



OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

November 20, 2023

Most Hon. Andrew Holness, ON, MP
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
1 Devon Road
Kingston 10

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Proposal for making Portmore a 15th parish

You are aware that the Opposition has consistently stated that any proposal to fundamentally alter the structure of the Portmore Municipality requires extensive prior consultations with the residents and organisations of the Portmore Municipality.

Our position is underpinned by the fact that present structure of the Portmore Municipality resulted from many years of internal consultations and deliberations of the people of Portmore, and represents the outcome of the residents' hard-fought goals. Furthermore, the Joint Select Committee of Parliament confirmed that no material benefits will accrue to the people or communities of Portmore from conversion from a City Municipality to a Parish.

We also recall that your Party had made a political platform promise back in 2007, which was not informed by any known consultations with the communities of Portmore.

It is long been clear to us that the objective of the conversion of Portmore from a City Municipality to a Parish is driven by a narrow, partisan and self-serving desire to separate the people of Portmore from the rest of St. Catherine in order to secure political control of the Spanish Town Municipal Corporation.

This objective was recently confirmed by a member of your Cabinet and senior member of the Jamaica Labour Party, Minister Clifford Warmington, on Sunday November 12, 2023 in a public statement which has been published in the media. In his statement, Minister Warmington stated that the boundaries of Portmore will be changed to ensure that several areas within two Portmore constituencies which have predominantly voted for the People's National Party, will no longer be in those constituencies.

...../2

This distasteful rebirth of gerrymandering in Jamaica under your leadership represents a retrograde manoeuvre to undermine and reverse the gains secured since 1980 in detribalizing the democratic processes. If pursued, this blatant gerrymandering will be a disgraceful legacy of your Prime Ministerial record, and an ugly stain that sullies our country's image locally and internationally.

In light of the recent pronouncement so clearly enunciated by Minister Warmington, we demand the immediate cessation of all efforts to make Portmore a parish.

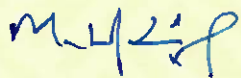
Thereafter, the Government may commence broad-based consultations with the leadership of Portmore at all levels, along with the residents at the community level, to arrive at any modifications of the present structure, its boundaries and any other parameters that they may deem appropriate. Such contemplations would not exclude the possibility of Portmore becoming a Parish or remaining a City Municipality.

I wish to also affirm that the Opposition has very serious concerns about any changes in parish boundaries that have consequential impacts on constituency boundaries and are driven by the governing party, thus emasculating the fundamental spirit and intent underpinning the independent Electoral Commission of Jamaica, an indigenous institution of governance that is highly regarded across the World, and the provisions of the Representation of the Peoples Act.

I encourage you to be mindful that Jamaica's success to date in maintaining democratic system of government to date, and prospects for economic growth and national development, are in large part dependent on our relatively stable political system and practices and the institutional arrangements which support this.

Any manipulative tinkering of political boundaries, as articulated by Minister Warmington with the apparent support of your Cabinet, will only serve to derail the country's past gains and future prospects.

Sincerely



MARK J. GOLDING, MP
Leader of the Opposition

cc His Excellency Sir Patrick Allen, Governor General of Jamaica