

A portrait of Lothan Cousins, a Black man with a shaved head, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red tie. The background is a stylized graphic with yellow and green geometric shapes and a halftone dot pattern.

**SECTORAL 20**  
**DEBATE 25**

**CHAMPIONING**  
**CHANGE**

**IN LAND AND HOUSING:  
JUSTICE, DIGNITY, AND  
OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL**

**LOTHAN COUSINS** **SHADOW MINISTER**  
**LAND**

**SECTORAL PRESENTATION 2025**

**“CHAMPIONING CHANGE IN LAND AND HOUSING: JUSTICE, DIGNITY, AND  
OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL”**

**LOTHAN COUSINS, MP**

**SOUTH WESTERN CLARENDON**

**JUNE 24, 2025**

**GORDON HOUSE, JAMAICA**

Madam Speaker,

I rise today to make what is likely my final presentation from this side of the House in a Sectoral Debate. And while this may mark the closing of one chapter, it is also a moment of deep reflection and renewed determination, because the mission is not yet complete.

First and foremost, I give thanks to Almighty God, who has been my strength, my shield, and my sustainer throughout this journey in public service. I thank Him for the grace to serve, the wisdom to lead, and the courage to stand.

To my family, your love has been my rock. Through long nights, difficult decisions, and time away from home, you have never wavered. I am deeply grateful.

I remain forever indebted to my people of Southwestern Clarendon. Representing you has been the honour of a lifetime, walking our streets, sitting at your kitchen tables, and standing with you through hardship and hope. You entrusted me with your voice, and I remain committed to speaking boldly and unapologetically on your behalf.

I must acknowledge the four PNP councillors in the South Western Clarendon constituency, Carlton Bailey, Godfrey Knight, Anthony Davis, and Kijana Johnson, for their invaluable partnership since claiming all four Divisions in the recent Local Government Elections.

And to my constituency executive, staff, friends, and comrades, thank you for keeping the engine running with your belief in the mission.

I also extend sincere thanks to the staff of the Houses of Parliament; your professionalism and steady hands behind the scenes make our work possible.

To my colleagues from both sides of the house and comrades in the People's National Party, your solidarity, your strength, and your unwavering commitment to building a better Jamaica continue to inspire me.

And finally, to the Leader of the Opposition and the next Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mark Jefferson Golding, thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility. Your steady leadership and clear vision for a more just and equitable Jamaica make it a privilege to serve under your direction.

### **Championing Change by Ending the Shame of Landlessness**

Madam Speaker, Today, I speak on an issue that sits at the centre of Jamaica's historical injustice and future prosperity: land ownership.

For generations, land has represented more than just acres and boundaries; it has symbolised freedom, stability, and dignity. Yet far too many Jamaicans still live without the security of tenure, the hope of ownership, or the ability to pass on anything tangible to the next generation.

It is time to end the shame of landlessness.

Jamaica, through its history, has a legacy of an inequitable distribution of land and the disempowerment of the masses regarding secure land tenure.

Up until Emancipation, the Crown, together with the owners of the estates, plantations, and pens, had a virtual monopoly of all the lands in Jamaica. Even post-Emancipation, they continued to maintain their grip by crafting the Emancipation Act of 1833, which ensured that the newly freed labour force would continue working on the estates, limiting their access to land.

That legacy still haunts us today.



## **The Current Landscape**

The government is the largest landowner, yet it has failed to utilise this Asset for the benefit of the people; it has not sought to use this asset to eradicate the proliferation of unplanned and informal settlements.

A PNP Government will undertake a programme akin to what is done in Dominica, where the Government undertook a radical land titling programme by distributing Government land to those already in possession. This was done in some instances by selling the land for a percentage of its market value, undertaking the requisite surveys and providing land titling services to many informal settlers, some of whom had occupied these lands for decades.

Our research indicates that as of 2018, the majority of Jamaica's population falls between the ages of 0 and 39. Within this group, approximately 975,000 Jamaicans fall within the age range of 19 to 39. These young people are among the most directly affected by the deep lack of access to affordable land and housing. But the crisis extends far beyond them.

There are many Jamaicans aged 40 to 55 who still have not yet acquired housing. And under the current economic climate, even those above 55 are still without a secure roof over their heads.

It is also estimated that over 700,000 Jamaicans, some say the figure may be closer to a million, live in informal settlements because they cannot afford land or housing.

Studies in 2004 and 2008 concluded that the Government of Jamaica owns 75% of the land on which squatter settlements are located. The Commissioner of Lands has responsibility for 47% of these lands, with the remaining 53% owned by statutory organisations and agencies. A negligible percentage is owned by municipal corporations.

This is why the solution is not far away. The State already has the land. The will to act is what has been missing.

### **Land Ownership and Regularisation**

What is needed now is a radical shift, one that removes the stigma of informality and puts power back in the hands of the people.

The next People's National Party Government has identified land and housing as a priority for national transformation. We begin from the principle that every Jamaican who desires to own a home should be facilitated to do so. Homeownership in the 21st century must be treated as a right, similar to education and health.

The inability of thousands to own a home is rooted in the structural inequalities that govern Jamaican society. One essential step is to accept informality as a legitimate mode of urbanisation. We must support and collaborate with those who are parcelling land and constructing buildings in informal settlements, rather than working against them.

This will not be easy. It challenges our sense of order. However, in a society marked by profound structural informality and deep inequality, true social cohesion can only be achieved through dialogue and consultation within a clear framework of legal reform. Such an approach will yield better results than heavy-handed, punitive measures.

Order in a democratic society comes from agreed norms, not from the big stick.

### **Unlocking Land through the State**

A future PNP government will take bold steps, including drawing inspiration from Dominica, as mentioned earlier, where Government land was distributed to those already in possession.

We will revisit the issue of Government land and how persons who have been living on it for decades can benefit. We are not giving it away, but a system must be designed to ensure that those in possession for an extended period are given an opportunity to legally acquire these lands. This is how we create an ownership society.

When we do this, we are not only building an ownership society, but we are building:

1. Pride in our Nation
2. Progress
3. Independence
4. Security of Tenure

Madam Speaker, regularising these informal settlements can only contribute positively to society. The country stands to benefit immensely; it's a win-win, it gives land to the landless, restores trust in the Government and has the potential to earn real-time revenue for the Government from the sale or leasing of these lands.

I must quickly add that this approach is not a one-size-fits-all, as each community has its own unique circumstances, but we will address these issues through consultation with residents and the relevant Agencies. In some cases, relocation may be necessary due to environmental and other factors which render certain areas uninhabitable.

We will revisit how persons living on Government land for decades can benefit from ownership, not through giveaways, but through a system that allows them to purchase at affordable rates. That is how we build an ownership society.

This is also why we propose that under a future PNP government, the cost of the land will be excluded from the NHT housing prices. Therefore buyers will pay only for the housing unit itself, resulting in a savings of approximately \$2.5 million to \$3

million per unit for the cost associated with the purchase of the land. This makes homeownership possible for nurses, teachers, public servants, persons with disabilities, and the average young Jamaican.

To support those communities already in possession, a PNP government will partner with residents, public agencies, and the private sector to establish critical infrastructure, including roads, water, and sewage systems. Because the work doesn't stop at a title, it begins there.

### **Government Lands**

Madam Speaker, the view has been advanced that land is not a trinket or a piece of jewellery. It ought not to be locked away and preserved unused for decades to satisfy the selfish motives of those who can afford to do so. This is particularly true of Crown or government land, which in a real sense belongs to the people and should be used by the people for the benefit of the people.

Madam Speaker, we cannot discuss land ownership without examining the laws that govern it, specifically the Registration of Titles Act (ROTA).

Under this 1833 Law, a person in adverse possession of Crown land is unable to apply for a possessory title unless they can prove such possession for sixty (60) years. Our research shows that this period is being reduced in other countries. In the United Kingdom, it is now ten (10) years save for land on the foreshore, which still requires sixty (60) years. The view of the UK Commission that reviewed the law is that in these modern times, the government has a duty of care to its citizens to protect Crown lands and to ensure their productive use. It is no longer permissible to simply offer resource constraints or the large acreage to be policed as an excuse.

Under the next PNP Government, our proposal is that sixty (60) years should be reduced to twenty-five (25) years (save and except for land on the foreshore,



which should still require sixty (60) years). We believe this is ample time for the Government to ensure that protective arrangements are in place.

A PNP Government will move with alacrity to amend the ROTA to provide for a shorter timeframe for persons who have been living on Government or Crown land to claim it. The same rules that apply to private owners must be commensurate with those that apply to the Government. The Government of Jamaica (GOJ) is the largest landowner in the country, who can hardly account for what it owns, yet persons must meet high hurdles to get a title. This is wrong, and we commit to putting an end to this. In fact, many of these informal settlements are already being serviced by our utility companies, may have benefited from infrastructure upgrades and interventions by various Government Agencies, including Members of Parliament and Councillors. It would therefore be hypocritical for us as leaders not to formulate a workable strategy to formally enable longstanding occupiers to acquire the properties they have possessed for decades.

In simple terms, what this means, Madam Speaker is that the next PNP Government will oversee what could be considered as the single largest transfer of wealth from the state (Crown) to the hands of the people by formalising and correcting close to two (2) centuries of injustice meted out to the Jamaican people by the crown over the years. 'Time Come' for us to put Jamaica first and ensure that our people achieve true economic independence and stability through finally owning a piece of this rock, hereby commencing the process of creating true generational wealth, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty which has resulted from this injustice.

### **Survey, Titling, and the SPA (LAMP)**

Madam Speaker, a critical step in land ownership is obtaining a survey diagram. We all know the cost of obtaining a survey diagram often puts it out of the reach of the average Jamaican.

We are committed to working with the Land Surveyors Association to form public/private partnerships to ensure that more Jamaicans can obtain survey diagrams. We will partner, consult, and take a joined-up approach to surveying using the best technologies available, including drones and GPS.

Madam Speaker, the fast-tracking of the systematic registration and land titling project, which was started under the PNP and is now being implemented by the current administration, is moving at a snail's pace.

The most significant improvement in the first registration system came in 2005 with the passing of the Registration of Titles, Cadastral Mapping and Tenure Clarification (Special Provisions) Act ['the SPA'] what we commonly refer to as the Land Administration and Management Programme LAMP a Government Agency which carried out significant work in delivering titles to several parishes including Clarendon.

In 2017, the current administration announced that it would merge LAMP with the National Land Agency (NLA). What was formerly LAMP has been downsized and transformed into a new Land Administration and Management Division (LAMDD) of the NLA, which focuses on non-systematic title applications.

This move was a backwards and retrograde step, which has resulted in thousands of Jamaicans being deprived of the opportunity to receive their Titles.

With respect to reforming the surveying process, we recommend that Sections of ROTA be amended to allow an easier path to the identification of boundaries in

declared areas (informal settlements). GPS technology has advanced to the point where a degree of accuracy is possible using a combination of virtual reference stations (VRS) and satellite GPS. These technologies may be used in surveys of parcels where boundaries are clearly defined.

### **Land Valuation**

As of August 2017, there were 339,000 parcels of land on the Valuation Roll without a title. The total number of untitled properties is likely to be several thousand more.

<b>PARISH</b>	<b>Number of Properties With Title</b>	<b>Number of Properties Without Title</b>	<b>Total Number of Properties</b>	<b>Percentage of Properties With Titles</b>
KINGSTON	12,817	1,241	14,058	91.17%
ST. ANDREW	83,692	14,240	97,932	85.46%
ST. THOMAS	17,151	20,868	38,019	45.11%
PORTLAND	13,263	20,306	33,569	39.51%
ST. MARY	22,518	26,782	49,300	45.68%
ST. ANN	34,491	31,076	65,567	52.60%
TRELAWNY	17,105	15,008	32,113	53.27%
ST. JAMES	45,633	11,397	57,030	80.02%
HANOVER	11,616	11,454	23,070	50.35%
WESTMORELAND	24,465	18,431	42,896	57.03%
ST. ELIZABETH	25,995	40,765	66,760	38.94%
MANCHESTER	32,806	35,019	67,825	48.37%
CLARENDON	43,281	50,592	93,873	46.11%
ST. CATHERINE	111,572	42,223	153,795	72.55%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>496,405</b>	<b>339,402</b>	<b>835,807</b>	<b>59.39%</b>
<i>Some title references may relate to multiple valuation numbers and some valuation numbers may relate to multiple title references.</i>				

**Source:** <http://nla.gov.jm/content/parcel-statistics>

Madam Speaker, The Land Valuation process is one of the weaknesses of the current system. Land, the subject of an application, must be on the Valuation Roll and bear a Valuation Number. The problem is that the Land Valuation Act requires the Commissioner of Land Valuation to conduct a valuation process and

investigate ownership and possession, which can take several months to complete.

A future PNP Government will amend the Law to allow the Adjudication Record produced under LAMP to be binding on the Commissioner of Land Valuations as to possession and ownership, which should reduce the time for entry of the land on the Valuation Roll.

Given the experience gained and lessons learnt from LAMP, which served as a pilot project, we are satisfied that a cost-effective system can be put in place to produce an average of forty thousand (40,000) titles per annum over the next five (5) years.

The experience in Rwanda, Taiwan and other countries proves that this target is achievable if the necessary resources are made available.

### **Bauxite Land**

Madam Speaker, over the years, several Jamaicans who were forced to resettle due to the operational needs of bauxite companies for mining lands have been struggling to obtain titles for the lands to which they were relocated. To compound the issue, most of these families were previously living on lands where they had legal titles and security of tenure. It is most unfortunate that these hardworking Jamaican citizens have been left behind, many of whom now have children who qualify for NHT benefits, but whose parents are unable to provide them with a plot of land on which to build their dream homes.

A recent breakdown of each bauxite/alumina company's performance revealed that Jamalco had 1,633 titles since 2010, but only 339 have been delivered. JISCO/Alpart had 1,301 titles, with only 329 delivered. Noranda had 1,765, but has delivered just 520. Windalco had 266, of which only 183 have been delivered.

Madam Speaker, the failure of the bauxite companies to deliver these outstanding titles over the years is not attributable only to them. The reality, Madam Speaker, is that the Bauxite and Alumina Industries (Special Provisions) Act provides safeguards to allow for government intervention to secure the rights of these displaced citizens. The time has come for real action, not just talk, and to that end, today, we are pleased to announce that the next PNP Government will correct this inequality once and for all. We will fast-track the process by enforcing the provisions under Section 6 of the Bauxite and Alumina Industries (Special Provisions) Act. This section allows the Minister to waive requirements under the Local Improvements Act and the Town and Country Planning Act. The effect of this would be to allow bauxite mining companies to deliver land titles and implement improvement works without the need for subdivision approval. Furthermore, we will utilise the Amendment to the Administrator General's Act, championed by then Minister of Justice Mark Golding, to address the contentious issue of generational lands. Madam Speaker, the use of these two pieces of legislation will allow us to unlock the mystery of land ownership in bauxite communities, thereby freeing the land and freeing the people's ownership.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, a future PNP Government will also utilise the powers under Section 5 of the Act to make vesting orders. A vesting order is a legal mechanism used to transfer land titles, particularly for those relocated due to bauxite mining operations. Section 5 of the Act empowers the Minister with responsibility for mining to declare that any property transferred may be vested in persons affected by mining activities. Importantly, the law provides that this process cannot be hindered by any other administrative or legal barrier.

### **Land Tenure & Social Housing**

Madam Speaker, I now turn to the Government's much-touted New Social Housing Programme, a programme meant to bring dignity and shelter to our most

vulnerable citizens. But what we have seen instead is a glaring mismatch between promise and performance.

Since the programme's launch in 2018, only 292 houses have been delivered across the entire island. That's 292 units in a span of nearly seven years, an average of just over 40 houses per year. With 63 constituencies across Jamaica, that barely scratches the surface of need. In fact, when compared with the expected delivery of approximately 1,800 units, based on five recommendations per MP annually, the programme has only managed a 16% delivery rate.

This is especially troubling when compared to the previous housing initiative, a partnership between the Government of Jamaica and Food for the Poor, which ran from 2012 to 2017. Under that initiative, over 3,700 houses were delivered. Yes, those units were wooden structures, not concrete, but they provided safe and immediate relief to thousands of families, which is far more than what this current programme can claim.

What is causing the breakdown? The answer, Madam Speaker, is one we've heard time and again: land tenure. Many of the individuals identified as beneficiaries do not own the land they occupy. Some live on family land with no formal documents. Others occupy parcels where the legal owner is unknown, deceased, or simply unreachable. And in some cases, the lands are Government-owned but earmarked for other developments, leaving applicants in limbo.

Even in my own constituency, I have had to hesitate in submitting applications. When potential beneficiaries come to me, I ask, "Do you own the land? Can you get permission?" Too often, the answer is no. These individuals have been living on the land for generations, but cannot provide the paperwork to prove it. The result? Their applications are denied, and the opportunity for a better life slips further away.



Madam Speaker, if we are serious about addressing housing needs for the most vulnerable, then we must be willing to meet people where they are. We therefore propose that the government establish a provisional certificate of tenure. This document would affirm long-standing occupation or informal possession and serve as a basis for eligibility under the social housing programme.

This simple reform would unblock access for thousands of deserving Jamaicans, those who need housing the most, but are trapped by bureaucracy and the legacy of untitled land. We cannot allow red tape to stand in the way of relief. A house delayed is a life put on hold. Under a PNP government, we will move with compassion, clarity, and common sense to ensure that land tenure is never again a barrier to dignity.

### **Housing: A Right, Not a Privilege**

Madam Speaker, the issue of housing is deeply intertwined with the issue of land. Every Jamaican aspires to own a home, to build their own castle, and for us in the People's National Party, shelter is not a luxury. It is a right.

That is why, over the years, we have established policies, programmes, and institutions designed to deliver affordable housing to the Jamaican people.

From as far back as the 1950s, the Rt. Excellent Norman Manley began this journey with the construction of housing schemes, such as Hope Pastures, Mona, and Harbour View.

The visionary, the Most Hon. Michael Manley, gave us the National Housing Trust, a bold institution that has transformed the housing landscape. Since 1976, thousands of Jamaicans have been able to own their homes through the NHT.

The Most Hon. P.J. Patterson expanded access with Operation PRIDE, delivering communities like Pines of Karachi, Mount Edgecombe, Belle Aire, Melrose Mews, and Norwich Heights.

And we cannot forget the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller, who lifted the dignity of sugar workers. She demolished the barracks and replaced them with modern housing in Westmoreland, Clarendon, and St. Thomas.

That, Madam Speaker, is the legacy of the PNP.

We don't bulldoze people's houses and leave them in the elements. We don't sell public lands above market value to ordinary citizens. And we certainly don't use NHT funds to build houses priced at \$29 million or \$38 million, far out of reach for contributors.

We build affordable homes, homes that empower and transform lives. And that transformational approach will continue under a future PNP administration led by Mark Jefferson Golding.

### **A Repurposed NHT**

Our first move will be to repurpose the NHT to focus squarely on its core mandate: **providing affordable housing**. The PNP will end the annual extraction of \$11.4 billion from the NHT to fund the national Budget. Those funds belong to the contributors, and they must benefit from them directly.

We will establish a \$1 billion fund at the NHT specifically for young people up to age 35, allowing them to access a \$500,000 grant toward a housing deposit. This is how we open the doors to homeownership for the next generation.

Over the past 12 years, \$136.8 billion has been taken from the NHT, with no returns to contributors. We believe in social and economic justice, and we intend to act on it. As I said earlier, under a PNP government, the cost of land will not be

included in housing prices for the next five years. This means a reduction of \$2.5 million to \$3 million per house, bringing affordability within the reach of young professionals, public servants, persons with disabilities and our everyday working-class contributors. That, Madam Speaker, is how we build a People's Housing Programme.

### **Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) as Lead Developer**

Madam Speaker, a part of our housing strategy is to make the Housing Agency of Jamaica (HAJ) the lead developer for low-income housing in the island. We have detected that most private developers have not been focusing on low-income housing because the return on investment is not as strong as it is for the middle to upper income bands of the market. Approximately 50% of NHT contributors earn less than \$30,000 per week, and these individuals cannot get a house on the market that falls within their income band. The government has a duty to protect its citizens, and we will be using the HAJ to drive the construction of low-income housing. In this context, we will be moving to build 80,000 houses, 50,000 low-income houses and 30,000 middle-upper income houses over the next five years.

The houses to be built by the HAJ will be one-bedroom units constructed on 3,000 sq. ft. of land. The owners of these units will have sufficient land space to complete their expansion over time, if they so desire. Madam Speaker, there is a cultural practice in Jamaica that when you sell a man or woman a starter unit, they will expand on it and build their own castle. Just look at Portmore and you will see.

### **The PORTIA Initiative**

Another part of our housing strategy, Madam Speaker, is to roll out the Programme for the Orderly Renewal and Transformation of Infrastructure in all Areas (PORTIA). This is a legacy project to salute the considerable contribution of

former Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller. We will be building social houses, tearing down zinc fences and replacing them with concrete walls.

We will restore dignity to our people. We will turn back the tide of neglect.

### **Closing**

Madam Speaker, as I close, I return to the core truth:

Land is justice. Housing is dignity. Together, they are nation-building.

Whether for environmental protection, infrastructure, agriculture, or shelter, land is what holds us together.

And the People's National Party has always understood this:

- Norman Manley passed the Facilities of Titles Act
- Michael Manley delivered Land Lease, Site & Service, and the NHT
- P.J. Patterson gave us LAMP and Operation PRIDE
- Portia Simpson Miller strengthened LAMP and uplifted sugar workers

Now, in 2025, our legacy continues with Mark Jefferson. Golding, who will free up government land for the people. He will make land work for the people, because we believe in people power.

Let me close with the words of Norman Washington Manley, Father of Independent Jamaica: "Land is the only source of the material life of the people. It provides food and shelter. It furnishes work and wealth. It is the basis of all production, of all development, of all security, of all growth. It is, in very truth, the root of our being."

Time come for us to put Jamaica first. The Word is Love.