

Preventable Tragedy Sparks Renewed Push for the Rural Safe School Bus Programme in Clarendon

Clarendon, Jamaica. December 4, 2024: Scean Barnswell, JP, Councillor for the Hayes Division and Minority Leader in the Clarendon Municipal Corporation, has joined the call from the National Parent-Teachers Association of Jamaica and principals across Clarendon for the urgent re-establishment of the Rural Safe School Bus Programme. This appeal comes in the wake of Monday's tragic crash, which claimed the lives of 12-year-old Richard Tulloh and 16-year-old Jody-Ann Lodge, both students in the parish.

According to the police, the driver of a Subaru motor car, reportedly being used as a taxi, lost control of the vehicle, colliding with a truck before landing in the path of a Toyota Pro Box. The two students, passengers in the Subaru, succumbed to injuries sustained in the crash.

"This heartbreaking incident underscores the critical need for safe and reliable transportation for our children. It is an unimaginable loss for the families, the schools, and the wider Clarendon community. These tragedies are preventable, and we must act now to ensure no more lives are lost on our roads," Barnswell stated.

The Rural Safe School Bus Programme was first implemented in September 2014 by the Transport Authority (TA) in partnership with the Clarendon Parish Council, with a pilot project initially organised for the town of May Pen and later expanded to other parts of the parish. The programme, which aimed to ensure students travelled to and from school safely and on time, involved collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Education, and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). Unfortunately, the programme was discontinued in 2020, leaving children vulnerable to the dangers of reckless and unsafe public transportation.

"We cannot allow this to continue," Barnswell emphasised. "I am renewing the call for the immediate reinstatement of the Rural Safe School Bus Programme. It is not just a matter of transportation—it is a matter of life and death. The Ministry of Transport must prioritise this programme, and we as a community must stand united in advocating for the safety of our children."

Barnswell extended his condolences to the families of Richard Tulloh and Jody-Ann Lodge and reiterated his commitment to working with all stakeholders to prevent further tragedies on Clarendon's roads.

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