

COVID-19 IN SUMMARY SERIES

Keeping older persons, persons with dementia & their loved ones reliably informed on current events. Page 1 of 1.

- EVENT:** Digital Town Hall, focusing on Workers and Small Businesses
- DATE:** Thursday 26 March 2020
- SPEAKERS:** Prime Minister The Honourable Andrew Holness; Minister of Finance, Dr. The Honorable Nigel Clarke; President of the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica, Mr. Keith Duncan
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In summary, the Digital Town Hall focusing on workers and small businesses described a 'balancing act' that must be done between: maintaining economic activity and ensuring that all protocols are observed to protect workers and the general public from COVID-19. A \$25-billion package to alleviate the impact of COVID-19 has been created and will be distributed under the COVID Allocation of Resources for Employees (CARE) programme.

Question: How will hard hit workers (in tourism, small business owners, bar-owners, etc.) be helped?

Answer: You will be able to apply for assistance via an online portal. You will be required to submit proof of business operation such as business TRN, business address, tavern license, etc and must have reasonably up to date documentation.

Question: What about those who have lost their jobs, including informal/domestic workers?

Answer: The Supporting Employee with (Cash) Transfer program will support all those who have lost their jobs between March 10 and June 1, 2020, and earn below JMD\$1.5 million/year. Applications will be submitted online and tax details will be required (TRN, etc.). An amount of JMD\$9000 fortnightly will be transferred to the affected staff fortnightly from April - June 2020.

Question: What about the homeless, the underprivileged or those in infirmaries?

Answer: JD \$150 million was set aside for the Ministry of Local Government to help ensure that homeless persons, underprivileged and those in infirmaries have food, medicine, and necessities.

Question: What about farmers?

Answer: JD\$200 million was set aside for the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Agriculture and Fisheries to be disbursed to affected small farmers in several ways (for crop harvesting, etc.)

Question: What help is there for those who may have trouble paying loans or mortgages?

Answer: Persons must be proactive, do not hesitate to speak to your bank or landlord as needed to work something out under the guidelines of the PSOJ. The NHT has cut its rate by 50% for existing loans. The banking sector will likely put several payment deferral programs in places, like extension of credit, waiving of fees and penalties, etc.

The government acknowledges this is not a perfect programme, and it may be adjusted as needed.