortunately, many of us in Jamaica, continue to take the water we have for granted. However, we need to understand that the supply is not endless, In fact, our water supply has been affected by such actions as the removal of tree cover to carry out farming and charcoal production, and other practices that have polluted our water sources.

Meanwhile, demand is growing, at an alarming rate. In addition to domestic consumption, every sector demands and utilizes water including commercial establishments, agriculture, industries, and recreational activities. At the rate of population growth, and development, if we are not careful to manage what we have, our supplies could easily run out, and sooner than we think.

The severe drought being felt in many of our central and southern parishes has brought this home to us sharply.

In addition, based on what is happening globally regarding the impacts of Climate Change, we can no longer predict our weather patterns.

The 2012 State of the Jamaican Climate report concluded that Jamaica's mean annual temperature is projected to increase across all scenarios. In the meantime, most rainfall models project decreases for Jamaica, especially by the end of the century.

As such, there is no guarantee that the rainfall we will receive during our wet months, will be enough to fill our water systems. We will therefore need to take even greater care of our fragile water resources and it needs to start with you as individuals and as a community.

The impacts of climate change may have potentially devastating effects on our water supply, and indeed all sectors including agriculture and fisheries, tourism, health and sanitation and the built environment. Make no mistake about it....all persons in all areas, and all sectors will be affected, and so I repeat.. **"With Climate Change, We MUST Change"**.

We must take care of our environment, and stop polluting our rivers and streams with garbage and other forms of waste matter. We need to be more diligent in detecting and reporting leaks.

We must explore alternative means of getting and storing water such as rainwater harvesting. We must practice greater conservation measures and be far more efficient in how we use water by recycling wherever possible. We must insist that our homes are built with water saving devices such as low volume shower heads and low flush toilets to reduce the amount of water we use.

We must adopt these measures today, or face a very dry, thirsty tomorrow.

Our own beloved Bob Marley in his song **"Rat Race" sang..."In the abundance of water, the fool is thirsty..."**. We know that Bob's message was a metaphor for human greed. He was in essence saying only a fool is unsatisfied when we are provided with everything to satisfy our needs.

However, the water experts will tell you that while there is more than enough water to satisfy our needs, without sustainable practices regarding our use of this precious resource, we will literally be living Bob Marley's metaphor.

Taking care of the water that we have is not the responsibility of Central Government and the Local Authorities alone. Each and every one of us must play our part.

This water supply system is a welcome investment and is expected to alleviate the water challenges you experienced in the past. As of today, 300 of you will experience water flowing through your pipes, coming into your individual homes.

Thornton has water now. Whether or not it has water for decades or even centuries to come, depends on you.

Thank you and God bless you all.