

St. Andrew Western

State of Constituency Debate



**We Won't Stop
Until We Achieve**

Presented by
Mr. Anthony Hylton, CD, MP

State of Constituency Debate 2024

Contribution on Western St. Andrew

By

G. Anthony Hylton, CD, MP

Salutation:

Madam Speaker, the limited time available to speakers in this debate is incentive for me to recognize my three Councilors, Anderson, Clarke and Thomas;

My able office team, Jennifer Edwards and Cassandra Campbell;

My ever present constituency team and personal staff comprising personal assistant, security officer and driver;

Specially Invited Guests, who will be introduced to the House shortly;

1. Geography of Western St. Andrew—changed.

Madam Speaker, the political boundaries of Western St. Andrew were redrawn sometime in 2012 to include the communities of Plantation Heights, Belvedere, Happy Grove, Gutzman, Mary's Gully, Cedar Valley and Cypress Hall. All in the Duhaney Park Division, which retains its complements of previously identified communities.

The other two Divisions of Waterhouse and Seaview Gardens remain as they were for the previous decades. The point, Madam Speaker, is being made for my colleagues in this House who have to be reminded from time to time that the needs of the constituents of Western St. Andrew are expanded to include communities which were formerly a part of West Rural St. Andrew, especially the farmers. As I have struggled to remind ministerial colleagues in this House of the legitimate needs of those farmers I now represent. I wish for Hansard to record their needs for proper farm roads, community roads, water and farm support, as can be confirmed by RADA.

2. Sub-Division of Plantation Heights—While I am on the subject of changed geography, I must mention the particular challenges faced by the residents of the Plantation Heights Community, whose lives have been greatly affected by the fact that their individual

purchases of lots in the sub-division, has not benefitted from the amenities of properly paved roads, adequate water, lighting and other facilities, due to the failure of the developer, or its successors interest in the development, to complete the development and hand –over the sub-division to the local government authority for proper administration and maintenance.

Madam Speaker, the issue arises as to the need for appropriate legislation to address this glaring problem as to what happens to purchasers in these failed sub-divisions and their expectation/enjoyment of decent roads and public amenities. More can and must be done to fix this unacceptable situation in the real estate/construction sector, Madam Speaker.

3. Duhaney Park 60th Anniversary Celebration

Madam Speaker, my presentation to this Honorable House could not be complete without reference to the fact that the Duhaney Park Community has been celebrating its 60th Anniversary in fine style, and under the leadership of the Community Development Committee (CDC).

Yes, a vibrant organization is still functioning in the Duhaney Park Community after several decades and many challenges in continuing the civic dialogue among various community members, groupings and factions in its effort to unite the community, and to maintain its central role as a hub of peace and stability in Western St. Andrew and in the corporate area.

The highlight of the year-long celebration activities was the Duhaney Park 60th Anniversary Award Dinner, spearheaded by the CDC itself in recognition of the many stalwarts who toiled in transforming the **starter homes** built by the Matalons into homes, which sheltered the families, and the families who forged a community. The reflection on its journey as a bed-room community, included the period racked by political violence that almost tore the community apart.

But for the intervention of the now disabled and discarded Peace Management Initiative (PMI), which greatly assisted in building bridges among factions, and eventually succeeded in winning sustained peace, if not harmony in the community. Madam Speaker, the Duhaney Park CDC and Community stands as a beacon of hope for other challenged communities in the corporate area and throughout Jamaica.

SUCSESSES

Among the successes in Duhaney Park are the stellar institutions of learning, including the heralded George Headley Primary school, the Duhaney Park Primary school (which has been experiencing something of a regeneration) and the Edith Dalton James High School, which has found a new lease on life and its true place in the education system and in the constituency.

Madam Speaker, the Edith Dalton James High School is not unlike many of the non-traditional high schools, which have struggled to find an identity and to chart a program of excellence from a seemingly indifferent education system that prioritizes the traditional high schools. That search for an identity ended recently, Madam Speaker. Because ever since I proposed, and the former Minister of Education agreed to add to its curriculum programs in Supply Chain Management and Logistics, as well as commercial truck driving, Edith Dalton James High has found a purpose Madam Speaker.

I use this opportunity to announce to this Honorable House, that the first cohort of students eligible to sit both the CAPE and CXC examinations in the subject will be registered this year!

I congratulate the staff at the school and at the Ministry for their responsiveness to the challenge issued, and wish the group of pioneering students well in their exam.

Madam Speaker, Edith Dalton James High has found purpose and will never be the same again! I have already thanked the former Minister of Education for her support in the venture, and will continue the effort with the new Minister of Education to quickly complete the process of removing the school from the shift system, and the badge of mediocrity it imposes. I also thank the private firm DECS for its commitment to assist in enabling the students at EDJH to acquire the skills and a license to drive commercial vehicles used in the distributive trade locally and a part of transport logistics globally.

CHALLENGES

Madam Speaker, in this its 60th Anniversary it can come as no surprise that Duhaney Park has its many challenges as well. Chief among these are the physical infrastructure beginning with roads, which are most visible and frequently felt by the motorists who have to be constantly replacing or repairing parts on their vehicles, or even the visually impaired trying to use the badly damaged side-walks. Also, the aged underground sewage and water mains, as well as the collapsed drains are a source of continuing concern and greatly increase the Misery Index of the community residents.

Madam Speaker, I must make a special appeal for Duhaney Park and Western St. Andrew community roads listed on the SPARK program, for them to be given priority status, as

these communities were the first to kick start the consultations under the program and the first to complete their consultation. For this, participants in the consultations were promised, publicly, that they would be among the first to be benefitted. The people and their communities are holding firm to this promise!

As I leave Duhaney Park Madam Speaker, I must remind the various Ministers of Economic Growth & Job Creation on the outstanding matters of the pipeline project from Ferry to Rock Pond, via Cypress Hall; and the Resource Training Centre for the Brook Valley Community, both of which are long overdue.

4. The New Haven Community

Madam Speaker, though not as storied as the Duhaney Park Community or having the same formal development, the New Haven Community has been much maligned and mischaracterized by persons ignorant of its antecedents, and a proud history of land and home ownership. Many of these original homeowners fled their land many years ago, as successive governments failed to control the silting of the Duhaney River as it floods communities in its path on the way to the Hunts Bay, via Riverton and Six Miles communities.

This has resulted in flooding of the New Haven Community whenever it rains, as the undersized and poorly maintained system of drains cannot empty the runoff into the river, which overflows its banks continually due to siltation. The situation is exacerbated by the poorly designed bridge/overpass at Six Miles, which blocks the flow of water from the Duhaney River and the main gully which drains Duhaney Park and Patrick City in the adjoining North-Western St. Andrew constituency. These bodies of water converge at the Six Miles bridge/Overpass.

The recent construction by China Harbour on the Mandela Highway and at the overpass/bridge has further worsened the flooding situation with neither NWA nor the NWC taking responsibility. The lives of the people of New Haven are severally disrupted whenever there is sustained rainfall anywhere in the catchment areas.

I again, place on the record of this Parliament the urgent need for the government to act to alleviate the misery of the people of New Haven and its environs.

5. Sandy-Gulley--- Threat to Seaview Gardens, Waterhouse and Washington Garden Communities

Madam Speaker, the records of this House will accurately reflect my several urgent appeals to the government to act boldly to avoid the catastrophic impact of what I called the “Grey Rhinoceros” heading towards the Sandy Gully, a metaphor for the imminent threat posed to the communities adjoining the gully, when the flood waters breach the gully walls. Madam speaker, the walls of the gully have now been breached, and the community residents are now living in fear for their lives and property.

The Clean Harbour Project

But there is yet another threat posed by the Sandy Gully, Madam Speaker, and that is the threat to our environment and the delicate eco-system that is the Port of Kingston - the seventh largest natural harbor in the world and a national and global asset.

An integral part of the Port eco-system is the Hunts Bay, into which several rivers and gullies flow, including the Sandy Gully. The tons of plastics carried in this and the other gullies emptying directly into the Port of Kingston, has been the concern of both local and international organizations, whose mission is to remove the tons of plastics from the world’s gullies, rivers and streams before they enter the Ports and oceans.

Today, I have invited some special guests to the Parliament to be recognized by this Honorable House, for the stellar job they have been doing in partnering to remove thousands of tons of plastics and other debris from the gullies before they enter the Port of Kingston or the mangrove forest.

I invite the House to welcome our visitors from the Kingston Harbour Clean-up Project (KHCP), a collaborative effort between the Grace Kennedy Foundation, The Ocean Clean Up Organization out of the Netherlands, and Clean Harbours Jamaica.

The Partnership is aimed at reducing the pollution of and facilitating sustainable development in Kingston Harbour. Since the beginning of operations in March 2022, the KHCP has prevented over 2.5 million kilograms of plastics and garbage from flowing into the harbor, through a combination of beach clean ups, legacy waste removal, and cutting-edge waste-trapping technology, known as interceptors. To date, these Interceptors have been strategically installed at the mouths of eight of the most polluting gullies feeding into Kingston Harbour, with the latest deployment completed in late October—Interceptor 015—at Sandy Gully in Seaview Gardens.

The deployment at Sandy Gully marks a major step forward in transforming and reducing the pollution of Kingston Harbour. The installation spans the entire width of the gully to ensure that the waste flowing down the gully is safely contained and guided towards the shoreline. The contained waste is then transported to the KHCP’s offloading site for

sorting and disposal. The data and learning gathered from the project so far will help optimize technology and operations, paving the way for an expanded network of Interceptors across the city. This effort not only aims to restore Kingston's waterways but also delivers local, regional and global benefits by reducing plastics pollution in the Caribbean Sea.

Madam Speaker, the fisher folks in Seaview Gardens are already reporting the return of baby shrimps and crabs not seen in quite sometimes in the mangroves. They are excited and hopeful. We thank our partners for their commitment and diligent efforts so far.

The advancing Grey Rhino

Madam Speaker, from the bridge on Spanish Town Road one can see the virtual forest of trees and shrubs, mounds of garbage and blocked waste in the Sandy Gully. During the last heavy rainfall the blocked waterway caused the water in the gully to rise to a level threatening the essential Spanish Town Road Bridge, as well as the communities upstream and downstream from the bridge. In the aftermath of the heavy rainfall, both the base of the Sandy Gully and its reinforced concrete walls, on both sides of the gully, have been breached leaving houses on the Dill Path/Waterhouse side of the gully hanging precariously.

To date, neither the PM (his constituency adjoins my constituency where the breaches occurred) nor the erstwhile Minister with responsibility for works has visited the area to appreciate the imminent dangers faced by entire communities should this danger not be averted forthwith. Madam Speaker, the response to my urgent plea on behalf of the residents has been that "something" will be in the next budget. Meanwhile, the terrified community members are agitating for action to be taken now!

Madam Speaker, the promise of 'something' coming in the next Budget, preceded the current Minister of Finance by several years. A word to the wise!

6. Riverton/ JPS Collaboration for Legal Light

Madam Speaker, as I make this contribution in this House the wiring of over 100 houses in the Riverton Community has been completed.

This is the first phase of a two phase program designed to expand access to legal light by residence of Riverton City, and to reduce revenue losses to JPS by removing illicit connections. This is a partnership between the community and JPS led by myself and the Councilor of the Seaview Gardens Division after patient, but deliberate, negotiation. The next phase in this collaborative arrangement will be implementation of an improved

distribution infrastructure to enable more houses, once successfully wired, to become formalized.

Considering the benefits of this program to all stakeholders involved, the question therefore is, why only 100 homes being wired? The answer, Madam Speaker, is the prohibitive cost involved to wire an individual house.

I am, therefore, calling on the government to demonstrate its genuine concern for the most vulnerable in society through a targeted program of cost reduction/elimination for the wiring of houses, thereby providing legal light to all those wanting to connect legally to the grid. All will be benefitted with the adoption/expansion of such a program by government, not just the few who will benefit under the vote buying scheme announced recently on the political platform.

The citizens of Riverton continue to press for a better NWC system of both potable water and a reliable sewer service. I will continue to advocate for their inclusion in accessing the improved and affordable services available to every community in Western St. Andrew. They deserve no less Madam Speaker!

The Penwood Road Housing Scheme

Madam Speaker, I close today's contribution with an improbable story, but a true story.

It begins with representation from one Member of Parliament to another neighboring MP, who happen to be a Minister of this Government with portfolio responsibility for housing, etc., about the need to arrest the serious decline of the housing stock in his adjoining community, by building a fifty (50) unit housing scheme on the only available suitable land in the community. The representation was met with a positive response from the Minister. Indeed, an announcement was made with much fanfare in this Honorable House, and elsewhere, shortly thereafter that the small, but necessary development, had been approved with the project set to begin shortly thereafter. It is now close to seven (7) years since the last announcement was made.

Meanwhile Madam Speaker, at least three housing schemes commenced in the nearby constituency, with at least one completed and another at a very advanced stage of development. For the Penwood Road proposed project, significant design and structural engineering work was done, and consultation held with the community residents concerning the project, involving persons making NHT contribution and others, with independent sources of income from within the community, and from relatives and friends living in the diaspora.

After at least four (4) rounds of meeting with the Housing Authority of Jamaica (HAJ), its technical and managerial staff, we were finally told no funds were available to implement the project as conceptualized. No alternative approaches were offered and no timeline given as to whether or if, the project would be revisited. End of story!

Madam Speaker, I am told that this experience is not an isolated one and too often critically needed projects, which are needed to stabilize communities like Penwood Road, are jettisoned for reasons other than their viability, and communities are left to wonder why, how come? Especially, as in this case, where the adjoining community with similar socio-economic profile is seen to be benefitting from several Government sponsored or enabled projects. The residents of Waterhouse Madam Speaker, have drawn their own conclusion, as to the nature of the injustice that has occurred in this instance.

I have assured them Madam Speaker, that the next PNP administration will fix it, sooner rather than later!!

Time Come!