



Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

For Immediate Release

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Statement on Water Availability for the Upcoming School Term

By

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Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

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The provision of potable water continues to be a priority for the Government, the Ministry and the National Water Commission.

Since the beginning of the year sections of the island have been severely affected by drought conditions, which have impacted our ability to provide constant piped water supply to our citizens. The Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation has been working assiduously with its implementing agencies to alleviate the situation through various mechanisms.

As Minister with responsibility for water, I have met with all water-related agencies to reinforce the importance of ensuring measures are in place to provide water to all schools and more specifically, those in drought-affected areas for the approaching school year.

As such, I have mandated several key outputs from the National Water Commission. In this regard, the following steps are being taken to ensure the availability of water in all schools:

- The National Water Commission is engaging Principals for the schools that have been affected by the drought as well as those schools which

are in areas where there are disruptions in the water supply to make arrangements to provide trucked water.

- The National Water Commission will truck water to all schools – those affected by the drought and those that have a regular piped water supply. In this regard, all water storage facilities will be filled. We are mindful of the fact that systems can go down at any given time and so we are ensuring that schools have a steady supply until the systems are up and running.

An island-wide trucking schedule has been prepared and trucking commenced this week in preparation for the new school term, which officially resumes on September 2, 2019.

- We are aware that some schools face challenges in terms of storage and so the NWC has assisted, by donating tanks to provide additional storage for those institutions that are in need. Two of these schools include Haile Selassie and Cedar Grove High.
- The National Water Commission has also carried out pipeline infrastructure upgrade in St. James which will result in an improved supply to Anchovy High School in the parish.
- NWC representatives have been assigned to maintain contact with school administrators to monitor water distribution in schools. Administrators may contact the NWC toll-free 888-225-5692 for assistance.
- In addition to works being done by the NWC, the Rural Water Supply Limited (RWSL) has constructed Rainwater Harvesting infrastructure and storage tanks at multiple schools across the island ahead of the start of the new term. This will ensure increased access to water for schools as we enter into the rainy season and should provide some reprieve especially for rural based schools.

Challenges

Despite the implementation of these measures, we continue to face challenges in the delivery of water to some schools. Two major challenges are the theft of water from storage facilities at schools and the practice of illegally tapping into the NWC's distribution network in some areas.

Consistently water is stolen from storage facilities at some schools – not just here in Kingston but also in the western region. As such, the NWC will be trucking water on Mondays to the schools that are experiencing water theft.

Secondly, we have received reports of individuals disrupting the distribution network which takes water to schools in east rural St. Andrew and St. Elizabeth. The NWC has conducted several operations to remove these illegal connections from its distribution network but despite these efforts, the persistent practices continue. During recent meetings concerning the trucking of water, I have asked the Jamaica Constabulary Force to play a greater role in monitoring such situations to facilitate a more efficient supply of water to customers.

I'm appealing to community members to protect the NWC infrastructure as well as the water which is delivered by truck to schools to support a healthy learning environment for our children. We urge farmers, residents and all stakeholders to desist from illegally tapping into the NWC network and to become legal customers.

Notwithstanding these challenges, we remain committed to ensuring that all schools have access to potable water, not just for the beginning of the school term but for the entire year.

For more information concerning the trucking of water for the school year, school administrators can contact the NWC at the toll-free number provided.

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