



Government Comes Up Dry on Water Promises, Hayles Urges Comprehensive Solutions

Kingston, Jamaica. December 12, 2024: Opposition Spokesperson on Water, Ian Hayles, has lambasted the Government for its failure to provide key communities across Jamaica with promised water supply, highlighting the near impossibility of meeting these commitments given the state of the National Water Commission (NWC) and the broader water sector.

Citing data from the OUR's 2023-2024 annual report, Mr. Hayles pointed out that non-revenue water (NRW)—water produced but not paid for by the NWC—remains at an alarming 74.3%, showing no improvement over the past six years despite investments in initiatives such as smart water meters. “For every four million gallons of water produced, three are not being paid for. This reflects poor resource management under the Jamaica Labour Party administration,” said Mr. Hayles.

The report also reveals that 158,448 customer accounts are inactive, a staggering increase of over 12,000 accounts since 2021. Meanwhile, the number of active accounts has grown marginally, but the financial burden on the NWC remains severe. “These inactive accounts, coupled with the lack of a strategic approach to water resource management, mean the system is failing Jamaicans,” he added.

Mr. Hayles criticised the Government's patchwork solutions, including recent announcements about major short to medium projects that have yet to start much less deliver tangible benefits. “Communities in St. Elizabeth, Westmoreland, Hanover and St. Ann continue to suffer, even after high-profile declarations of immediate solutions to ease the impact of low or no supply. The administration has no real strategy to address where water is needed, how to ensure coverage, or how to modernise the sector to support livelihoods and improve standards of living. Jamaicans are suffering.”

Additionally, Mr. Hayles while welcoming the suggested moratorium to pensioners and PATH beneficiaries that will allow them to regularise their accounts with the NWC noted the inequity for the few paying customers of the NWC or others who wish to regularise their accounts, citing widespread economic hardship. “With 75% of those receiving water not paying for it, the Government must go beyond token measures. A nationwide moratorium on sewerage charges, for example, or facilitating an extended payment timeline for regularising accounts would help alleviate the financial strain many households are under, ensuring fairness and fostering better long-term compliance.”



MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Opposition Spokesperson also echoed concerns from the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) regarding the water sector's poor performance, characterised by low service quality, high operating costs, and inadequate access to potable water and sewerage services. The situation, compounded by climate change and prolonged droughts, underscores the urgency of strategic action.

"The Government is quick to make promises but comes up dry when it comes to delivering results. Jamaicans deserve better, and it is time for comprehensive solutions to address the deep-rooted issues in the water sector," Mr. Hayles concluded.

For more information, contact:

Ian Hayles

Opposition Spokesperson on Water

PNP Media Unit - Tel: 876-408-3160