



# JAMAICA

## COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION BENCHMARKS FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATURES

### FINAL REPORT



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office



CPA

COMMONWEALTH  
PARLIAMENTARY  
ASSOCIATION

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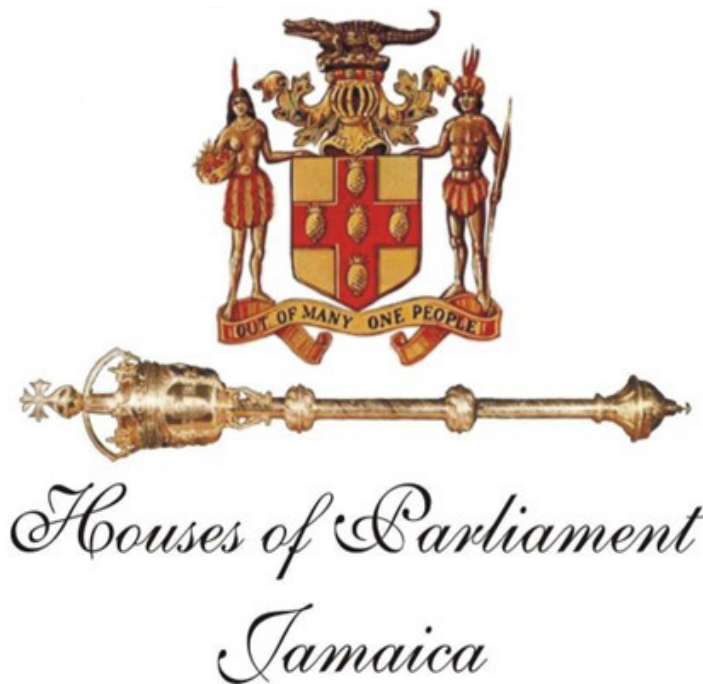
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# CPA BENCHMARKS SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

## JAMAICA BRANCH

*“Participating in this Self-Assessment represents an unwavering commitment to ensuring that our legislative practices meet the highest standards of good governance.*

*We are proud to engage in this critical exercise, and by adopting key Benchmarks, we pave the way for a stronger and more inclusive parliamentary system. It is an opportunity to further strengthen our democracy and better serve the Jamaican people.”*



Coat of Arms of Jamaica

### Executive Summary

As highlighted by its Presiding Officers, the Parliament of Jamaica has ‘an unwavering commitment to ensuring that our legislative practices meet the highest standards of good governance’. The Presiding Officers also want to ‘further strengthen our democracy and better serve the Jamaican people’. These are noble objectives and closely align with a fundamental belief of the Commonwealth that strong, independent, and effective Legislatures are one of the key political institutions of any functioning, flourishing, and successful democracy. To this end, the Parliament of Jamaica should be praised for how it conducts several of its affairs and Jamaican citizens can be optimistic that their Legislature’s clear commitment to these underlying values of good governance will continue to guide its work in the months and years to come as it takes important steps towards becoming an increasingly effective modern-day Parliament.

The CPA’s **Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures** draw upon the 2012 Commonwealth Charter’s ambition to create free, fair, and democratic societies in every nation of the Commonwealth. The Parliament of Jamaica is undoubtedly committed to these important principles and, positively, meets a number of CPA standards across many different workstreams. Senior political leadership in the Legislature should be commended for achieving these standards and warm praise given to the wide-ranging efforts of staff, who ably support many of its core parliamentary services with a blend of skill, diligence, and pride.

Historically, Jamaica has, at times, experienced particularly partisan politics between the country’s two main parties. With this in mind, positive democratic progress made by the Parliament in recent years should rightly be praised. The Legislature’s efforts to

continually improve its ways of working for the benefit of all Jamaicans are admirable and demonstrably effective in a number of areas. To this end, many examples of current positive parliamentary practice highlighted throughout this Report should be a notable source of achievement.

For example, recent national votes in Jamaica have been internationally recognised as both free and fair, there is a direct link between Members of Parliament and their constituents, and many stakeholders within the country's political ecosystem are actively contributing to its already robust democratic structures. The Parliament itself shows positive performance in a range of areas including adherence to the Constitution, facilitation of plenary business, provision of core parliamentary services to Members, and commitment to learning and development. Additionally, the Presiding Officers and dedicated parliamentary staff are deeply committed to ensuring that the Parliament of Jamaica continues to evolve in line with international best practices. Several of these achievements are highlighted throughout this Report.

That said, there are a number of areas in which the Parliament of Jamaica does not currently meet the CPA's **Recommended Benchmarks**. These cover a wide range of the Parliament's core legislative, oversight, and representative functions which, when taken together, currently limit the efficacy of its activities across multiple different workstreams. Several of these current shortcomings are listed below and, in order to continue making positive democratic progress, a strong commitment at both the political and official level will be required to ensure that Parliament reaches these important targets in the future:

- increasing the regularity of parliamentary sittings and ensuring that the Legislature has its own official calendar of meetings which is published online;
- updating national electoral law and strengthening the current Electoral Commission with improved oversight powers of more robust campaign finance law;
- extending parliamentary privilege provisions to ensure organisations and individual citizens supporting the Legislature's work enjoy due protections;
- drafting a Code of Conduct for all Members of Parliament;
- creating an independent Remuneration Authority alongside clear means for Members to disclose pecuniary interests and how parliamentary funds are spent;
- better balancing its legislative agenda to ensure that issues raised by non-Government Members and Private Members' Bills are given due consideration in the House;
- modifying the set-up of parliamentary Committees so that these important vehicles of legislative scrutiny are more fit for purpose;
- introducing important means of secondary, pre-legislative and post-legislative scrutiny;
- establishing more effective provisions for the submitting of public petitions;
- uplifting, where possible, infrastructure and ICT provisions on the parliamentary precinct;
- expanding current professional development opportunities for Members and staff;
- broadening avenues for public engagement with relevant Civil Society stakeholders and Media personnel; and
- in the fullness of time, establishing a Parliamentary Service Commission (or equivalent corporate body) to give the Legislature more operational autonomy and financial independence from the Executive wing of Government with the ambition of achieving longer-term progress against several of these important targets.

The burden of responsibility for improvement in a number of these areas does not, however, rest entirely with Parliament. The Executive Government in Jamaica should also take this opportunity to, among others: make positive strides towards establishing a new parliamentary precinct for the Legislature; consider reforms around potentially transferring oversight responsibilities from the Executive-controlled Jamaican Public Service to a further strengthened Electoral Commission and independent Remuneration Authority; and, crucially, no longer classify the Legislature as a department of Government and support any future efforts to establish a Parliamentary Service Commission while, in the meantime, providing the Parliament with greater fiscal independence and operational autonomy to run its own affairs.

Overall, the Parliament of Jamaica should be praised for building a Legislature that meets many of the CPA's Recommended Benchmarks and, positively, appears to be improving its performance on a continuous basis. While a number of areas for reform are identified in this Report, we hope that its Recommendations will act as a valuable resource to the Legislature moving forward. Utilising its content as an impartial guide will hopefully help build a stronger Parliament, develop better Government, and ultimately deliver more for the people of Jamaica in the months and years ahead.

## Background

The **Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**<sup>1</sup> is an international community of 180 Parliaments and Legislatures working together to deepen the Commonwealth's commitment to the highest standards of democratic governance. Founded in 1911, the CPA brings together Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff to identify benchmarks of good governance and implement the enduring values of the Commonwealth. It offers vast opportunity for both Parliamentarians and officials to collaborate on issues of mutual interest and to share best practice across many fields.

1 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/>.



In 2018, the CPA undertook a consultation and review process that resulted in the adoption of updated **Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures**<sup>2</sup>. The Benchmarks provide a minimum standard and guide on how a Parliament should be constituted and how it should function. They play an important role in developing the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions across the 180 Parliaments and Legislatures of the CPA and contribute to effective implementation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup>.

In January 2025, the **Parliament of Jamaica** became the 36th Commonwealth Legislature to use this framework to conduct a Self-Assessment against the Benchmarks. The Self-Assessment exercise was approved by the President of the Senate, **Hon. Thomas Tavares-Finson**, Speaker of the House of Representatives, **Hon. Juliet Holness**, and organised by parliamentary staff. CPA International Secretariat Headquarters appointed **Fraser McIntosh** (Good Governance Project Manager, CPA Headquarters) and **Brian Caesar** (Clerk of the House, Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago) to undertake this Self-Assessment from 13-17 January. The Self-Assessment took place as part of the CPA's Good Governance Project – an initiative part-funded by the **UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office**.

During their time in Kingston, Fraser and Brian met President Tavares-Finson, Speaker Holness, and other Members of Parliament from both Government and Opposition benches. They also held discussions with **Ms. Colleen Lowe** (Clerk to the Houses of Parliament, Parliament of Jamaica) and various parliamentary staff alongside additional meetings with a wide range of external stakeholders including representatives of the Government of Jamaica, the Jamaican Electoral Office, Attorney-General's Office, and Auditor-General's Office, as well as representatives of local Media outlets.

These meetings took place in conjunction with a review of certain key documents including: the *Constitution of Jamaica*<sup>4</sup> and the *Parliament of Jamaica Standing Orders*<sup>5</sup>, as well as other related parliamentary materials.

The Report below is a summary of the main findings of the Self-Assessment.

## Acknowledgements

The Parliament of Jamaica proactively chose to assess itself against the CPA Benchmarks. As such, Hon. President Tavares-Finson, Hon. Speaker Holness, the Clerk, and other parliamentary staff should be praised for both their willingness and enthusiasm to undertake this important piece of work. Their doing so demonstrated a positive approach to the CPA Self-Assessment, which was consistent throughout Fraser and Brian's time in Kingston. This commitment to continued learning and improvement is admirable.

The CPA would also like to place on record its warmest appreciation to all stakeholders who participated in this Self-Assessment and draw particular attention to the efforts of both the Clerk and **Ms. Tashana Sewell** (Director, Corporate Communications and Public Relations, Parliament of Jamaica) for helping coordinate a successful programme of meetings, facilitating important logistical arrangements, and extending such warm hospitality for the duration of Fraser and Brian's visit to Kingston. Other officials with whom the CPA delegation met are all a credit to the Parliament and its continued efforts to improve parliamentary democracy for the people of Jamaica.

## Support and Follow-Up

Following the publication and consideration of the findings of this Report, and within financial constraints, the CPA is committed to supporting the Parliament of Jamaica in further strengthening its democratic processes. As such, the CPA stands ready to enable the Parliament to take forward these Recommendations – where requested and appropriate – through its **Technical Assistance Programme**<sup>6</sup> scheme and wider efforts linked to institutional parliamentary strengthening.

## Political, Economic, and Social Context

Jamaica is an island country in the Caribbean Sea and the West Indies. With an area of approximately 11,000 square kilometres, it is the third-largest island of the Greater Antilles after Cuba and Hispaniola (the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Jamaica lies approximately 150 kilometres south of Cuba, 200 kilometres west of Hispaniola, and 215 kilometres south-east of the Cayman Islands (a British Overseas Territory)<sup>7</sup>.

2 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpaq.org/media/10ijk2nh/recommended-benchmarks-for-democratic-legislatures-updated-2018-final-online-version-single.pdf>.

3 In particular: Goal 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels); and Goal 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels).

4 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

5 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

6 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *How is the CPA supporting Commonwealth Parliaments?* [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpaq.org/what-we-do/institutional-parliamentary-strengthening/>

7 Encyclopaedia Britannica – *Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.britannica.com/place/Jamaica](http://www.britannica.com/place/Jamaica).

At the country's last formal census (conducted in 2011<sup>8</sup>), Jamaica's population was recorded as 2.6 million. According to recent official estimates, the population has since grown to approximately 2.8 million (as of January 2025<sup>9</sup>). The majority of Jamaica's population are of African descent (76%) with Afro-European (16%), Afro-Indian/Afro-East Indian (4%), White (3%), and Chinese (1%) groups accounting for the rest of the population. Kingston, the country's capital and largest city, is located on Jamaica's southern coast. It faces a natural harbour protected by the *Palisadoes* – a long sand spit which connects the historic town of Port Royal and Norman Manley International Airport to the rest of the island.

Jamaica is classified as a bilingual country, with two major languages in use by the population. The official language is English, which is used in many domains of public life (including the Government, legal system, media, and education), however many Jamaicans also speak an English-based creole called *Jamaican Patois*. Religion is central to the lives of most Jamaicans with many citizens following various denominations of Christian faith. *Rastafarianism* – which has been an important religious and cultural movement in Jamaica since the 1930s – only represents a small proportion of the modern-day population but continues to hold widespread international recognition.

Jamaica is a mixed economy comprised of both state enterprises and private sector businesses. Major sectors of the Jamaican economy include agriculture, mining, manufacturing, petroleum refining, financial services, and tourism. Since gaining independence in 1962, the country's economy has developed markedly but unevenly. According to the World Bank<sup>10</sup>, Jamaica is a middle-income country that, like several of its Caribbean neighbours, is particularly vulnerable to external shocks (such as flooding and hurricanes) linked to climate change. In terms of trade, the United States is by far Jamaica's biggest economic partner with respect to imports and exports<sup>11</sup>.

Much of Jamaica's history can be placed in the context of foreign rule. Firstly, by the Spanish (1494 to 1655) and then under the British (1655-circa 1900). From the 1920s, the growing professional classes and people of mixed African and European ancestry agitated for more representative government. The *Universal Negro Improvement Association*<sup>12</sup> advocated black nationalism and Pan-Africanism among Jamaican natives and the island's large African diaspora. Growing dissatisfaction with the Crown colony system continued throughout the 1930s, was sharpened by economic hardship of the Great Depression, and led to widespread rioting across Jamaica in 1938. In response to these events, a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the political, economic, and social conditions affecting Jamaica which, in turn, led to the adoption of a new Constitution in 1944 establishing universal franchise for all Jamaicans regardless of race or class.

By the 1950s, there was a growing push for political independence in Jamaica and across wider British Caribbean territories. In 1958, this resulted in ten British West Indian colonies establishing the inaugural *West Indian Federation*<sup>13</sup> – an internal self-governing federal community with the goal of achieving complete independence for its member states. Jamaica's membership of the *West Indian Federation* was short-lived, and, in 1961, a popular referendum led to it withdrawing from the organisation in pursuit of full political independence. From 1961-1962 a Joint Committee of the (then) House of Representatives and the (then) Legislative Council drafted a new Jamaican Constitution. This was approved by the United Kingdom, formed the Jamaica (Constitution) Order 1962, became part of the West Indies Act 1962, and, ultimately, entered into force with the Jamaica Independence Act 1962<sup>14</sup>, which granted Jamaica full political independence on 6 August 1962.

The contemporary politics of Jamaica takes place under the framework of a Constitutional Monarchy with key elements of Westminster-based parliamentary democracy. As King of Jamaica, Charles III is Head of State and represented locally by a Governor-General who is nominated by the Prime Minister of Jamaica (with support from his or her Cabinet) and then formally appointed by the Monarch. The Monarch and the Governor-General serve largely ceremonial roles in Jamaica, apart from their reserve powers for use in certain constitutional crisis situations.

The Head of Government in Jamaica is the Prime Minister (currently **Hon. Andrew Holness MP**), who is drawn from and nominated by Members of the leading political party in the Lower House of Parliament before being appointed to office by the Governor-General. All Members of the Cabinet (which comprises the PM and at least 11 other Ministers) are also appointed by the Governor-General upon the advice of the Prime Minister. Each Ministry is headed by a designated Cabinet Member who is assisted by a Permanent Secretary and team of civil servants.

The Parliament of Jamaica<sup>15</sup> is bicameral, consisting of the House of Representatives (Lower House) and the Senate (Upper House). The House has 63 Members, all of whom are directly elected, with its Speaker and Deputy Speaker being chosen from

8 Statistical Institute of Jamaica – *Census 2011*. [online]. Available at: [www.statinja.gov.jm/census/popcensus/popcensus2011index.aspx](http://www.statinja.gov.jm/census/popcensus/popcensus2011index.aspx).

9 Worldometers Info – *Jamaica | Population*. [online]. Available at: [www.worldometers.info/world-population/jamaica-population/](http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/jamaica-population/).

10 World Bank – *Country Profile: Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.worldbank.org/en/country/jamaica](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/jamaica).

11 United Nations Trade and Development – *Data Hub | Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/388/index.html](http://www.unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/388/index.html).

12 Encyclopaedia Britannica – *Universal Negro Improvement Association*. [online]. Available at: [www.britannica.com/topic/Universal-Negro-Improvement-Association](http://www.britannica.com/topic/Universal-Negro-Improvement-Association).

13 CARICOM: Caribbean Community – *West Indian Federation*. [online]. Available at: [www.caricom.org/the-west-indies-federation/](http://www.caricom.org/the-west-indies-federation/).

14 United Kingdom Government – *Jamaica Independence Act 1962*. [online]. Available at: [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1962/40/pdfs/ukpga\\_19620040\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1962/40/pdfs/ukpga_19620040_en.pdf).

15 Jamaica Houses of Parliament – *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm).

within and by Members of the Lower House. The Senate has 21 Members, all of whom are appointed by the Governor-General: 13 in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister and eight upon the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. Senators are appointed for the duration of a single parliamentary term and elect their own President and Deputy President of the Upper House. In line with the Constitution, General Elections in Jamaica must be held at least once every five years, however the Prime Minister and his or her governing party may choose to hold early elections at any point during a five-year parliamentary term. Jamaica has traditionally had a two-party system with power often alternating between the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) and the People's National Party (PNP). Following its victory at the 2020 General Election, the JLP currently holds Executive power in Jamaica and enjoys a significant majority of Members in Parliament.

Jamaica's Judiciary is based on English common law and Commonwealth of Nations precedents. The highest court in the Jamaican legal system is the Court of Appeals which hears appeals from the Supreme Court (Jamaica's highest trial court) and a range of other domestic magistrate courts.

Alongside these national structures, Jamaica is divided into 14 parishes, two of which are amalgamated as the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation corresponding to the Kingston metropolitan area. Parish councils, whose members are directly elected in local elections, administer a wide range of local issues across Jamaica's three traditional counties – Cornwall, Middlesex, and Surrey.



# I. GENERAL

## OVERVIEW

### Elections

Since gaining independence from Great Britain in 1962, Jamaica has ably managed to blend its traditional political system with wider Westminster-style institutional structures commonplace throughout the Commonwealth. Over the last 62 years, Jamaica has invariably enjoyed relatively smooth transitions of power from one Government to another following General Elections held every five years. Provisions for the holding of national polls are clearly outlined in the Constitution (Chapter V, Part 1<sup>6</sup>) and the separate *Representation of the People Act*<sup>17</sup>, which was initially drafted pre-independence and was last updated in 2016. In a positive demonstration of sound parliamentary practice, previous elections in Jamaica have historically been supported and recognised as both free and fair by international electoral observations missions, including from the *Caribbean Community (CARICOM)*, *European Union (EU)*, and *Organisation of American States (OAS)*. The latest General Election (September 2020) was held during the Covid-19 Pandemic and, as a result, not subjected to traditional external international observation, however, was subsequently reported positively on by the *Commonwealth Secretariat's Election Observation Group (COG)*<sup>18</sup>. While summary reports produced by these groups have been largely positive about how the General Elections in Jamaica are conducted, they have highlighted the importance of continuing to invest in civic education programmes and further improving the skills and knowledge of Jamaican electoral officials to ensure that current good practices and consistency in managing election activities are maintained.

General Elections in Jamaica are overseen by the *Electoral Commission of Jamaica (ECJ)*<sup>19</sup>. The ECJ, provided for by the *Electoral Commission (Interim) Act*<sup>20</sup> of 2006, is a Commission of Parliament with its operations governed by this Act until such a time as the Constitution of Jamaica is updated to include provisions for the establishment of a fully independent Electoral Commission. In addition to conducting General Elections, by-elections and referenda, the ECJ is responsible for compiling and maintaining the national register of eligible electors; approving political parties eligible to receive state funding; administering related electoral funding and financial disclosure requirements; conducting public outreach/civic education programmes; and periodically reporting to the Parliament's *Standing Committee on Boundaries* when potential amendment to Jamaica's constituency boundaries is being considered. The Commission comprises four selected members (jointly agreed by the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition), four nominated members (two each from the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition), and a Director of Elections (unanimously chosen by the eight other members and appointed by the Governor-General), who oversees operational day-to-day activities of the Commission via the *Electoral Office of Jamaica*. The Director of Elections and the four Selected Commissions are disqualified by law to vote in any General Election, local government election, or national referenda. The CPA team met with representatives of the ECJ while in Kingston and those conversations noted that the organisation enjoys both healthy political/financial independence and positive ties with fellow electoral commissions in other Caribbean countries.

The most recent General Election in Jamaica took place in September 2020<sup>21</sup>. A total of 139 candidates contested 63 parliamentary seats with turnout registered at 37% (down from 48% in the 2016 General Election). Positively, the Constitution (Chapter V, Part 1<sup>22</sup>) has open eligibility criteria in place for those candidates seeking election to Parliament which do not discriminate along religion, gender, ethnicity, race, or disability lines. Results from the General Election saw the incumbent *Jamaica Labour Party* win 57% of the vote and 49 seats in Parliament, with the opposition *People's National Party* winning 43% of the vote and 14 seats in the Legislature. **Hon. Andrew Holness MP** retained his position as Jamaica's Prime Minister and remains in office today. As per the Constitution, Jamaica's next General Election must take place no later than 3 September 2025.

While the conducting of General Elections in Jamaica is undoubtedly positive in several ways, discussions held by the CPA team with representatives of the ECJ did raise three important areas in which improvements could be made against the CPA's Recommended Benchmarks<sup>23</sup>:

1. At present, the electoral framework in Jamaica does not currently contain any provisions that allow for the 'power of recall' whereby those constituents who are dissatisfied with the performance of their elected representative can seek to have them

16 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

17 Jamaican Ministry of Justice – Representation of the People Act 1944 (Updated 2016). [online]. Available at: [www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-representation-of-the-people-act](http://www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-representation-of-the-people-act).

18 Commonwealth Secretariat Election Observation Group – Covid-19 and Election Management in the Caribbean. [online]. Available at: [www.thecommonwealth-ilibrary.org/index.php/comsec/catalog/download/976/973/8297?inline=1](http://www.thecommonwealth-ilibrary.org/index.php/comsec/catalog/download/976/973/8297?inline=1).

19 Electoral Commission of Jamaica – Homepage. [online]. Available at: [www.ecj.com.jm](http://www.ecj.com.jm).

20 Jamaican Ministry of Justice – Electoral Commission (Interim) Act 2006. [online]. Available at: [www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-electoral-commission-interim-act](http://www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-electoral-commission-interim-act).

21 Electoral Commission of Jamaica – 2020 General Election Results. [online]. Available at: [www.ecj.com.jm/election-results/general-election/](http://www.ecj.com.jm/election-results/general-election/).

22 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

23 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – Election Planning Handbook. [online]. Available at: [https://www.cpahq.org/media/vilpux02/election-planning-handbook\\_final.pdf](https://www.cpahq.org/media/vilpux02/election-planning-handbook_final.pdf).



removed from office between General Elections. Some stakeholders who met with the CPA team in Kingston suggested that this absence can sometimes create a culture among certain Members of not spending sufficient time in their constituencies between parliamentary elections and that introducing such provisions (along with the holding of linked by-elections) would help to strengthen accountability between elected representatives and the citizens they serve.

2. Specifically with respect to General Elections, Jamaican citizens are obliged to attend a registered polling station on election day. There are currently no provisions under national electoral law for Jamaican citizens to vote by post or proxy. Introducing such provisions would not only allow those citizens unable to physically attend a polling station (such as those suffering from ill health or living with a disability) to participate in national votes but could also help to reverse a recent trend which has seen voter turnout at General Elections fall.
3. Furthermore, while Jamaica (positively) does have campaign finance laws<sup>24</sup> in statute which regulate the manner and extent to which candidates receive monetary contributions from individuals or corporations ahead of General Elections, some stakeholders who met with the CPA team suggested that these could be improved. Strengthening such provisions alongside clear mechanisms for recording/publishing these contributions would discourage potential financial misconduct and create a more level playing field during electoral campaigns, as well as demonstrating greater transparency for the benefit of the Jamaican electorate at large.

## RECOMMENDATION 1

**Recommendation 1: The Parliament of Jamaica should update current national electoral law to include 'power of recall' provisions and provide citizens with postal/proxy voting means, whilst ensuring that the Electoral Commission of Jamaica has sufficient powers to accurately monitor and regulate campaign finance laws relating to candidates running for Parliament.**

*(Benchmark 1.1.4 – There shall be legislation to ensure campaign finance laws are in place to regulate the manner and extent to which political parties and candidates may receive monetary contributions from individuals and corporations / Benchmark 1.2.2 – Measures to encourage the representative political participation of marginalised groups shall be drawn to accomplish precisely defined objectives).*

Upon taking their seats in Parliament, the Constitution (Chapter V, Part 2<sup>25</sup>) and the Standing Orders of both Houses (Section 1<sup>26</sup>) stipulate that Members must take an Oath of Allegiance or, alternatively, make a Solemn Affirmation. This is administered by the Clerk to Parliament and is mandatory for all candidates successful in parliamentary elections before they can begin their legislative duties. During their time in Kingston, the CPA team was not made aware of any newly elected Members ever having refused to take this Oath.



24 Electoral Commission of Jamaica – *Election Campaign Financing: Legislation and Regulations*. [online]. Available at: [www.ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Election-Campaign-Financing-Legislation-Regulations-Revised-July-2017.pdf](http://www.ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Election-Campaign-Financing-Legislation-Regulations-Revised-July-2017.pdf).

25 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

26 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

## Separation of Powers

The national Constitution of Jamaica was adopted, upon independence, in 1962. It provides a framework defining the country's fundamental political principles, establishes structures, powers, procedures, and duties of the various Branches of Government, and outlines important rights and responsibilities of all Jamaican citizens. The Constitution (Chapters V-VII<sup>27</sup>) separates political powers between the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary, with provisions for their respective roles and remits clearly outlined<sup>28</sup>. As the supreme law of Jamaica, all parliamentary legislation must align with and not contravene the Constitution.

At present, Jamaica enjoys a relatively clear separation of powers between its three Branches of Government. By way of example, in a positive demonstration of parliamentary practice, no candidate successfully appointed or elected to either the Senate or House of Representatives may simultaneously serve in the Judiciary, hold an Executive civil service position, or be party to an organisation which is in contract with Jamaica's Government or wider Public Service (unless a legitimate declaration is made to the Governor-General or published in the official *Gazette*<sup>29</sup> one month ahead of a General Election being held). Furthermore, any employees of the Jamaican Public Service who become a candidate for election to the Legislature shall be granted a leave of absence for the purposes of their candidacy while, conversely, any sitting Member who takes up employment within the Public Service must resign their seat in Parliament, at which point a by-election is called to elect an eligible replacement.

That said, Jamaica's constitutional framework arguably favours the Executive in several respects. Stakeholders in Kingston suggested that constitutional amendments and updates to the Standing Orders could strengthen Parliament's independence and autonomy.

## Privileges and Immunity

When in office, Members of Jamaica's Parliament are afforded due privilege and immunity from liability for anything they say or do in the Legislature. The *Senate and House of Representatives (Powers and Privileges) Act* outlines these protections in greater detail and, positively, is publicly available. Unless ordered otherwise by the Presiding Officers of Parliament, Members are immune from any inquiry, arrest, detention, or prosecution relating to their legislative duties, whether in the Chamber or as part of Committee work. While the CPA team was informed that informal practice is for former Members to be granted immunity relating to any parliamentary activity undertaken during their time as a Member, there does not appear to be any formal codification for such occurrences in statute. Accordingly, Jamaica's Parliament should, therefore, look to update its relevant provisions to clearly enshrine this in law.

Positively, the immunity privileges afforded to sitting Members of Parliament are extended to individual citizens, representatives of Civil Society organisations, and Media outlets who contribute to or report on parliamentary proceedings. Accordingly, Jamaica's statute book includes both a *Witness (Public Enquiries) Protection Act*<sup>30</sup> and a *Protected Disclosures Act*<sup>31</sup> both of which enshrine in law welcome protection to these stakeholders in their interaction with the Legislature. One area, however, in which the Parliament could look to introduce another positive means of protecting external stakeholders who engage with its activities would be to provide citizens that feel their reputation has been damaged or brought into disrepute during parliamentary proceedings with formal means to a right of reply. Introducing such provisions would add invaluable extra protections for those citizens supporting the Legislature's work and bring the Parliament of Jamaica more in line with best practice demonstrated by other democratic Legislatures around the Commonwealth.

### RECOMMENDATION 2

**The Parliament of Jamaica should update its parliamentary privilege/immunity provisions to enshrine in law due protections for former Members, while also introducing a citizen's 'right of reply' scheme in relation to adverse references made to individuals during legislative proceedings.**

(Benchmark 1.4.4 – *The Legislature shall have mechanisms for persons to respond to adverse references made to them in the course of the Legislature's proceedings* / Benchmark 1.4.5 – *The freedom of speech immunity shall continue to apply to former legislators after they have left office in respect of works spoken or acts done while holding office and participating in or directly facilitating the Legislature's proceedings*).

27 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

28 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Latimer House Principles on the Three Branches of Government*. [online]. Available at: [https://www.cpahq.org/media/kaf14zuf/commonwealth\\_principles\\_cpa\\_sept\\_2023-v2\\_single.pdf](https://www.cpahq.org/media/kaf14zuf/commonwealth_principles_cpa_sept_2023-v2_single.pdf).

29 Jamaica Gazette – *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: [www.jamaicagazette.com](http://www.jamaicagazette.com).

30 Jamaican Ministry of Justice – *Witness (Public Enquiries) Protection Act*. [online]. Available at: [www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-witnesses-public-enquiries-protection-act](http://www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-witnesses-public-enquiries-protection-act).

31 Jamaican Integrity Commission – *Protected Disclosures Act*. [online]. Available at: [www.integrity.gov.jm/sites/default/files/2021-02/The%20Protected%20Disclosures%20Act%202011%20-%20Procedural%20Guidelines%20Gazette.pdf](http://www.integrity.gov.jm/sites/default/files/2021-02/The%20Protected%20Disclosures%20Act%202011%20-%20Procedural%20Guidelines%20Gazette.pdf).

Two linked areas in which the Parliament does fully meet the relevant CPA Benchmarks are both the application of natural justice legal norms and related sub judice provisions. Positively, the Constitution of Jamaica (Chapter III<sup>32</sup>) details the upholding of fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual while the Standing Orders of Parliament (Section 35<sup>33</sup>) protect the integrity and independence of Jamaican courts by prohibiting Members of Parliament from publicly discussing issues that are subject to live judicial review. Members throughout the Legislature appear to respect these rules and the CPA team was not made aware of any issues relating to their application during stakeholder discussions.

## Remuneration and Benefits

The remuneration, benefits, and other statutory entitlements for Members of Parliament are currently overseen by Jamaica's Government, by virtue of the fact that the Legislature is, for all intents and purposes, considered a department of Jamaica's Executive Branch, and not a distinct organisation in its own right, as is the case in other Commonwealth jurisdictions.

All elected Members of Parliament are paid a basic annual salary and receive additional allowances designed to support the facilitation of their parliamentary duties, the levels of which are set by Jamaica's Executive (through the Ministry of Finance). Traditionally, salaries have varied in comparison to other Caribbean legislatures<sup>34</sup>. However, in May 2023, Jamaica's Government significantly increased MPs' salaries for the 2022-2024 period, making them among the best-paid politicians in the region<sup>35</sup>. This was part of a broader public sector compensation review following the Covid-19 pandemic and received some criticism at the time by members of the public who felt that this uplift was unnecessary given the health of the national economy.

Levels of remuneration within Jamaica's Parliament are allocated on a tiered basis depending on the position held by the Member in question and, at the time of writing, are paid as follows:

Position	2021 Salary	2022 Salary	2023 Salary	2024 Salary
Prime Minister	JAM\$ 9,169,617	JAM\$ 22,332,830	JAM\$ 25,267,539	JAM\$ 28,587,893
Deputy Prime Minister	JAM\$ 8,031,788	JAM\$ 20,099,547	JAM\$ 22,740,785	JAM\$ 25,729,103
Leader of the Opposition	JAM\$ 8,031,788	JAM\$ 20,099,547	JAM\$ 22,740,785	JAM\$ 25,729,103
Cabinet Minister	JAM\$ 6,893,956	JAM\$ 17,866,264	JAM\$ 20,214,031	JAM\$ 22,870,314
Presiding Officer	JAM\$ 6,893,956	JAM\$ 17,866,264	JAM\$ 20,214,031	JAM\$ 22,870,314
Minister of State	JAM\$ 6,039,728	JAM\$ 14,293,011	JAM\$ 16,171,225	JAM\$ 18,296,251
Deputy Presiding Officer	JAM\$ 5,185,501	JAM\$ 13,399,698	JAM\$ 15,160,523	JAM\$ 17,152,736
Member of Parliament	JAM\$ 4,331,273	JAM\$ 11,077,084	JAM\$ 12,532,699	JAM\$ 14,179,595

Alongside their base salary, Members of Parliament are also eligible to receive a daily per diem when the Legislature is in session, and further allowances linked to travel between Parliament and their constituencies, and accommodation in Kingston during parliamentary sittings. Whilst in Kingston, the CPA team learned that a substantial proportion of Parliament's annual budget is dedicated to Members, their remuneration/allowances, and other related services, which means that various other important activities in the Legislature do not always receive the funding they need. Accordingly, the Parliament may wish to explore alternative means of setting these more commensurately moving forward so as to ensure that other key elements of the Legislature's operations also receive sufficient levels of investment. The ideal practice demonstrated in other Commonwealth jurisdictions is for payments made to Members of Parliament to be regulated by an independent Remuneration Authority with clear procedures for monitoring and publishing relevant financial disclosures. At present, no such body exists in Jamaica. Its establishment would be a strong demonstration of positive transparency/accountability and bring the Parliament in line with other Commonwealth Legislatures.

32 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

33 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

34 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Members Pay and Remuneration Report*. [online]. Available at: [https://issuu.com/the-parliamentarian/docs/cpa\\_members\\_remuneration\\_report\\_2020\\_2021\\_final/228](https://issuu.com/the-parliamentarian/docs/cpa_members_remuneration_report_2020_2021_final/228).

35 Jamaica Information Service – *Salary Adjustments for Members of Parliament*. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/salary-adjustments-for-mps-ministers/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/salary-adjustments-for-mps-ministers/).

## RECOMMENDATION 3

**The Parliament of Jamaica should pass legislation that establishes an independent Remuneration Authority with adequate mechanisms for monitoring and publishing relevant financial disclosures relating to Members of Parliament.**

*(Benchmark 1.5.2 – An independent body or mechanism should determine the remuneration, benefits, and other statutory entitlements of legislators).*

### Infrastructure

The Parliament of Jamaica has been on its current premises (*Gordon House*<sup>36</sup>) since the country gained political independence. The building – which saw its construction completed in 1960 – held the inaugural meeting of an independent Jamaica's Parliament on 9 April 1963 and has been the Legislature's home ever since. Whilst Gordon House ably hosted Parliament for decades following independence (and in certain aspects still manages to blend traditional Jamaican heritage with some modern facilities befitting of a contemporary Legislature), the passage of time has gradually seen Gordon House become less of a help and more of a hindrance to how Jamaica's Legislature fulfils many of its roles and responsibilities today.

In 2018, the Jamaican Government launched a design competition for a new parliamentary precinct in Kingston's National Heroes Park. After an 18-month tendering process, the winning design by Design Collaborative Limited was approved by Jamaica's Urban Development Corporation and received widespread support from politicians and officials. The project was budgeted at US\$50 million, with construction planned for May 2021 to March 2023. However, due to the economic impact of Covid-19, plans never materialised. During their time in Kingston, the CPA team witnessed first-hand multiple shortcomings with Parliament's current set-up at Gordon House and there was near universal appreciation among all stakeholders for the benefits that Jamaica's Parliament moving to a new home would bring.

That said, at the time of writing, there are some positives. For example, the plenary Chamber is reasonably bright and spacious, as well as being equipped with some welcome modern technology in parts. Every Member has their own designated seating space, there are distinct viewing sections for representatives of the Media, visiting dignitaries and invited guests, and (in a positive demonstration of transparent parliamentary practice) members of the Jamaican public are able to watch live proceedings in person. Gordon House also hosts offices for the Presiding Officers of both Houses, the Leaders of Government and Opposition Business, the Clerk to Parliament, and working space for wider Secretariat staff, alongside separate conference rooms for Government and Opposition Members, a basic parliamentary library/research service, and a particularly impressive modern communal dining facility for Members and staff.

While some of these facilities are broadly positive, the current parliamentary precinct lacks adequate space and resource in several key areas that would best enable the Parliament to fully meet all of its key legislative functions.

For example:

- Unlike other bicameral Commonwealth Legislatures, Gordon House has just one plenary chamber, meaning that only one of the Senate or House of Representatives can meet at any given time. Notwithstanding obvious practical limitations, Parliament's inability to hold concurrent sittings of its two Houses can lead to instances of the Legislature not being able to progress with important oversight and legislative functions as efficiently as would be the case were two plenary chambers in place.
- Linked to this, the Legislature has no specific rooms for parliamentary Committees to meet. At the time of writing this Report, all parliamentary Committees (across both Houses) are limited to holding meetings in the plenary chamber which, when taken in conjunction with the point raised above, significantly limits the ability of parliamentary Committee to meet with sufficient regularity and efficacy to fully exercise their important legislative responsibilities.
- Other than the Presiding Officers and the Leaders of Government/Opposition Business, rank and file Members of both Houses do not have their own offices providing personal working space and up-to-date ICT equipment, such as personal desktop computers, laptops, or tablets. These provisions are commonplace across many other Commonwealth Legislatures and the Jamaican Parliament should look to improve the working environment for its Members in this regard at the earliest opportunity.
- Whilst the current library/research service is reasonably well-stocked with hard copy materials and staffed by a small team of dedicated parliamentary officials, it is short on space and appears to lack valuable internationally recognised digital resource facilities. Uplifting resources in this regard would not only provide a better working environment for Parliament's staff but, crucially, also enable them to deliver a higher level of service to Members seeking assistance with their various legislative responsibilities.

36 The Spanish/Jamaican Foundation – *Gordon House*. [online]. Available at: [www.spanishjamaicanfoundation.org/jamaica-heritage-trail/gordon-house/](http://www.spanishjamaicanfoundation.org/jamaica-heritage-trail/gordon-house/).



- Arrangements for persons with disabilities across the parliamentary precinct are also sparse. Access to the plenary chamber for Members with mobility issues is particularly challenging and external visitors (including journalists and members of the public) in wheelchairs cannot access live plenary activities via designated galleries above the main chamber. Wider legislative premises would also benefit from, among others, disabled-friendly access ramps, lifts, and public restrooms.

During their time in Kingston, the CPA team heard a range of views from stakeholders (both elected and at the official level) on where exactly the Parliament is in terms of its long-awaited move to a new legislative precinct. Regardless of how these events unfold, the Parliament should ensure that issues raised above are addressed in full when infrastructural development plans for the new legislative precinct are finalised and, in the meantime, prioritise more immediate means of improving levels of infrastructure on current premises which better enable Members and staff to excel at meeting their various legislative responsibilities.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

**The Parliament of Jamaica should accelerate its plans to construct a new precinct befitting its status as an effective modern-day Legislature and, where possible, in the meantime seek to improve current physical infrastructure, with a focus on providing Committees with bespoke meeting spaces and Members with individual office, updating ICT provisions, expanding library/research service facilities, and enhancing accessibility provisions for persons with disabilities across the parliamentary precinct.**

(Benchmark 1.9.1 – The Legislature shall have adequate physical infrastructure to enable Members and staff to fulfil their responsibilities).



Chamber of the House of Representatives and the Senate in Gordon House

## Professional Development

The Secretariat of the Parliament conducts an induction programme for all Members (returning and first time) at the beginning of each new session of Parliament following a General Election whereby key information concerning the Constitution, Standing Orders, and parliamentary duties, services and entitlements are shared with Members to help facilitate their understanding of how the Legislature functions. Positively, Jamaica's Parliament has previously produced an excellent *Handbook for Parliamentarians*<sup>37</sup>, which has proven a useful resource in supplementing the in-person induction programme. In general, these orientation sessions appear valuable and well received, however Members who met with the CPA team voiced a desire for such training opportunities to be made more comprehensive and conducted on a rolling basis throughout the life cycle of a Parliament. From speaking to senior officials within the parliamentary administration, there is an ambition to enhance the levels of training currently provided to Members. Doing so would bring the key benefits of continually developing Member's knowledge and ensuring that the Parliament of Jamaica remains in line with evolving best parliamentary practices across the Commonwealth.

37 Parliament of Jamaica – *Handbook for Parliamentarians*. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/702\\_Handbook%20for%20Parliamentarians.pdf.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/702_Handbook%20for%20Parliamentarians.pdf.pdf).

Officials within Jamaica's Parliament do receive some training as part of their own professional development, however stakeholder discussions noted that these are currently few and far between. To this end, increased learning opportunities should be afforded to parliamentary staff. Speaking to many different officials within the Secretariat of Parliament, it was repeatedly flagged to the CPA team that there is a real appetite among them to gain deeper knowledge, build further capacity, and develop new skills in a range of areas relating to model parliamentary practice. In order to increase sustainability and prepare for future succession planning within the parliamentary administration, it is advised that the Parliament focusses resources on adequately training all staff (regardless of seniority) throughout the parliamentary term.

Another way in which the Legislature could improve its professional development opportunities would be to provide relevant external stakeholders with more formal platforms to meet with Members and staff throughout the life cycle of a Parliament. During conversations about the role of Civil Society and with representatives of local Media groups, a desire was voiced to be afforded greater opportunities for presenting to Members and officials information about their respective organisations and how they interact with Parliament. It was felt that this would improve understanding between parliamentary stakeholders and these groups. Doing so would not only ensure that the Parliament meets relevant CPA Benchmarks in this regard but also be a positive demonstration of the Legislature's commitment to improving how it interacts with external stakeholders and hopefully passing better long-term legislation as a result.

More broadly, several stakeholders also voiced a desire for the Self-Assessment exercise to be used as an opportunity for the Parliament to engage further with the CPA moving forward. With this in mind, the suggestion of future enrolment in CPA Technical Assistance Programmes<sup>38</sup> (referenced earlier in this Report), the hosting of a CPA Post-Election Seminar<sup>39</sup> following Jamaica's next General Election later this year, and involvement in tailored study visits/exchange programmes were all welcomed. Given the challenges of cost and travel faced by all Legislatures, the Parliament of Jamaica should also make use of free online courses available to all Members and staff through the CPA's Parliamentary Academy<sup>40</sup>.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

**The Parliament of Jamaica should expand its Professional Development Programmes to include the participation of key external stakeholders, hold these periodically between General Elections, and ensure that such opportunities are open to all Members of Parliament and Secretariat staff.**

*(Benchmark 1.6.1 – The Legislature shall take measures to ensure that newly elected Members are assisted in understanding how the Legislature works and its rules of procedure / Benchmark 1.6.2 – The Legislature shall take measures to assist legislators increase their knowledge and skills in the performance of their parliamentary duties).*

38 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *How is the CPA supporting Commonwealth Parliaments?* [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/what-we-do/institutional-parliamentary-strengthening/>.

39 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Professional Development*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/what-we-do/professional-development/>.

40 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *The CPA Parliamentary Academy*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/parliamentary-academy/>.

## II. ORGANISATION OF THE LEGISLATURE

### PROCEDURES AND SESSIONS

#### Rules of Procedure

The Parliament of Jamaica operates pursuant to provisions outlined in the Constitution (Chapter V<sup>41</sup>) and its own internal Standing Orders<sup>42</sup>. Positively, for the most part, this framework reflects the Legislature's operations, albeit the broader culture of Parliament is also shaped by a range of customary practices (separate to the Standing Orders) which have built up and been applied over time.

Parliament's Standing Orders were adopted for the first time in 1964 (during the inaugural session of Jamaica's first post-independence Parliament) and have undergone several minor amendments at various intervals in the decades since. Any Member of Parliament can move a motion recommending an amendment be made to the Standing Orders and, so long as the motion is seconded and sufficient justification is provided, that motion is then considered by the Standing Order Committee of the relevant House before it reports back to all Members of that House. A simple majority of Members in each House is required to approve amendments to its Standing Orders, a recent example of which was the incorporation of virtual participation by Members in parliamentary proceedings in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

More extensive reviews of the Legislature's Standing Orders have historically been less common albeit, during their time in Kingston, the CPA team learned that the Senate's Standing Order Committee had recently completed a root and branch review of its Standing Orders (the first of its kind) with its equivalent Committee in the House of Representatives embarking upon a similar exercise to ensure that they remain fit for purpose moving forward. Best practice demonstrated in other Commonwealth jurisdictions is for the Standing Orders of their Legislature to be routinely reviewed at the beginning of each new session of Parliament, something that, with the Parliament of Jamaica having recently initiated this positive practice ahead of 2025's General Election, it may wish to maintain following subsequent General Elections in future years.

Parliament's Standing Orders are applied to manage the business of both Houses and their respective Committees and, as such, form the key operational documents for the Legislature's functionality. Stakeholder discussions revealed varying levels of appreciation for the Standing Orders among Members, with a correlation between understanding and length of service often commonplace. As such, the Parliament could benefit from producing a companion guide to the Standing Orders, which would be useful as an explanatory tool setting out the rationale for the Standing Orders and any references made to the Constitution. It would also serve an informative and educational purpose for all Members but particularly those newly elected to Parliament.

The Standing Orders themselves are distributed to all Members at the first sitting of a new Parliament after a General Election and further hard copies are held centrally by the Legislature's Secretariat. Positively, digital copies of the Standing Orders are also published on Parliament's website for wider stakeholders and members of the public to view.

#### Presiding Officers

Both the Constitution (Chapter V<sup>43</sup>) and the Standing Orders (Section 2<sup>44</sup>) of each House provide for the Presiding Officer of the Senate and of the House of Representatives. Candidates for the positions of Presiding Officer are sought from within the Parliament's membership with any sitting Member eligible to be nominated by at least one of their peers. At the first meeting of Parliament following a General Election, nominations for the positions of Presiding Officer are sought. Should only one candidate be nominated and approved by a simple majority of Members, they assume the position of Presiding Officer. Should more than one candidate be proposed, their respective nominations and merits are considered by the whole House in the order in which their candidacy was proposed until such a time as a prospective candidate receives simple majority support from the Members of the House in question. Both the Constitution and Standing Orders also provide for the election of a Deputy President in the Senate and a Deputy Speaker in the House of Representatives who support their respective Presiding Officers and stand in for them in the event that the Presiding Officer is unable to oversee legislative activities in their House on a particular day. The election of Deputy Presiding Officers follows the same format as that used for the election of Presiding Officers in both Houses of Parliament.

The role of the Presiding Officer is to maintain order in Parliament so that all Members have full opportunity to participate in the debates and votes of the Legislature. To this end, both the President and Speaker are well supported in advice on practice,

41 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

42 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

43 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

44 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

precedent and procedure by the Clerk and other senior parliamentary Secretariat staff. During various stakeholder discussions, Members and officials from across both Houses spoke positively about the incumbent Presiding Officers and the way in which they conduct the important role of facilitating Legislature business. Both President Tavares-Finson and Speaker Holness should be praised for their efforts to ensure that these important elements of parliamentary practice are well maintained.

When it comes to ensuring model parliamentary conduct on the Floor of the House, this responsibility does not rest entirely with the Presiding Officers. Accordingly, individual Members should also take it upon themselves to demonstrate correct etiquette when participating in legislative activities. To this end, the CPA team's visit to Kingston coincided with a sitting week of Parliament and, as such, they witnessed first-hand a sitting of the House of Representatives. During this session, some Members present arguably did not demonstrate the model behavioural etiquette requested of them by the Speaker during a Plenary session. While stakeholder discussions didn't suggest that such examples are commonplace in Jamaica's Parliament, the CPA team emphasised to Members the importance of showing due respect to the Presiding Officer's authority and setting a positive example to wider Jamaican stakeholders who follow parliamentary proceedings.

## Convening Sessions and Setting the Agenda

As per the Constitution (Chapter V<sup>45</sup>), the Parliament of Jamaica is required to meet at least twice every year so that a period of six months shall not intervene between the last sitting of Parliament in one session and the first sitting of Parliament in the next. In line with the Standing Orders of both Houses (Section 8<sup>46</sup>), however, the Legislature meets more regularly. The scheduling of these meetings is formalised by the Leader of Government Business in the Senate and House of Representatives and adhered to without any major issues. During a typical sitting week of Parliament, the House of Representatives meets on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays (2:00PM-7:30PM) and the Senate on Fridays (10:00AM-4:30PM). Separately to this, the Legislature also has means to call itself into extraordinary session (via the Presiding Officers of both Houses) should they feel that an additional sitting is required or in the wider public interest. While having provisions to call itself into extraordinary session is positive, best practice in other Commonwealth jurisdictions is for rank-and-file Members of the Legislature to be able to do so should there be the popular will. Introducing mechanisms for backbench Members to suggest amendments to the Legislature's sitting days is something that the Parliament may wish to consider moving forward.

While the Parliament of Jamaica comfortably meets Constitutional requirements regarding the regularity of sittings, the CPA team identified two important areas in which improvements could be made:

1. At the time of writing, the Legislature does not have its own parliamentary calendar with agreed sitting dates outlined for each session of Parliament convened during a 12-month period. Current practice is for the Leader of Government Business in the Senate and in the House of Representatives to notify Members each Friday whether or not their respective Houses will be convened the following week. Several discussions flagged this as a major shortcoming in terms of how the Legislature currently structures its affairs with a number of stakeholders noting that this not only places too much influence in the hands of the Executive to dictate Parliament's timetable, but can also create legislative backlogs (should the Legislature not sit with sufficient regularity) and present challenges to Members when it comes to balancing legislative work in Kingston alongside more local responsibilities in their constituencies. Establishing a formal parliamentary calendar and ensuring this is made publicly available would not only help improve the Legislature's functionality but also ensure that citizens across Jamaica can more easily follow parliamentary business. Furthermore, a detailed public agenda like this would encourage transparency in the Legislature's work, ensure that Members carry out their duties in a more effective manner, increase public confidence, and improve the Jamaican electorate's outlook of their national Legislature.
2. Linked to this, the CPA team concluded that there is also scope for the Parliament to sit more often than it currently does. This is particularly important given the infrastructural shortcomings of Gordon House (outlined earlier in this Report) that render the concurrent facilitation of multiple different parliamentary activities impractical. Until such a time as the parliamentary precinct is able to facilitate several parliamentary activities simultaneously, sitting more regularly would at least provide the Legislature with more time to conduct its important work, provide greater scrutiny of Government activities and improve opportunities for public engagement.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

**The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to increase the regularity of parliamentary sittings, establish an annual calendar of meetings, and ensure that this is published online for the benefit of Jamaican citizens and other interested stakeholders.**

45 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

46 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).



(Benchmark 2.3.1 – The Legislature shall meet regularly, at intervals sufficient to fulfil its responsibilities / Benchmark 2.4.4 – There shall be an annual parliamentary calendar to promote transparency).

Ahead of each sitting, Parliament's proposed agenda is formalised by the Presiding Officer (in consultation with the Leader of Government Business in each House) and disseminated among Members by way of a Business Paper prepared by the Clerk and other senior Secretariat staff. These officials also produce a daily Order Paper which helps guide Members through each day's business. Unlike other Commonwealth Legislatures, rank-and-file Members do not currently have any opportunity to suggest changes or request amendments to the proposed agenda. Notwithstanding issues raised above about introducing a formal parliamentary calendar, this is another provision that the Parliament of Jamaica may wish to introduce, albeit stakeholder discussions with Members across Parliament suggested that, for the most part, they are generally satisfied with how the Legislature's sitting agenda is currently constructed, conveyed, and adhered to.

## Debate and Voting

The Parliament of Jamaica does have clear procedures in place for the facilitation of parliamentary debates and votes, as well as determining their order of precedence. The Standing Orders of both Houses (Sections 12-40) ably outline provisions relating to the tabling of Papers, moving of Motions and Amendments, exchange of Questions and Answers, and consideration of public Petitions. For the most part, Standing Order arrangements relating to all of these generally appear reasonably well understood and adhered to by Members of Parliament with no specific issues of note being raised during stakeholder discussions. This not only reflects positively on Hon. President Tavares-Finson and Hon. Speaker Holness, but also more broadly on the Clerk and wider parliamentary staff in the Legislature. In another example of model parliamentary practice, all Plenary debates and votes are conducted publicly with live coverage provided in real time by the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica (PBCJ<sup>47</sup>) and via the Parliament's dedicated Facebook<sup>48</sup>, Instagram<sup>49</sup>, and YouTube<sup>50</sup> channels. To this end, the Parliament of Jamaica should be praised for its commitment to openness, transparency, and accountability vis-à-vis the electorate.

While the overall parameters for facilitating debates and votes in the Parliament are broadly positive, the CPA team did identify two areas in which current arrangements could be improved:

1. **Non-Government business** – much like many other Commonwealth Legislatures, the vast majority of business considered by the Parliament emanates from the Government. While this is not uncommon, formal provisions in the Standing Orders for dedicated 'Opposition Days' allowing non-Government Members to propose debate topics could be strengthened. Having specific days set aside to consider business proposed by non-Government Members would not only demonstrate sound application of the 'minority right' democratic principle but, equally, provide a conducive environment for the Legislature to debate all pertinent issues raised by any Member throughout either House.
2. **Private Members' Bills** – similarly, while provisions for the introduction of Private Members' Bills do exist in the Standing Orders, in practice, these do not happen. In fact, while in Kingston, the CPA learned that the Parliament has not considered or passed any Private Members' Bill during the current 2020-2025 parliamentary cycle<sup>51</sup>. This is, in part, because the vast majority of Parliament's agenda is dedicated to considering Government business, but also because (as referenced elsewhere in this Report), the Parliament lacks sufficient legal and financial expert capacity to help 'backbench' Members with the crafting and drafting of own-initiative legislation. Uplifting these resources would hopefully encourage non-Government Members of Parliament to begin utilising this important means of legislating moving forward.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

**The Parliament of Jamaica should adopt provisions that allow specific days in its parliamentary calendar for the consideration of Non-Government business and establish structures within its staff Secretariat to facilitate the meaningful introduction of Private Members' Bills.**

(Benchmark 2.4.3 – A substantial proportion of the Legislature's time is set aside for it to consider business proposed by non-Government Members).

47 Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica – *Parliament of Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.pbcjamaica.org/show/parliamentsenate/](http://www.pbcjamaica.org/show/parliamentsenate/).

48 Facebook – *Parliament of Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.facebook.com/jamaicaparlament/](https://www.facebook.com/jamaicaparlament/).

49 Instagram – *Parliament of Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.instagram.com/parliamentjamaica/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/parliamentjamaica/?hl=en).

50 YouTube – *Parliament of Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgJbc0bj4RtiIGZm-8C2JlwDdWKeLfHzv](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLgJbc0bj4RtiIGZm-8C2JlwDdWKeLfHzv).

51 IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliaments – Jamaica. [online]. Available at: [www.data.ipu.org/parliament/JM/JM-LC01/law-making-oversight-budget/law-making-oversight-budget/](http://www.data.ipu.org/parliament/JM/JM-LC01/law-making-oversight-budget/law-making-oversight-budget/).

## Petitions

There is a public petitions system in Jamaica which is outlined in the Standing Orders of both Houses of Parliament (Section 12<sup>52</sup>) and by law all Jamaican citizens enjoy the right to petition their elected representatives. In reality, however, this function is rarely used. It was suggested by some stakeholders that this is partially (and positively) because of a strong link between Members and the individual constituencies they represent, but by others that this can be attributed to the Legislature not currently having a well-established petitions system for members of the public to engage with.

Currently, any petition submitted to Parliament must be sponsored by a Member and there appears to be little information online providing guidance to citizens on how they can initiate/submit a petition, should they wish to do so. Furthermore, the Legislature's website has historically not provided any electronic means for citizens to submit a petition remotely.

In the event that a petition is submitted to Parliament, it must be presented by a Member and approved by the Clerk before being laid in Parliament, and while there are Standing Order provisions allowing for petitions to then be read to the House, printed, or considered by a Select Committee (pending support from the Member presenting the petition), the CPA team was not made aware of any instances where this has taken place. Improving its provisions around the petitions process (by way, for example, of including a dedicated Petitions page on the Parliament's website with educational materials and an online submission tool) would represent another positive step for the Parliament in strengthening its democratic interlinkage with the Jamaican electorate.

### RECOMMENDATION 8

**The Parliament of Jamaica should develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to modernise its petition process, establish electronic means of submission through its website, and consider introducing a numerical threshold for signatories that mandates the Legislature (and its Committees) to fully consider any petition submitted by external organisations or members of the wider public.**

*(Benchmarks 2.7.1 – The Legislature shall have procedures to allow for the meaningful consideration of petitions).*

## Records

As per the Standing Orders of both Houses, the Clerk to Parliament is responsible for preparing and circulating parliamentary papers to Members ahead of each sitting day. These include a daily Order Paper, a Business Paper covering all business currently before the House, any draft Bills being considered, and further supplementary briefing material produced by the staff Secretariat. During the session itself, Members' attendance, interventions, and voting activities are also recorded by parliamentary officials which, in turn, form the official report (Hansard) covering that day's business.

Generally speaking, staff of the Legislature make positive efforts to maintain parliamentary records however, during their time in Kingston, the CPA team learned that there are currently gaps in terms of how these are produced and maintained. While Hansard records are held centrally by the Secretariat and made available to Members upon request, discussions with the Hansard Department in Parliament showed that these are not up-to-date, it is currently understaffed, and lacks modern day technology (such as voice recognition or transcribing software) that would better enable the dedicated team of Secretariat officials to fully meet their responsibilities. Whilst Hansard records are, positively, uploaded to the Parliament's website, resource constraints within the Secretariat has led to a backlog of final Hansard accounts being approved and made public online. Ongoing efforts to improve the Parliament's website also hampers efforts to efficiently digitise Hansard records publicly for the electorate at large. During various discussions with internal and external stakeholders, the CPA team stressed the importance of transparency and accountability for public access, emphasised the need for Parliament to expedite the improvement of its website, and underscored the multiple benefits (including Hansard maintenance/dissemination) that doing so would bring. These important advantages are continually discussed throughout this Report.

## COMMITTEES

### Organisation

As per the Standing Orders of both Houses, the Parliament of Jamaica establishes at the commencement of each new Parliament following a General Election a number of Sessional Select Committees to consider and report on matters referred to them by the Legislature, matters which fall under their designated subject area, and matters which (in the opinion of the Committee) require further consideration by the whole House. There are a total of four Sessional Select Committees in the Senate, ten in the House of Representatives, and a Caucus of Women Parliamentarians which brings together female Members from both Houses. All of these Sessional Select Committees are constituted along thematic lines and last for the full life cycle of a parliamentary term. Alongside these, the Legislature can also establish additional Special Select Committees. These are set-up to consider

52 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

particular ad-hoc issues, are time-limited in nature, and cease to operate once their designated work on a particular topic has been completed.

All Committees within the Parliament reflect the political composition of the Legislature (an 80:20 split between Government and Opposition Members), with the Chairmanship of each Committee selected by its composite Members at the Committee's constitutive meeting. Committees in both Houses comprise a minimum of six Members, have a quorum for the holding of meetings, and may adopt additional Terms of Reference to help guide and manage their work. While some Committees in the Parliament appear to meet with sufficient regularity alongside scheduled Plenary sittings of the House, other Committees (particularly with oversight of subject-specific portfolios) are not currently as active. Positively, Government Ministers do not serve on parliamentary Committees, both the Public Accounts and Public Administration and Appropriation Committees in the House of Representatives are chaired by an Opposition Member, and in a further demonstration of sound parliamentary practice, Committee meetings in the Legislature are by default open to representatives of the Media and members of the public during evidence sessions, albeit private considerations and deliberations can be held in camera until the Committee has reported its findings to the whole House.

Each Committee in the Legislature is assigned a Clerk from the parliamentary administration to help with holding meetings and coordinating its workplan however, at the time of writing, resource constraints within the Secretariat sees each of these officials clerking more than one Committee. Given the heavy workload involved in clerking a Committee, this is sub-optimal and undoubtedly reduces the efficacy of Committee work in the Parliament. These shortcomings are discussed below and, to help improve the performance of its Committees, the Parliament should look to dedicate more resource and human capital to their important work moving forward.



## Power and Resources

Committees in the Parliament of Jamaica play an important role in the passage of legislative Bills brought before the Legislature<sup>53</sup> (a detailed overview of which is provided later in this Report). After their Second Reading on the Floor of either House, draft Bills are considered in granular detail (clause by clause) by either a Committee of the Whole Senate/House or by being referred to one of the Legislature's relevant Select Committees. Members of these Committees will consider the merits of draft pieces of legislation, potentially recommend the inclusion of amendments to them, and report back to the Legislature as a whole, which will then vote on whether to accept the legislation as amended or in its original form. Positively, all legislation considered by the Parliament is, by default, referred to a relevant Committee and, in this sense, the Committee structure in Parliament appears broadly fit for purpose.

That said, during their time in Kingston, the CPA team did identify a number of areas in which the current Committee set-up of Parliament could be improved:

53 Jamaica Information Service – *The Legislature*. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-legislature/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-legislature/).

1. The Government of Jamaica currently has 16 Ministries listed on its website<sup>54</sup> however stakeholder discussions held by the CPA team noted that the Parliament doesn't currently have the same number of Committees with bespoke responsibility for scrutinising the work of that individual Government Department. This can largely be attributed to resource/space constraints within Parliament's administration referenced earlier in this Report. While best practice demonstrated in other Commonwealth jurisdictions is for each Executive Ministry to have a corresponding Committee in the Legislature with robust oversight mechanisms for scrutinising the work of that particular Government Department, this may be unrealistic for Jamaica's Parliament until aforementioned resource/space constraints are overcome. In the meantime, the Legislature could look to improve the effectiveness of its Committee framework (perhaps by merging related Committee portfolios or encouraging joint meetings of more than one Committee) to help with ensuring that the Executive remains accountable to the Legislature in all of its governmental activities.
2. At present, while Cabinet Ministers are (positively) prohibited from serving on parliamentary Committees, a disproportionately high number are currently chaired by Government Members. While appreciating the strong two-party dynamic in Jamaica's Parliament, best practice demonstrated by other Commonwealth Legislatures is to ensure that a commensurate number of Committees in the Parliament are chaired by non-Government Members. This not only helps establish a clear separation of powers between the Executive and Legislature, but also avoids potential issues of impartiality around Government Chairs scrutinising the merits of their own Executive's legislative proposals.
3. While all Committees in the Parliament (positively) have the power to summon persons, papers, and records to assist in their scrutiny of draft legislation and other related issues, the CPA team learned that this right is not currently exercised in line with Standing Order provisions. By way of example, when representatives of the Executive are requested to appear before parliamentary Committees, it is invariably a Permanent Secretary and not the relevant Minister who comes before Members. Again, best practice demonstrated by other Commonwealth Legislatures is for elected Cabinet Ministers to periodically appear before the relevant parliamentary Committee which has responsibility for scrutinising the work of their Government Department. Having Committees make full use of their Standing Order powers and introducing such sessions in the parliamentary calendar should not only strengthen the means of scrutiny available to Committees in the Legislature but would also be another positive demonstration of model practice for the Parliament to consider.
4. On a related note, as discussed earlier in this Report, all activities undertaken by the Legislature currently take place in Parliament's Plenary Chamber. This clearly limits the ability of Sessional and Special Select Committees to meet as often as they might were dedicated space on the legislative precinct made available for them to conduct business. As well as enabling parliamentary Committees to better meet existing responsibilities, providing them with dedicated space in Parliament could also lead to Committees being able to incorporate new mechanisms of Executive oversight into their annual work plans. One example of this (which proved popular in several stakeholder discussions) could be introducing new provisions that see the Prime Minister periodically appear before the Chairpersons of Parliament's Committee to report on the overall activities of Jamaica's Government. This activity is undertaken by the Liaison Committee in the UK House of Commons and provides the UK Parliament with another effective means of holding the British Executive to account.
5. Whilst Committees in the National Parliament are undoubtedly active in their scrutinising of draft legislation, they appear to conduct little own initiative work through running parliamentary inquiries into particular issues of interest. This can largely be attributed to a lack of resource at staff level with Committees currently sharing internal Clerks with one another to coordinate business and not having sufficient means to employ external experts whereby doing so could be beneficial. To this end, the CPA team was informed that several Committees in the Parliament currently make use of student volunteers from local universities to help address this shortfall in its staffing resource. This is clearly sub-optimal and ensuring that Committees in the Legislature have the capacity and expertise to fully meet their legislative responsibilities would improve the Parliament of Jamaica's alignment with respect to various relevant CPA Benchmarks.
6. Regarding external activities, the CPA team noted a lack of financial resource being made available to Committees for them to conduct certain activities away from Kingston in support of their legislative work. Should a Committee wish to visit other parts of Jamaica to undertake a public consultation or participate in citizen engagement activities, a specific funding request must be made to the Ministry of Finance, which stakeholder discussions suggested is often declined. Best practice dictates that parliamentary Committees should have their own budget, independent of the Executive, that can be apportioned to supporting important outreach activities and engagement programmes. This is another area in which the Parliament should seek to increase the level of resource available to its Committees so that they can fulfil their legislative responsibilities to maximum effect.

54 Government of Jamaica – *Government Ministries*. [online]. Available at: [www.opm.gov.jm/your-government/government-ministries/](http://www.opm.gov.jm/your-government/government-ministries/).



## RECOMMENDATION 9(1)

**The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to improve the structure and oversight of its Committees by ensuring: all Executive Ministries are scrutinised by a corresponding parliamentary Committee; ; a substantial number of Committees are chaired by non-Government Members; and all Committees are empowered with binding means to summon persons, papers, and records.**

## RECOMMENDATION 9(2)

**The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to improve the resource and independence of its Committees by: providing Committees with dedicated working space on the Legislature's precinct to increase the efficiency and scope of their activities; increasing the staff capacity of Committees to support own-initiative work; and guaranteeing that all Committees have an independent budget (free from Executive oversight) that enables them to conduct outreach activities away from the parliamentary precinct.**

(Benchmark 3.1.2 – The Legislature's assignment of Committee Members on each Committee shall include both majority and minority party Members and reflect the political composition of the Legislature / Benchmark 3.1.4 – Once established, Committees shall meet regularly in a timely and effective manner / Benchmark 3.2.1 – Committees shall have the power to summon persons, papers, and records, and this power shall extend to witnesses and evidence from the Executive branch, including officials / Benchmark 3.2.4 – Committees shall have the right and sufficient resources to consult and/or employ experts / Benchmark 3.2.6 – Committees hear evidence from people who wish to be heard, if practicable, or at least ensure that hearings cover the diverse perspectives of submitters).

## POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARTY GROUPS

### Political Parties

Formal political parties do exist in Jamaica and, as mentioned earlier in this Report, the country's political landscape has been dominated by the Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party since Jamaica gained independence in 1962. As of 2014, all political parties in Jamaica planning to run candidates in an election or campaign in a referendum must be registered with the country's Electoral Commission<sup>55</sup>. The *Political Party Registration Act*<sup>56</sup> not only mandates the registration of political parties in this regard, but also monitors their financial activities, two requirements that did not exist in Jamaica until the Act entered into force. Linked to this, any political party in Jamaica that meets the criteria for state funding is obliged under national law to make statutory reports of their financial activities to the Electoral Commission at the end of each financial year.

While having clear parameters in place for the registration of political parties is objectively positive, some stakeholders who met with the CPA team in Kingston suggested that such a rigorous registration process had, however, made it more difficult for minor parties in Jamaica to contest national elections and referenda. Jamaica does have a number of smaller political parties in existence, however none of them contested the country's previous General Election in 2020.

Once in Parliament, alongside the Prime Minister, the position of Leader of the Opposition is also formally recognised, allocated dedicated resources from the Legislature's budget, granted priority speaking time in plenary debates, and consulted by the Speaker on wider decisions taken concerning the administration of the Legislature and its precinct. These are all positive demonstrations of model legislative practice for which the Parliament of Jamaica should be praised.

### Caucuses and Interest Groups

While in Kingston, the CPA team explored the rights of legislators to form broader caucuses and interest groups based on common issues or concerns. At present, the Parliament has caucuses established along party lines but lacks broader non-partisan interest groups that are common in other Commonwealth Legislatures. While there is nothing in the Parliament's Standing Orders that limits the ability of Members to form such groups, there has traditionally been a limited culture of these bodies existing as part of Parliament's organisational framework. The only such body that currently exists in the Jamaican Parliament is a relatively new bipartisan *Caucus of Women Parliamentarians*<sup>57</sup>. Established in 2023, this body is (positively) up and running but, as of yet, hasn't held many meetings or participated in beneficial interparliamentary activities with fellow Legislatures in other

55 Electoral Commission of Jamaica – *Guidelines for the Registration of Political Parties*. [online]. Available at: [www.ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Guidelines-for-Registration.pdf](http://www.ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Guidelines-for-Registration.pdf).

56 Electoral Commission of Jamaica – *Registration of Political Parties Legislation and Regulations*. [online]. Available at: [www.ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Political-Party-Registration-Legislation-and-Regulations-Jan-2018-New.pdf](http://www.ecj.com.jm/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Political-Party-Registration-Legislation-and-Regulations-Jan-2018-New.pdf).

57 Jamaica Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport – *Parliament establishes Women's Caucus*. [online]. Available at: [www.mcges.gov.jm/index.php/gender/item/933-parliament-establishes-women-s-caucus](http://www.mcges.gov.jm/index.php/gender/item/933-parliament-establishes-women-s-caucus).

Caribbean jurisdictions. It is recommended that the Parliament of Jamaica's Caucus of Women's Parliamentarians make use of relevant CPA guidance<sup>58</sup> on helping it achieve these objectives.

During stakeholder discussions with the CPA team, elected Members and parliamentary staff positively acknowledged the idea of Parliament modernising its approach to such bodies. Generally speaking, doing so was viewed as having two main benefits: firstly, preventing unnecessary duplication in the mandates of parliamentary Committees (where a caucus or interest group would be a more efficient vehicle for considering cross-subject issues); and, secondly, providing Parliament with more scope to effectively address often apolitical topics of common interest. Establishing mechanisms and encouraging a culture that supports the increased creation of these bodies is undoubtedly something that the Parliament of Jamaica could look to consider moving forward.

## PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

### Recruitment and Management

The Presiding Officers sit together as the Heads of the Parliamentary Administration and are, in effect, responsible for all political activities undertaken in the Legislature. Alongside the Presiding Officers, the Clerk serves as the Parliament's most senior official with wide-ranging responsibilities relating to administrative operations in support of House business and the delegation of work among fellow parliamentary staff. At the time of writing this Report, the Parliament of Jamaica has a Secretariat comprising approximately 75 staff; who are talented, dedicated, and non-partisan, providing strong support for many aspects of the Legislature's operations.

Whilst the current team of staff are a credit to both the Parliament and Jamaican citizens more widely, there were a number of important areas of concern raised throughout stakeholder discussions about how the Parliament currently recruits, retains, promotes, and manages its staff, as well as how they are able to fulfil key responsibilities relating to the Legislature's functionality. For all intents and purposes, the Parliament is considered part of Jamaica's Public Service and, as such, effectively a Department of Government as opposed to its own distinct entity. Unfortunately, this significantly limits the Legislature's ability to take a range of important decisions, among others, relating to:

- 1. Recruitment** – the recruitment and appointment of individuals joining the Parliamentary Administration are currently coordinated in part by the Jamaican Public Service Commission<sup>59</sup> and not the Legislature in its own right.
- 2. Retention and Promotion** – the Legislature is currently limited in its ability to set independent terms of employment for its staff, including specific arrangements relating to retention, promotion, and any linked changes to levels of remuneration.
- 3. Management** – the Legislature is also limited when it comes to providing services (office space, research/Library facilities, and ICT provisions) and developing wider corporate regulations/HR policies (conduct, safeguarding, bullying and harassment, equality and diversity) tailored to the needs of parliamentary Secretariat staff.

Lacking sufficient independence and autonomy from the Jamaica's Government and, by extension, wider Public Service, was one of the biggest shortcomings identified by the CPA team in terms of how the Parliament currently runs its affairs. At the time of writing this Report, there is a lack of much-needed legislation providing for the Parliament to establish its own corporate body responsible for the independent management of its human resources, providing funding entitlements towards key parliamentary services, delineating Parliament from the Executive, and further enhancing the separation of powers between two of Jamaica's three branches of Government<sup>60</sup>.

In this regard, best practice is to legislate for the establishment of a Parliamentary Service Commission that would enable the Parliament to have independent authority of its corporate operations, build capacity across the parliamentary precinct without Executive restriction, and better allow both Houses to start putting in place much-needed multi-annual strategic plans. Further benefits that could flow from the establishment of a Parliamentary Service Commission would include the Parliament having full control over recruitment and the terms of employment for staff, enjoying unimpeded autonomy for allocating funds to particular activities on the parliamentary precinct, and entrenching non-interference from the Executive across a wide range of other legislative functions. The CPA team repeatedly discussed the merits of establishing a Parliamentary Service Commission (or equivalent corporate body) with key Legislature personnel during their visit to Kingston, and this proposal broadly received positive support from both Members and staff.

58 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *How to establish a Women's Caucus*. [online]. Available at: [www.cpahq.org/knowledge-centre/blogs/how-to-start-a-women-s-parliamentary-caucus/](http://www.cpahq.org/knowledge-centre/blogs/how-to-start-a-women-s-parliamentary-caucus/).

59 Government of Jamaica – *Public Service Commission*. [online]. Available at: [www.osc.gov.jm/index.php/public-service-commission/](http://www.osc.gov.jm/index.php/public-service-commission/).

60 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Model Law for Independent Parliaments: Establishing Parliamentary Service Commissions for Commonwealth Legislatures*. [online]. Available at: [https://www.cpahq.org/media/usdnwcqp/model-law-for-independent-parliaments\\_final.pdf](https://www.cpahq.org/media/usdnwcqp/model-law-for-independent-parliaments_final.pdf).

## RECOMMENDATION 10

**The Parliament of Jamaica should establish a Parliamentary Service Commission (or equivalent corporate body) with responsibility for the Legislature's internal governance and key related parliamentary services.**

*(Benchmark 5.1.2 – The Legislature, rather than the Executive branch, shall control the parliamentary service and determine the terms of employment. There shall be adequate safeguards to ensure non-interference from the Executive / Benchmark 5.1.4 – Members and staff of the Legislature shall have access to sufficient research, library, and ICT facilities / Benchmark 5.2.1 – The Legislature shall have adequate resources to recruit staff sufficient to fulfil its responsibilities. The rates of pay shall be broadly comparable to those in the public service / Benchmark 5.4.3 – The Legislature should, either by legislation or resolution, establish a corporate body responsible for providing services and funding entitlements for parliamentary purposes and providing for governance of the parliamentary service).*

### III. FUNCTIONS OF THE LEGISLATURE

#### LEGISLATIVE FUNCTION

##### Legislative Process

The legislative process in Jamaica is intricately linked to the Executive branch, reflecting a governance model where the outcome of elections is heavily influenced by the legislative platforms presented by political parties. Governments typically secure their positions by forming a majority in the House of Representatives, enabling them to shepherd legislation through Parliament effectively. This dynamic positions the Parliament's primary function as one of oversight and refinement of the proposals put forth by the Government. While Parliament is endowed with significant powers to scrutinise and challenge these proposals, it also has the capacity to exert influence that may compel the Government to consider and introduce additional legislative measures.

The Jamaican Constitution (Chapter V, Section 48<sup>61</sup>) defines the scope of parliamentary authority as “*Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament may make laws for the peace, order, and good government of Jamaica.*” Accordingly, the Legislature is vested with the responsibility to engage in thoughtful debate and enact laws, as well as to review, amend, and refine existing legislation that directly affects the lives of citizens. Legislative progress is primarily achieved through comprehensive discussions on Bills and Subsidiary Legislation, both of which necessitate approval under specific procedural guidelines.

There are three main classification of Bills within the Jamaican legislative framework:

- **Public Bills** are introduced by Government Ministers, advance the Government's agenda, undergo parliamentary debate and stakeholder input before becoming law, and comprise the vast majority of draft legislation brought before Parliament.
- **Private Members' Bills** can be introduced by any Member but are rarely used within the Jamaican Parliament primarily due to limited drafting support referenced earlier in this Report.
- **Money Bills** initiated in the House of Representatives, address financial matters such as taxation and public expenditure, and follow distinct legislative procedures which ensure transparency and accountability. Government Ministers propose budgetary resolutions, which the Finance Committee reviews for necessity and fiscal responsibility. Once approved, these resolutions follow the standard legislative process, maintaining oversight and ensuring alignment with public interest.

##### Stages of a Bill

Clear procedural guidelines for the passage of Bills in the Jamaican Parliament are set out in Standing Order 48<sup>62</sup>. Bills are drafted by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel under the oversight of relevant Government Ministries before being introduced in either House:

**First Reading** marks the Bill's official entry into parliamentary proceedings, with the Clerk reading the Short Title and ensuring proper formatting and publication in the Jamaica Gazette. The **Second Reading** allows for the first substantive debate on the Bill's principles, though no amendments are permitted. If approved, the Bill moves to the **Committee Stage**, where each clause is examined, and Members may propose amendments, though the Bill itself cannot be rejected. The **Report Stage** follows, where further changes may be suggested before the **Third Reading**, during which Members vote on the final version. Once passed, the Bill is sent to the Senate for a parallel review process. If both Houses agree on a final version, it is submitted to the **Governor-General for Assent**, after which it is published in the Jamaica Gazette and comes into effect immediately or on a specified commencement date.

While the legislative process in Jamaica functions well overall, the CPA team did identify some areas in which improvements could be made:

1. **Legal Department** – To enhance the legislative process, it is essential for the Parliament to establish a well-resourced Legal Department that is adequately staffed with trained professionals specialising in legislative drafting. This department should consist of experienced legislative drafters who understand legal language and the intricacies of legislative processes. Their primary role would be to assist Members of Parliament, particularly those introducing Private Members' Bills, by providing expert guidance and support in crafting clear, effective, and comprehensive legislation. This initiative would streamline the drafting process and ensure that proposed Bills are thoroughly vetted for legal consistency and feasibility, ultimately contributing to more informed and effective legislative outcomes.
2. **Equality Impact Assessments** – One important area that is not currently emphasised in the Jamaican legislative process relates to equality impact assessments. Encouraging the inclusion of these assessments would ensure that new laws and policies more rigorously consider their impact on different parts of the population (particularly marginalised groups) to

61 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

62 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).



promote essential fairness and equality. It would also be a useful vehicle for more public input into the legislative process as well as ensuring compliance by Jamaica with international treaties and agreements, such as UN Sustainable Development Goals.

- 3. Pre-Legislative/Post-Legislative Scrutiny** – Another important means of legislative scrutiny that could be improved relates to the conducting of pre-legislative and post-legislative scrutiny. Both are core functions of many other Commonwealth Legislatures. While the Parliament's Standing Orders provide for an active Committee system (which should contribute towards these activities), issues linked to staffing constraints and the regularity of some Committee meetings means that, in practice, they are not effectively undertaken.

Pre-legislative scrutiny can take various forms but has a number of benefits including creating opportunities for Parliament to influence legislation at an early stage, drawing upon particular policy expertise that individual Members might have, and providing a key tool for Civil Society Organisations and wider members of the public to engage with crafting the laws that ultimately shape their lives. All of these measures together act as a form of quality control to ensure that legislation is in its best possible form before entering into force.

Post-legislative scrutiny has the aim of ensuring that Acts of Parliament have done, or are doing, what they were originally intended to achieve. It heightens accountability that those tasked with implementing particular laws are doing so effectively and offers an opportunity to evaluate whether alternative means of reaching intended goals could be pursued. As with pre-legislative scrutiny, post-legislative scrutiny can take various forms but ultimately should lead to better Government, better legislation, and better outcomes for the citizens of Jamaica.

## RECOMMENDATION 11

**The Parliament of Jamaica should enhance the drafting, scrutiny, and implementation of legislation by establishing an independent Legal Department to support Private Members' Bills, conducting equality impact assessments on draft legislation, and introducing pre- and post-legislative scrutiny to ensure laws are well-designed and effective.**

*(Benchmark 6.1.4 – The Legislature shall provide adequate resourced for legislators to draft legislation or amendments to any legislation / Benchmark 6.1.5 – The Legislature shall encourage the process of equality impact assessment with respect to the development of legislation, policies, and budgets / Benchmark 6.2.4 – The Legislature shall establish procedures for systematic monitoring of the effective implementation and consequences of legislation).*

## OVERSIGHT FUNCTION

### Oversight of the Executive

The framework for executive oversight in Jamaica is provided for by the Constitution (Chapter VI, Section 68<sup>63</sup>) which explicitly outlines the delineation of executive authority.

The section states:

1. “*The executive authority of Jamaica is vested in His Majesty.*” – which signifies that ultimate authority resides with the monarchy.
2. “*Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the executive authority of Jamaica may be exercised on behalf of His Majesty by the Governor-General, either directly or through officers subordinate to him.*” – this provision highlights that the Governor-General acts as a representative of the Crown, preserving executive authority.
3. “*Nothing in this section shall prevent Parliament from conferring functions on persons or authorities other than the Governor-General.*” – this provision allows for flexibility in governance by enabling the Parliament to delegate powers as deemed necessary.

Furthermore, the Constitution (Section 69<sup>64</sup>) asserts that: “*The Cabinet shall be the principal instrument of policy and shall be charged with the general direction and control of the Government of Jamaica, for which it is collectively responsible to Parliament.*” Here, the Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister, is depicted as the central governing body responsible for making policy decisions and ensuring that the Government functions effectively. The collective responsibility of the Cabinet underlines its accountability not just to Parliament but also, indirectly, to the citizens of Jamaica. Accordingly, the Parliament of Jamaica currently utilises a wide range of mechanisms for exercising oversight of the Executive:

- **Oral and Written Questions:** Members of Parliament have the right to submit questions to Government Ministers, which can be addressed orally during sessions or in written form. This process encourages transparency, as it allows MPs to seek

63 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

64 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

clarification on governmental actions and decisions. Engaging in debates stemming from these questions necessitates that a Substantive Motion be presented concerning the relevant issue, fostering an environment of accountability.

- **Government Reports:** various Government departments and public bodies are mandated to submit annual performance reports, including audited financial statements, to Parliament. Although these reports are provided for information purposes and typically are not subject to a vote, Parliamentarians retain the right/ability to express concerns. They can do so by questioning relevant Ministers or by initiating Substantive Motions for further debate. Additionally, reports can be referred to parliamentary Committees for further in-depth examination of key issues.
- **Committee Hearings:** parliamentary Committees play a critical role in the oversight process by conducting hearings aimed at scrutinising the Government's actions and monitoring public expenditures. These hearings lead to the creation of reports that are subsequently presented to the House of Representatives, thereby enhancing transparency and public understanding of Government operations.
- **Legislative Review Process:** Committees, alongside parliamentary debates, provide MPs with the opportunity to critically evaluate proposed legislation. This process ensures that new laws are not only consistent with constitutional mandates but also align with the public interest and adhere to broader Government policies.
- **Committees of Inquiry:** Parliament also elects to engage in Oversight through Committees of Inquiry. Special Select Committees are established to examine specific matters of concern, and these Committees have the authority to summon public officials from relevant Ministries to provide testimony and information, thereby enriching the information available for legislative review.

By employing these oversight mechanisms, in full view of the public, the Jamaican Parliament is indispensable in preserving Executive accountability and transparency, thus fostering a democratic environment where elected officials remain answerable to the public they serve. While discussions held by the CPA team suggested that, for the most part, these work well and are largely fit for purpose, some stakeholders noted that Executive representatives do not always answer written or oral questions as quickly as they should and that (as discussed earlier in this Report), it is often officials and not Ministers who appear before parliamentary Committees scrutinising Executive activities and performance. Accordingly, the Legislature should consider amending its Standing Orders to put in place more robust enforcement mechanisms for ensuring that the Executive fully complies with its accountability responsibilities to Parliament.

## RECOMMENDATION 12

**The Parliament of Jamaica should amend its Standing Orders to ensure that the Executive fully complies with its accountability responsibilities to Parliament by answering all questions put to it by Members of the Legislature in a timely and effective manner.**

*(Benchmark 7.1.2 – The Legislature shall have mechanisms to obtain information from the Executive branch sufficient to exercise its oversight function in a meaningful and timely manner. There shall be clear and effective procedures requiring the Executive to provide timely responses to oral and written question and Parliamentary Committee reports and recommendations).*

## Financial and Budgetary Oversight

Budget planning, formulation, and execution in Jamaica are anchored in the Constitution (Chapter VIII, Sections 114-122<sup>65</sup>) and the *Financial Administration and Audit Act*<sup>66</sup>. Parliament's own budget approval processes are dictated by the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives (65-67<sup>67</sup>) as per the provisions regarding Financial Procedure.

Jamaica's fiscal year runs from 1 April to 31 March. The budget process begins in September when the Ministry of Finance issues a **Budget Call** to Government agencies, setting expenditure ceilings and requesting draft proposals. These are reviewed from November to January before Cabinet approval in February. Once approved, the Minister presents the **Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure** to Parliament. As required by **Section 115 of the Constitution**, the budget must be prepared before the end of each financial year and laid before the House of Representatives. The **Auditor-General** examines the Fiscal Policy Paper within two weeks of its presentation, with findings submitted to Parliament. The **Standing Finance Committee** reviews the budget in early March, followed by a debate on the **Appropriation Bill**. The Bill must pass all legislative stages and receive assent by 31 March.

### Parliamentary Oversight of the Budget

The Parliament of Jamaica has established procedures, aligned with the Constitution and Standing Orders, to oversee national finances. This oversight is primarily carried out by three key Committees:

65 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

66 Jamaican Ministry of Justice – *Financial Administration and Audit Act*. [online]. Available at: [www.laws.moj.gov.jm/legislation/subsidiaries/F/The%20Financial%20Administration%20and%20Audit%20Act.pdf](http://www.laws.moj.gov.jm/legislation/subsidiaries/F/The%20Financial%20Administration%20and%20Audit%20Act.pdf).

67 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

1. **The Standing Finance Committee** – Scrutinises budget proposals, requiring Ministers to justify funding allocations.
2. **The Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAA)** – monitors real-time expenditure, ensuring funds are used as approved and identifying inefficiencies.
3. **The Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** – Conducts post-expenditure scrutiny, reviewing audits and financial reports to ensure accountability.

These Committees collectively strengthen fiscal oversight and government accountability. The budget process typically lasts three to four weeks, allowing for debate and review of the Appropriation Bill and expenditure estimates. Additionally, financial statements of Statutory Boards, Public Corporations, and Government-owned companies must be presented to Parliament and are automatically referred to the PAC for examination.

A notable feature of the Jamaican parliamentary model is the role of the Opposition Members, who are entrusted with the responsibility of Chairing both the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee. This positive arrangement enhances the independence and objectivity of the Committees' oversight functions, fostering a system of checks and balances that is essential for good governance and effective management of public finances.

While the Constitution and Standing Orders provide an adequate framework for financial and budgetary oversight, several stakeholders who met with the CPA team noted that the effectiveness of these provisions is hampered by an absence of financial expertise being provided to Members by the Parliament. This lack of support can affect the capability of Members to research, examine, and analyse financial documents presented in the Houses and referred to the respective Financial Oversight Committees.

To this end, the CPA team felt that the Legislature would benefit from establishing a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to support its oversight of the annual State budget process and other financial activities<sup>68</sup>. The PBO should be staffed by well-trained and qualified financial experts to assist Members of Parliament with objective and non-partisan advice and guidance. The PBO would also be tasked with providing parliamentary Committees with independent forecasts for expenditures and revenues relating to the Government's economic projections.

## RECOMMENDATION 13

**The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to establish an independent Parliamentary Budget Office so that it has increased resources and sufficient financial expertise to conduct financial oversight responsibilities more effectively.**

*(Benchmark 7.2.6 – The Legislature shall have access to sufficient financial scrutiny resources and/or independent budget and financial expertise to ensure that financial oversight is conducted effectively).*

## Oversight of Independent Constitutional Bodies

Jamaica's Constitution and pertinent legislative frameworks have established various autonomous institutions designed to operate independently of political influences, fostering principles of good governance, transparency, and accountability within the public sector. These include (but are not limited to) the Office of the Auditor-General<sup>69</sup> and the Jamaica's national Integrity Commission<sup>70</sup>. During their time in Kingston, the CPA team met with the Auditor-General and held broad discussions with other stakeholders on the work of the Integrity Commission.

### Office of the Auditor-General

The Constitution (Sections 120-122<sup>71</sup>) provides that there shall be an Auditor-General in and for Jamaica, who shall be appointed by the Governor-General, and insulated from the direction or control of any other person or authority. Accordingly, the independence of their office is constitutionally enshrined.

The Auditor-General conducts independent audits of Government ministries, agencies, and departments, reports financial irregularities and inefficiencies in public spending, and submits these reports to Parliament for review by the Public Accounts Committee. As per the Constitution (Section 122<sup>72</sup>), the Auditor-General is mandated to audit the accounts of all Government Departments (and those of both Houses of Parliament) on an annual basis while enjoying unrestricted access to all relevant books, records, and reports required to facilitate this work. The Auditor-General must then submit their annual reports resulting from these audits to the Speaker of the House of Representatives for presentation before Parliament.

68 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Handbook on Parliamentary Financial Oversight: Adapting PAC Best Practices to Legislatures in Small Jurisdictions*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/media/wchb4uv5/handbook-on-parliamentary-financial-oversight.pdf>.

69 Auditor-General of Jamaica – *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: [www.auditorgeneral.gov.jm](http://www.auditorgeneral.gov.jm).

70 Integrity Commission of Jamaica – *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: [www.integrity.gov.jm](http://www.integrity.gov.jm).

71 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

72 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

Notwithstanding points made in the previous section of the Report concerning financial and budgetary oversight, the Self-Assessment exercise indicated a robust collaboration between the Office of the Auditor-General and the Public Accounts Committee. Positively, the Auditor-General's department is consistently represented at all Committee meetings, typically by the Auditor-General herself or, in her absence, by a senior official from her team.

### The Integrity Commission

Jamaica's Integrity Commission (IC) is established under the *Integrity Commission Act*<sup>73</sup> of 2017 (ICA). The Commission monitors and investigates Government contracts, financial mismanagement, and conflicts of interest in Government spending, with the underlining objectives of preventing corruption and ensuring transparency in public procurement. The IC also provides recommendations for improving governance and financial accountability in public spending.

As stipulated in the Integrity Commission Act (Section 36<sup>74</sup>), the Integrity Commission is mandated to prepare and submit an annual report to Parliament within three months following the end of each financial year, or within another timeframe as approved by Parliament. This comprehensive report must thoroughly outline the Commission's operational activities and achievements during the preceding financial year, aligning with detailed provisions outlined in the Second Schedule of the Act.

Upon its submission to Parliament, the annual report is tabled and made available for review by the Legislature's Integrity Commission Oversight Committee. In accordance with the Standing Orders (Number 73<sup>75</sup>) of the House of Representatives, the Integrity Commission Oversight Committee bears several critical responsibilities, including:

- a) Monitoring and evaluating the operational efficacy of the Integrity Commission to ensure that it meets its mandates.
- b) Reporting to both Houses of Parliament on the Commission's performance, summarising findings and areas of concern regarding its functions.
- c) Conducting a thorough review of the annual report and any supplementary reports from the Commission, along with providing informed recommendations for both Houses of Parliament.
- d) Assessing the overall effectiveness of the Integrity Commission and evaluating the adequacy of its procedures in fostering transparency and accountability.
- e) Convening meetings to deliberate on the report submitted to Parliament under Section 36 of the Integrity Commission Act, ensuring that this process occurs within a 30-day timeframe following its submission.

When taken together, both the Auditor-General and the Integrity Commission, via their independent reporting mechanisms to Parliament, positively assist in ensuring robust oversight and accountability by public officials regarding the use of public funds and executive decision-making. That said, stakeholder discussions did highlight one important gap regarding the Parliament's performance against relevant CPA Benchmarks. Jamaica does not currently have a dedicated Human Rights Commission. While in Kingston, however, the CPA team learned that there was some appetite to establish an independent HRC in Jamaica. It was noted during stakeholder discussions that establishing one would not only enhance important accountability mechanisms but also align Jamaica with best international practices demonstrated by other Commonwealth jurisdictions.

### **No Confidence and Impeachment**

Mechanisms to impeach or censure the Executive branch, or to express no confidence in the Government, is an important CPA Benchmark in a democratic Legislature and, positively, the Constitution of Jamaica (Sections 64 and 71<sup>76</sup>) provides for this and establishes specific procedures for the dissolution of Parliament where the House of Representatives adopts a resolution of No Confidence in the Government.

A Member of the House may introduce a Motion of No Confidence, which can either revoke the Prime Minister's appointment or propose a formal vote against the entire Government. For either to succeed, they must garner support from a majority of all Members of the House. If a No Confidence vote passes, the Governor-General must either revoke the Prime Minister's appointment or, if advised by the Prime Minister within three days, dissolve Parliament instead, triggering elections. This ensures democratic accountability. While stakeholders raised no specific concerns during discussions with the CPA team, and suggested that previous instances of No Confidence procedures in Jamaica's Parliament were rare, a motion was tabled against Prime Minister Holness in October 2024<sup>77</sup>. The motion in question was blocked by the Deputy Speaker (on sub judice grounds) and, ultimately, proved unsuccessful.

73 Integrity Commission of Jamaica – *Integrity Commission Act*. [online]. Available at: [www.integrity.gov.jm/sites/default/files/The%20Integrity%20Commission%20Act%2C%202017\\_0.pdf](http://www.integrity.gov.jm/sites/default/files/The%20Integrity%20Commission%20Act%2C%202017_0.pdf).

74 Integrity Commission of Jamaica – *Integrity Commission Act*. [online]. Available at: [www.integrity.gov.jm/sites/default/files/The%20Integrity%20Commission%20Act%2C%202017\\_0.pdf](http://www.integrity.gov.jm/sites/default/files/The%20Integrity%20Commission%20Act%2C%202017_0.pdf).

75 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

76 Constitution of Jamaica 1962. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/government/the-constitution/).

77 Jamaica Gleaner – Golding blocked from moving no-confidence motion against Holness. [online]. Available at: [www.jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20241001/golding-blocked-moving-no-confidence-motion-against-holness](http://www.jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20241001/golding-blocked-moving-no-confidence-motion-against-holness).



## REPRESENTATIONAL FUNCTION

### Representation of Constituents

The Parliament of Jamaica serves as a vital representational institution that encapsulates the interests and concerns of Jamaican citizens within the broader framework of national governance. This representation is achieved through the active involvement of Members from both the House of Representatives and the Senate, each playing distinct yet complementary roles in the legislative process. Positively in Jamaica, there is an invariably strong link between elected Members of Parliament and the local communities they represent. Many parliamentarians in Jamaica work closely with their communities to address local issues and implement relevant policies. This collaboration takes various forms, some of which occur take place at Parliament in Kingston with others targeted at and delivered in local constituencies across Jamaica. This is a positive demonstration of sound parliamentary practice which should be praised.

For example, while in Kingston, the CPA team learned that Parliament engages in public consultations through various Parliamentary Committees, which serve as platforms for extensive dialogue and feedback from citizens, Civil Society organisations, and other relevant stakeholders. These consultations foster a participatory approach to governance, encouraging members of the public to voice their opinions and contribute to discussions about national issues that directly impact their lives. By actively soliciting input from these groups, Parliament aims to create policies that are more reflective of the needs and aspirations of the Jamaican people.

Accountability to the electorate is also a key principle within the Westminster parliamentary framework, supported by structured mechanisms that ensure Government officials are answerable to the public. The Parliament of Jamaica performs positively in this regard with, for example, regular Prime Minister's Question Time events (as mandated by Standing Order 17B<sup>78</sup> of the House of Representatives) taking place monthly during the second sitting of the House. Doing so allows Members of Parliament to pose questions to the Prime Minister about matters of both national significance and local importance. This practice enables Members to scrutinise the Government's activities and directly put forward questions that relate to their individual constituencies.

Representing the interests of constituents is a fundamental responsibility of every Member of Parliament. Elected representatives are responsible for advocating for the needs, interests, and concerns of those they represent, addressing the challenges that arise within their communities. In this role, Members serve as a vital link between Government and the public, ensuring that they convey the voices and views of all citizens. Positively, the House of Representatives Standing Orders (Number 32C<sup>79</sup>) also enables a *State of Constituency Debate* to periodically take place in Parliament. This is another positive example of Jamaica's Parliament effectively meeting relevant CPA Benchmarks. That said, there were mixed views among some stakeholders as to what constitutes adequate resource for Members to fulfil their representative role and how these should best be administered. These discussions raised two important issues:

- 1. Member support** – there was little consensus among Members regarding the appropriate level and means of support required by them and, for the most part, parliamentary officials are happy to assist Members with a range of tasks that in other Commonwealth Legislatures are delegated to staff working in individual Member's offices. While some of these positively support a Member's legislative work in the Parliament, some often relate to personal constituency responsibilities, which can sometimes lead to officials in Parliament's secretariat being taken away from their core professional function in the Legislature. Such occurrences not only reduce the effectiveness of how some core parliamentary functions are conducted but can also create difficulties for the Legislature's non-partisan staff when they are tasked with supporting individual political objectives.
- 2. Constituency Development Funds** – CDFs are allocations of public development monies provided to individual Members of Parliament by the Jamaican Government to spend directly in their constituencies on local infrastructure projects and other community activities<sup>80</sup>. While these funds can undoubtedly bring about positive change in constituencies across Jamaica, some stakeholders who met with the CPA team in Kingston voiced concerns about how effectively these funds are currently being spent. While positive examples of CDF expenditure were highlighted in discussions, some individuals pointed to perceived failings associated with CDFs, potential misuse of them by some Members of Parliament, and suggested that stronger enforcement mechanisms were needed to ensure that the spending of funds correctly distributed and appropriately documented.

78 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

79 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarliament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).

80 Government of Jamaica – *Constituency Development Funds*. [online]. Available at: [www.opm.gov.jm/opm\\_agency/constituency-development-fund/](http://www.opm.gov.jm/opm_agency/constituency-development-fund/).

## RECOMMENDATION 14

**The Parliament of Jamaica should: ensure that a clear distinction is drawn between partisan and non-partisan staff and establish an appropriate oversight mechanism that ensures robust scrutiny of how public monies allocated to Constituency Development Funds are spent and disclosed.**

*(Benchmark 8.1.2 – The Legislature shall provide all legislators with adequate and appropriate resources to enable them to fulfil their constituency responsibilities / Benchmark 11.1.4 – There shall be mechanisms to prevent, detect, and bring to justice legislators and staff engaged in corrupt practices).*

### Representation of Women

According to Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics from 2024, 27% of Members in the House of Representatives and 38% of Members in the Senate are women. Whilst the Parliament of Jamaica performs reasonably well when compared against the current international average of 27.5%<sup>81</sup>, there are various ways in which the Legislature could potentially look to further increase the number of female parliamentarians moving forward. These could include potential electoral reform (whereby a certain percentage of seats in the Legislature must be held by women), reserved seats (whereby only female candidates can contest particular parliamentary constituencies), funding incentives (whereby political parties are provided with funding entitlements to boost the number of female candidates they put forward), and civic education (where the Legislature dedicates particular outreach activities to better capacitate women across its electorate in advance of them running for Parliament).



Positively, in February 2023, the Legislature officially established its inaugural Caucus of Women Parliamentarians<sup>82</sup> (by including a provision in its Standing Orders) which brings together female Members from both Houses on a non-partisan basis to advance the political agency of women across Jamaica. The Caucus's objectives encompass the facilitation of networking, the cultivation of solidarity, and the promotion of constructive dialogue on pertinent issues among women parliamentarians across party affiliations and legislative chambers. Furthermore, the Caucus aims to provide its Members with professional development opportunities designed to enhance their leadership skills and capacity to engage in the legislative process in a manner that is responsive to gender considerations.

As referenced earlier in this Report, the Caucus is (positively) up and running but, as of yet, hasn't held many meetings or participated in many interparliamentary activities with fellow Legislatures in other Caribbean jurisdictions. To this end, it is recommended that the Jamaican Parliament increases its engagement with the CPA's Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Network<sup>83</sup> and disseminates among Members the CPA's associated Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines<sup>84</sup>.

81 IPU Parline: Global Data on National Parliaments – *Global and Regional Averages of Women in National Parliaments*. [online]. Available at: [www.data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date\\_year=2025&date\\_month=01](http://www.data.ipu.org/women-averages/?date_year=2025&date_month=01).

82 Jamaican Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment, and Sport – *Parliament establishes Women's Caucus*. [online]. Available at: [www.mcges.gov.jm/index.php/gender/item/933-parliament-establishes-women-s-caucus](http://www.mcges.gov.jm/index.php/gender/item/933-parliament-establishes-women-s-caucus).

83 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/our-networks/commonwealth-women-parliamentarians/>.

84 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines: Standards and a Checklist for Parliamentary Change*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.cpahq.org/media/s20j1lws/cwp-gender-sensitizing-guidelines.pdf>.

## RECOMMENDATION 15

**The Parliament of Jamaica should increase its efforts to encourage the political participation of women and take concrete steps to help support these objectives.**

*(Benchmark 8.1.1 – The Legislature shall be organised in such a way as to enable the substantive representation of women in its work).*

## PARLIAMENTARY ASSISTANCE AND NETWORKING

### Commonwealth Connections

Jamaica officially joined the Commonwealth on 6 August 1962 albeit the Parliament had already been a member of the CPA prior to independence, establishing its Branch on 1 January 1933<sup>85</sup>. The Parliament is one of 19 Legislatures in the CPA's Caribbean, Americans, and Atlantic (CAA) region, and in recent years Jamaican Members of Parliament have actively participated in a number of CPA events (including as delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference). More broadly, the Parliament enjoys strong working relationships with several other Legislatures throughout the Caribbean. It was clear to the CPA team throughout their time in Kingston that all parliamentary stakeholders understand the importance of strong international relations and are committed to deepening them further.

While both Members and staff in the Parliament seek to positively engage in a range of interparliamentary activities, their means of doing so are sometimes limited due to resource constraints discussed throughout this Report. In recent years, the Parliament has sought to address these issues through soliciting technical assistance from international partners (including the CPA), but more could be done so that the Members and staff of Parliament can maximise the wide-ranging benefits enjoyed from strong interparliamentary cooperation with fellow Legislatures across the Commonwealth. To this end, the CPA team shared information about the resources for assistance, networking, learning and development available to the Parliament as a dedicated member of the CPA. Some of the capacity building and technical assistance opportunities available have already been mentioned in the *Professional Development* section earlier in this Report but, as discussed during stakeholder conversations, the Parliament should seek to engage further with the CPA, perhaps by way of a *Technical Assistance Programme* following successful completion of the Benchmarks Self-Assessment exercise.

## RECOMMENDATION 16

**The Parliament of Jamaica should continue to increase valuable opportunities for its Members and staff to receive technical/advisory assistance from international partners, as well as to network/exchange best legislative practice with representatives of other Commonwealth Legislatures.**

*(Benchmark 9.1.3 – Members and the staff of Parliament shall have the right to receive technical and advisory assistance, as well as to network and exchange experience with individuals from other Legislatures).*

85 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Jamaica Branch*. [online]. Available at: [www.cpahq.org/directory/jamaica/](http://www.cpahq.org/directory/jamaica/).

## IV. VALUES OF THE LEGISLATURE

### ACCESSIBILITY, OPENNESS AND ENGAGEMENT

#### Citizens and Public Engagement

In a modern democracy, legislative systems must be based on and characterised by three principal tenants: Accessibility, Openness, and Engagement. Across all Commonwealth Parliaments, these values are embraced in many different ways. At the Parliament of Jamaica, there is an appreciation and adherence to the importance of citizens having meaningful opportunities to participate in the process and, for the most part, the Parliament of Jamaica performs relatively well against various relevant CPA benchmarks. Positively, the Presiding Officers, Clerk, and wider parliamentary staff are all committed to further improvement moving forward.

For example, as per its Standing Orders, the Clerk is required to prepare an Order Paper ahead of any meeting of the House and official Hansard reports of proceedings in both Houses are produced by Secretariat staff following legislative sittings. Order Papers appear to be disseminated among Members in reasonable time ahead of plenary meetings albeit there is room for improvement (referenced earlier in this Report) in terms of the Parliament establishing a calendar of sittings and how finalised Hansard reports are published online.

While these provisions generally work well internally for Members of Parliament, the Legislature could be doing more when it comes to being fully accessible, open, and engaged with wider Jamaican society<sup>86</sup>. Many of these current shortcomings centre on the Legislature currently re-developing its website. While having an independent online platform set-up at all is positive (some other Commonwealth Legislatures do not), the CPA team identified a number of clear gaps in information that currently features online. Continuing to improve Parliament's website was one of the priority issues discussed with stakeholders during the CPA team's time in Kingston alongside several key benefits being identified. These included but were not limited to:

- Publishing an official calendar of meetings (ahead of time) for the Legislature and related Hansard transcripts from House sittings (post-event) to better allow Jamaican citizens to follow the work of Parliament;
- Producing more detailed information pages that inform external stakeholders of wider parliamentary activities, including how legislation is passed and what work the Legislature's parliamentary Committees undertake;
- Ensuring that current webpages dedicated to Ministerial Statements, Responses to Motions, Votes and Proceedings, and Parliament Reports are all populated as soon as possible to highlight the important work that Members and staff are conducting;
- Improving individual webpages for all Members of Parliament including contact details, their CV, declaration of pecuniary interests, and disclosure of relevant financial activities undertaken in line with allowances provided by the Legislature to support their parliamentary work.

Another linked area in which the Parliament does not fully meet the relevant CPA Benchmark relates to accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities. As discussed earlier in this Report, while the current parliamentary precinct has some positive features, a significant renovation or complete re-build is currently being considered. At the time of writing, its facilities and provisions catering for persons with disabilities could certainly be improved. For example, access to the Chamber's public viewing galleries is not possible for individuals in a wheelchair and wider legislative premises would benefit from additional disabled access ramps, lifts, and public restrooms. In conjunction with the development of its own website mentioned above, the Parliament should ensure that wider facilities and provisions relating to persons with disabilities are more prominently included in its next Strategic Plan.

#### RECOMMENDATION 17

**The Parliament of Jamaica should improve its current website to bring about multiple benefits relating to various openness, and engagement criteria and ensure that future upgrades on the legislative precinct fully take into consideration accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities.**

*(Benchmark 10.1.2 – The Legislature shall be accessible and open to persons with disabilities / Benchmark 10.1.7 – The Legislature shall have a regularly updated and accessible website to enhance and promote information sharing and interaction with citizens and the outside world).*

Throughout the Self-Assessment exercise, further areas of accessibility, openness, and engagement were explored by the CPA team in stakeholder discussions.

<sup>86</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Engagement, Education & Outreach Handbook for Commonwealth Parliaments*. [online]. Available at: [www.cpahq.org/media/sbif14kt/engagement\\_education\\_outreach-handbook\\_final.pdf](http://www.cpahq.org/media/sbif14kt/engagement_education_outreach-handbook_final.pdf).



### Parliamentary Library

A notable aspect of the Parliament's accessibility initiatives is the public's access to the parliamentary library. Despite facing challenges related to its limited physical space, the Legislature's library remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering a wide range of knowledgeable, timely, non-partisan, and high-quality information resource services. This dedication extends not only to all Members of Parliament and their research staff but also includes support for the administrative staff of the Parliament and the general public seeking access to parliamentary information.

The role of the Librarian is pivotal in fulfilling this mission. The Librarian is entrusted with the critical responsibility of curating and ensuring the availability of a collection of resources, including books, academic journals, and various printed materials, to support Members of Parliament in their legislative duties. In addition to managing the library's collection, the Librarian plays a vital role in responding swiftly and effectively to information requests from Members of Parliament, their officers, and authorised personnel from both Houses. This involves locating and providing essential documents that are necessary for the performance of their parliamentary functions.

The Librarian is also responsible for curating and safeguarding a comprehensive repository of documents, including papers, reports, and records pertinent to the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament and their associated Committees. This curated collection ensures that parliamentarians and other stakeholders have access to historical and contemporary information, facilitating informed decision-making and enhancing the efficacy of legislative processes. Through these initiatives, the library seeks to maintain exemplary service standards and bolster Jamaica's democratic infrastructure. The existing team of approximately five library staff is actively seeking additional human resource support to advance the library services further and meet the growing demands of parliamentary information management.

### Modern Technology

This refers to the ability of individuals, particularly Jamaican citizens, to easily access information about parliamentary proceedings, decision-making processes, and available services. This includes streaming Sittings, and Committee meetings live through a dedicated medium, primarily for those who wish to remotely watch and follow the work of legislators. Parliamentary proceedings in Jamaica are streamed live and broadcast via the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica (PBCJ<sup>87</sup>).

The PBCJ is publicly owned and has an extended reach in communities across Jamaica, thereby enabling the Parliament to be '*brought to the people*'. This arrangement is executed through the PBCJ's mandate in covering the work of Parliament and appears to function well. That said, moving forward, the Parliament of Jamaica may wish to establish its own in-house television network which could improve its performance against Accessibility-related CPA Benchmarks by offering greater opportunities for the Jamaican electorate to follow the activities of their Legislature.

### Citizen Interaction

This involves actively encouraging citizen participation in the political process. This can take various forms, including public forums, town hall meetings, and digital platforms that facilitate dialogue between officials and constituents<sup>88</sup>. Engagement empowers citizens to voice their opinions, influence policy discussions, and hold their representatives accountable. By creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcome to participate, a parliamentary democracy can better reflect the diversity of its populace and address the needs and concerns of all community members.

Generally speaking, the Parliament of Jamaica performs relatively well in terms of how it conducts public outreach and educational activities. Officials within the Parliament's administration undertake a range of positive initiatives including organising guided tours of Parliament for interested groups, delivering informative presentations at local schools/universities, and (from time to time) accompanying Committee secretariats during external consultations on a particular inquiry.

### National Youth Parliament of Jamaica

An increasingly significant avenue for public engagement within Commonwealth Parliaments is the organisation of youth parliamentary debates. These debates are recognised as an effective platform for young people to actively participate in the democratic process, typically conducted in simulated parliamentary environments. In Jamaica, the National Youth Parliament is a pivotal initiative that gathers a diverse, non-partisan group of youths to voice their concerns and advocate for issues pertinent to their generation.

Each year, the Parliament of Jamaica, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Youth<sup>89</sup>, traditionally hosts this event in November to coincide with National Youth Month. The National Youth Parliamentary debate presents an invaluable opportunity for young individuals from various backgrounds across Jamaica to articulate their perspectives and engage in meaningful dialogue with their peers on various common interests, including education, health, and social justice.

This annual event serves as a platform for expression and immerses participants in a nurturing environment where they receive

87 Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica – *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: [www.pbcjamaica.org](http://www.pbcjamaica.org).

88 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Engagement, Education, and Outreach Handbook for Commonwealth Parliaments*. [online]. Available at: [www.cpahq.org/media/sbif14kt/engagement\\_education\\_outreach-handbook\\_final.pdf](http://www.cpahq.org/media/sbif14kt/engagement_education_outreach-handbook_final.pdf).

89 Jamaican Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth, and Education – *National Youth Parliament of Jamaica*. [online]. Available at: [www.youthjamaica.gov.jm/youth\\_programmes/national-youth-parliament-of-jamaica/](http://www.youthjamaica.gov.jm/youth_programmes/national-youth-parliament-of-jamaica/).

mentorship and coaching. Through their involvement, youths gain a deeper understanding of parliamentary democracy and the political process. Furthermore, they develop essential skills in critical research, policy formulation and analysis, advocacy strategies, public speaking, and effective communication.

The National Youth Parliament aims to empower the next generation of leaders, foster a culture of participation and civic engagement among Jamaican youths, and ultimately strengthen democratic values within society. The work undertaken by the Parliament of Jamaica and its partners concerning the National Youth Parliament initiative is on point and highly commendable.

### Social Media Platforms

Social media has emerged as a vital instrument in contemporary governance, enhancing transparency, augmenting public engagement, and promoting citizen involvement in democratic frameworks. The Parliament of Jamaica has ably integrated social media into its communication strategy, facilitating the dissemination of information and improving accessibility to parliamentary functions.

Key methodologies include:

1. Live Streaming of Parliamentary Sessions
  - The Parliament streams live sessions of the House of Representatives and the Senate on YouTube and Facebook platforms.
  - This accessibility ensures that Jamaicans can stay updated on national matters in real time regardless of geographical location.
2. Official Social Media Channels
  - Actively utilising platforms like Facebook and Instagram to relay information regarding Bills, Committee Meetings, and Legislative proceedings.
  - Content is enhanced with graphics, short videos, and infographics to render legislative information more digestible for the public.

The Parliament of Jamaica has successfully harnessed social media's power to enhance transparency, educate the public, and foster citizen engagement in governance. As technological advancements continue, opportunities for further integration of digital tools – such as interactive online consultations, AI-powered chatbots for citizen inquiries, and improved accessibility features for individuals with disabilities – are on the horizon<sup>90</sup>.

### Civil Society Engagement

A critical Benchmark for assessing accessibility, transparency, and engagement within legislative processes is the ongoing participation of demographic groups typically underrepresented in parliamentary decision-making. During stakeholder discussions, the Parliament of Jamaica acknowledged the absence of established rules, policies, and resources to facilitate these groups' involvement. Civil society undeniably plays a pivotal role in democratic governance, functioning as an intermediary between the State and its citizens. A robust civil society is essential for fostering a healthy democracy, as it empowers individuals, fortifies institutional frameworks, and enhances principles of good governance.

The Parliament of Jamaica could certainly improve its current working practices in this regard by establishing clearly defined rules of engagement and effective communication interfaces with Civil Society organisations and other under-represented societal groups. Doing so should foster more inclusive and participatory democratic processes by ensuring that diverse perspectives are acknowledged and integrated into the legislative framework. By creating structured channels for dialogue and collaboration, the Parliament can help enhance transparency, accountability, and public trust in governance, ultimately leading to more equitable policy-making that reflects the needs and aspirations of all members of society.

## **RECOMMENDATION 18**

**The Parliament of Jamaica should continue to make positive progress towards becoming a more accessible, open, and engaged Legislature with particular focus on physical infrastructure, digital technologies, and broader citizen engagement activities.**

*(Benchmark 10.1.5 – The Legislature shall promote the public's understanding of the work of the Legislature / Benchmark 10.1.6 – The Legislature shall identify demographic groups whose perspectives are not well represented in parliamentary decision-making and make effort to increase their participation).*

90 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Parliamentary Handbook on Disinformation, AI, and Synthetic Media*. [online]. Available at: [www.cpahq.org/news/2024\\_01-parliamentary-handbook-on-disinformation-ai-and-synthetic-media/](http://www.cpahq.org/news/2024_01-parliamentary-handbook-on-disinformation-ai-and-synthetic-media/).

## The Media

In a parliamentary democracy, the Media plays an essential and multifaceted role that significantly contributes to the overall strength and health of the democratic system. One of its primary functions is to act as a watchdog, diligently monitoring the actions of public officials and Government entities to ensure they are held accountable for their decisions and conduct. This oversight is vital in maintaining the integrity of the democratic process and preventing abuses of power.

The media landscape in Jamaica is robust and intricate, encompassing print, television, radio, and digital/social media platforms. According to the 2024 World Press Freedom Index<sup>91</sup>, Jamaica is ranked 20th out of 180 countries, reflecting a commendable level of press freedom. This ranking highlights the Media's crucial role as a conduit for public discourse, facilitating the expression and debate of diverse perspectives. By promoting open dialogue among citizens, the Media enhances civic engagement and strengthens democratic participation, empowering individuals to take an active role in the democratic process.

While in Kingston, the CPA team held discussions with representatives from the Jamaican media, frequently referred to as '*the fourth estate*' because of its essential function in democratic governance. These interactions revealed two distinct perspectives on the relationship between Jamaican Media and the Parliament.

The first perspective focuses on the collaboration between the Media and the parliamentary staff, specifically the Office of the Parliament. There is a dedicated communications team consisting of three officials whose primary role is to manage communications for and on behalf of the Parliament, including its interactions with the Media. In this context, the parliamentary staff strive to meet the information needs of Media outlets, facilitating efficient reporting on parliamentary proceedings. Media representatives expressed optimism and satisfaction regarding the responsiveness and performance of parliamentary staff, appreciating their commitment to transparency and access to information.

Conversely, the second perspective reveals a more complex and strained dynamic between the Media and individual Members of Parliament. This relationship demonstrated a noticeable tension that, although evident, maintains a commendable professional demeanour. Media professionals often navigate the delicate balance of holding MPs accountable through reporting, while MPs may occasionally be defensive regarding their actions and decisions in the Legislature. This dichotomy illustrates the intricate interplay between the need for robust, transparent communication and inherent challenges in the Media's role as watchdogs within the political landscape. Overall, the engagement between the Media and Parliament reflects the complex nature of democratic governance in Jamaica, where openness and scrutiny are essential yet sometimes contentious.

Media practitioners acknowledged that, in the present day, their coverage of Parliament primarily occurs from remote locations including their own Media houses. This practice has mainly emerged due to sub-optimal Media space within the Parliament. This area can only accommodate eight single-padded chairs, making it both limited and inadequate for the sometimes large number of reporters who attend parliamentary proceedings. During significant events, such as the opening of Parliament, many reporters, need to occupy space in the general public gallery if they wish to observe proceedings live.

Discussions with parliamentary reporters highlighted a strong preference for receiving Bills in a searchable format rather than as scanned documents. This preference stems from the desire for efficiency and ease of access when navigating through the content of these Bills, which can often be lengthy and complex. Journalists generally agree that Members of Parliament are reasonably accessible to them albeit some concerns were raised regarding receiving timely feedback from MPs for interview requests. This perspective is important, particularly given that the Communications staff of Parliament are not responsible for scheduling interfaces between the Media and MPs while in Parliament. Additionally, it was noted by journalists who met with the CPA team that the Parliament's website is not often used for gathering information due to its performance limitations (discussed earlier in this Report).

Currently, Media practitioners/parliamentary reporters are not required to complete an accreditation process to report on or operate within the parliamentary precinct. It was suggested that the absence of a formal accreditation system aligns with the Media's perspective against such processes being introduced. Consequently, while there are reporters who specialise in parliamentary coverage, the existing framework allows for journalists, regardless of their primary focus, to freely attend and report on parliamentary activities at their discretion, without any prior authorisation.

The Parliament's relationship with representatives of Jamaican Media is certainly positive in many aspects, however two important areas for improvement did arise from stakeholder discussions:

- **Facilities:** the Parliament does not currently have a dedicated Media facility on the parliamentary precinct where journalists can base themselves while reporting on parliamentary business. Best practice dictates that one should be established to ensure that members of the Press have regular access to the Legislature and are able to freely report on its affairs.
- **Understanding:** Press representatives who met with the CPA team noted that some Members of Parliament have a limited understanding of the important role that Media outlets can play in promoting the Legislature's work to Jamaican citizens. During these conversations, it was highlighted that providing journalists with opportunities to explain their work (perhaps

91 Reporters Without Borders – 2024 Press Freedom Index. [online]. Available at: [www.rsf.org/en/2024-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-under-political-pressure](https://www.rsf.org/en/2024-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-under-political-pressure).

by being included as part of rolling learning and development schemes) would bring considerable value to improving the relationship between parliamentarians and the Press in a mutually beneficial way that helps Members promote the important legislative work they are carrying out and improves the quality of reporting being conducted by journalists following the Legislature's proceedings. To this end, the CPA team also recommended that Parliament's senior management staff take steps towards producing a companion guide/handbook for representatives of the Press. This initiative has been undertaken in other Commonwealth jurisdictions (such as Tonga<sup>92</sup> and Samoa<sup>93</sup>) to great effect.

## RECOMMENDATION 19

**The Parliament of Jamaica should improve its provision of information and services to representatives of the Press by: establishing a dedicated Media facility on the parliamentary precinct; involving them in post-election induction activities organised for new Members of Parliament; and producing a dedicated companion guide/handbook for reporters who regularly cover the activities of Parliament in their professional responsibilities.**

(Benchmark 10.1.3 – *The Legislature should ensure that the media are given appropriate access to the proceedings of the Legislature without compromising the proper functioning of the Legislature and its rules of procedure* / Benchmark 10.1.4 – *The Legislature shall have a non-partisan media relations facility*).

## ETHICAL GOVERNANCE

### Transparency and Integrity

Ethical governance within a Parliament emphasises the importance of its Members' conduct and behaviour. It encompasses the principles of transparency, accountability, and integrity, guiding how parliamentarians manage their personal and professional affairs. This governance framework requires Members to openly share information regarding their decisions and actions, ensuring that their dealings are accessible and understandable to the public they serve.

#### Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament in Jamaica is guided by the principles established in the Legislature's *Handbook for Parliamentarians*<sup>94</sup>, which serves as a reference for individuals within the legislative framework. The section entitled *Parliamentary Protocol* outlines the expected conduct and behaviour essential for upholding the decorum of the parliamentary institution, however, it is noteworthy that the handbook predominantly addresses the conduct and behaviours of Members during parliamentary sessions or while present in the Parliament building, with limited emphasis placed on conduct and behaviours outside of the parliamentary environment. Accordingly, the Parliament of Jamaica should look to establish a formal Code of Conduct for Members that binds them to upholding the highest standards of behaviour etiquette that comes with holding elected office.

#### Pecuniary Interests

The Standing Orders<sup>95</sup> of both Houses of the Jamaican Parliament specify the responsibilities of any Member who has a direct personal financial interest in a matter being considered by the parliamentary body: "*A Member shall not vote on any subject in which he has a direct personal pecuniary interest, but a motion to disallow a Member's vote on this ground may be made only as soon as the numbers of the Members voting on the question have been declared.*" While these Standing Order provisions are certainly positive, ensuring that all such declarations are routinely made publicly available via the Parliament's website would be another demonstration of the Parliament's commitment to heightening accountability, increasing transparency, and fostering greater public trust.

#### Constituency Office Funds

The Parliament of Jamaica allocates a monthly budget of JMD \$250,000 to each Member of Parliament to assist in fulfilling their representational responsibilities. This financial support is intended to help MPs manage the operations of their constituency offices. During stakeholder discussions there was a consensus among MPs that this amount is insufficient to cover the expenses associated with maintaining these offices however, at the time of this Report, there does not appear to be any oversight mechanism in place which ensures that whatever level of constituency funds are allocated to Members, they are correctly spent on their intended purpose and accurately documented.

#### Political Ombudsman

92 Parliament of Tonga – *Parliamentary Reporter Handbook*. [online]. Available at: [https://falealea.to/images/parliament\\_handbook/TonganParliamentaryHandbookEnglish.pdf](https://falealea.to/images/parliament_handbook/TonganParliamentaryHandbookEnglish.pdf).

93 Parliament of Samoa – *Journalist Handbook*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.palemene.ws/pdfs/Samoa%20Parliamentary%20reporting%20guide.pdf>.

94 Parliament of Jamaica – *Handbook for Parliamentarians*. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/702\\_Handbook%20for%20Parliamentarians.pdf.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/702_Handbook%20for%20Parliamentarians.pdf.pdf).

95 Standing Orders of the Senate 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/Senate%20Standing%20Orders.pdf). / Standing Orders of the House of Representatives 1964. [online]. Available at: [www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf](http://www.japarlament.gov.jm/attachments/article/339/House%20of%20Representatives%20Standing%20Orders.pdf).



The position of a Political Ombudsman is vital for ensuring ethical governance. In Jamaica, the Political Ombudsman<sup>96</sup> exemplifies this commitment by promoting integrity within the political sphere. Established by the Political Ombudsman (Interim) Act of 2002<sup>97</sup>, this independent office has significant responsibilities which include: upholding the nationwide Declaration on Political Conduct; conducting investigations into cases of potential misconduct; providing mediation and conflict resolution between political parties and electoral candidates; and enhancing public awareness of ethical political practices through civic education campaigns.

#### Freedom of Information

Jamaica does have a Freedom of Information regime in place, with the *Access to Information Act*<sup>98</sup> (2002) being on the statute book for over 20 years. During discussions held by the CPA team, various stakeholders positively acknowledged the Act and the role it plays in reinforcing important democratic principles that ensure political activities in Jamaica, as far as possible, are undertaken with transparency and integrity.

Overall, during various stakeholder discussion in Kingston, there was broad support from the majority of stakeholders, including political leaders, to introduce new schemes and strengthen existing ones with the ambition of seeing the Parliament of Jamaica meet all relevant CPA transparency and integrity-related Benchmarks. This was encouraging and doing so would not only be a strong demonstration of the Legislature taking proactive steps towards establishing heightened standards for conduct across the parliamentary precinct but also align the House with best practices from other Commonwealth Legislatures<sup>99</sup>.

### **RECOMMENDATION 20**

**The Parliament of Jamaica should: establish a bespoke Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament; develop a more robust Declaration of Pecuniary Interests scheme; and introduce strengthened mechanisms of ensuring that public monies apportioned to supporting Members' Constituency Offices are commensurate and fully accounted for.**

*(Benchmark 11.1.1 – Legislators should maintain high standards of accountability, transparency, responsibility, and propriety in the conduct of all public and parliamentary matters including strict adherence to codes of conduct, and interest disclosure rules / Benchmark 11.1.2 – The Legislature shall approve and enforce codes of conduct, including rules on conflicts of interest and the acceptance of gifts / Benchmark 11.1.3 – Legislatures shall require legislators to periodically fully and publicly disclose their financial and other relevant interests / Benchmark 11.1.4 – There shall be mechanisms to prevent, detect, and bring to justice legislators and staff engaged in corrupt practices).*

96 Political Ombudsman of Jamaica – *Homepage*. [online]. Available at: [www.jis.gov.jm/category/office-of-the-political-ombudsman/](http://www.jis.gov.jm/category/office-of-the-political-ombudsman/).

97 Jamaican Ministry of Justice – Political Ombudsman (Interim) Act. [online]. Available at: [www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-political-ombudsman-interim-act](http://www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-political-ombudsman-interim-act).

98 Jamaican Ministry of Justice – *Access to Information Act*. [online]. Available at: [www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-access-to-information-act](http://www.laws.moj.gov.jm/library/statute/the-access-to-information-act).

99 Commonwealth Parliamentary Association – *Standards for Codes of Conduct*. [online]. Available at: [www.cpahq.org/media/k4bhbzvd/codes-of-conduct-2024\\_final.pdf](http://www.cpahq.org/media/k4bhbzvd/codes-of-conduct-2024_final.pdf).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1:** The Parliament of Jamaica should update current national electoral law to include ‘power of recall’ provisions and provide citizens with postal/proxy voting means, whilst ensuring that the Electoral Commission of Jamaica has sufficient powers to accurately monitor and regulate campaign finance laws relating to candidates running for Parliament.

**Recommendation 2:** The Parliament of Jamaica should update its parliamentary privilege/immunity provisions to enshrine in law due protections for former Members, while also introducing a citizen’s ‘right of reply’ scheme in relation to adverse references made to individuals during legislative proceedings.

**Recommendation 3:** The Parliament of Jamaica should pass legislation that establishes an independent Remuneration Authority with adequate mechanisms for monitoring and publishing relevant financial disclosures relating to Members of Parliament.

**Recommendation 4:** The Parliament of Jamaica should accelerate its plans to construct a new precinct befitting its status as an effective modern-day Legislature and, where possible, in the meantime seek to improve current physical infrastructure, with a focus on providing Committees with bespoke meeting spaces and Members with individual office, updating ICT provisions, expanding library/research service facilities, and enhancing accessibility provisions for persons with disabilities across the parliamentary precinct.

**Recommendation 5:** The Parliament of Jamaica should expand its Professional Development Programmes to include the participation of key external stakeholders, hold these periodically between General Elections, and ensure that such opportunities are open to all Members of Parliament and Secretariat staff.

**Recommendation 6:** The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to increase the regularity of parliamentary sittings, establish an annual calendar of meetings, and ensure that this is published online for the benefit of Jamaican citizens and other interested stakeholders.

**Recommendation 7:** The Parliament of Jamaica should adopt provisions that allow specific days in its parliamentary calendar for the consideration of Non-Government business and establish structures within its staff Secretariat to facilitate the meaningful introduction of Private Members’ Bills.

**Recommendation 8:** The Parliament of Jamaica should develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to modernise its petition process, establish electronic means of submission through its website, and consider introducing a numerical threshold for signatories that mandates the Legislature (and its Committees) to fully consider any petition submitted by external organisations or members of the wider public.

**Recommendation 9(1):** The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to improve the structure and oversight of its Committees by ensuring: all Executive Ministries are scrutinised by a corresponding parliamentary Committee; a substantial number of Committees are chaired by non-Government Members; and all Committees are empowered with binding means to summon persons, papers, and records.

**Recommendation 9(2):** The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to improve the resource and independence of its Committees by: providing Committees with dedicated working space on the Legislature’s precinct to increase the efficiency and scope of their activities; increasing the staff capacity of Committees to support own-initiative work; and guaranteeing that all Committees have an independent budget (free from Executive oversight) that enables them to conduct outreach activities away from the parliamentary precinct.

**Recommendation 10:** The Parliament of Jamaica should establish a Parliamentary Service Commission (or equivalent corporate body) with responsibility for the Legislature’s internal governance and key related parliamentary services.

**Recommendation 11:** The Parliament of Jamaica should enhance the drafting, scrutiny, and implementation of legislation by establishing an independent Legal Department to support Private Members’ Bills, conducting equality impact assessments on draft legislation, and introducing pre- and post-legislative scrutiny to ensure laws are well-designed and effective.

**Recommendation 12:** The Parliament of Jamaica should amend its Standing Orders to ensure that the Executive fully complies with its accountability responsibilities to Parliament by answering all questions put to it by Members of the Legislature in a timely and effective manner.

**Recommendation 13:** The Parliament of Jamaica should seek to establish an independent Parliamentary Budget Office so that it has increased resources and sufficient financial expertise to conduct financial oversight responsibilities more effectively.

**Recommendation 14:** The Parliament of Jamaica should: ensure that a clear distinction is drawn between partisan and non-partisan staff and establish an appropriate oversight mechanism that ensures robust scrutiny of how public monies allocated to Constituency Development Funds are spent and disclosed.

**Recommendation 15:** The Parliament of Jamaica should increase its efforts to encourage the political participation of women and take concrete steps to help support these objectives.

**Recommendation 16:** The Parliament of Jamaica should continue to increase valuable opportunities for its Members and staff to receive technical/advisory assistance from international partners, as well as to network/exchange best legislative practice with representatives of other Commonwealth Legislatures.

**Recommendation 17:** The Parliament of Jamaica should improve its current website to bring about multiple benefits relating to various openness, and engagement criteria and ensure that future upgrades on the legislative precinct fully take into consideration accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities.

**Recommendation 18:** The Parliament of Jamaica should continue to make positive progress towards becoming a more accessible, open, and engaged Legislature with particular focus on physical infrastructure, digital technologies, and broader citizen engagement activities.

**Recommendation 19:** The Parliament of Jamaica should improve its provision of information and services to representatives of the Press by: establishing a dedicated Media facility on the parliamentary precinct; involving them in post-election induction activities organised for new Members of Parliament; and producing a dedicated companion guide/handbook for reporters who regularly cover the activities of Parliament in their professional responsibilities.

**Recommendation 20:** The Parliament of Jamaica should: establish a bespoke Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament; develop a more robust Declaration of Pecuniary Interests scheme; and introduce strengthened mechanisms of ensuring that public monies apportioned to supporting Members' Constituency Offices are commensurate and fully accounted for.

## STAKEHOLDERS

The CPA would like to thank everyone consulted as part of this Self-Assessment:

Name	Title
Senator the Honourable Thomas Tavares-Finson	President of the Senate (Parliament of Jamaica)
Most Honourable Juliet Holness MP	Speaker of the House of Representatives (Parliament of Jamaica)
Hon. Edmund Bartlett MP	Minister of Tourism & House Leader (Parliament of Jamaica)
Hon. Olivia Grange MP	Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport & Deputy House Leader (Parliament of Jamaica)
Hon. Marlene Malahoo Forte MP	Minister of Legal and Constitutional Affairs (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Phillip Paulwell MP	Opposition Business Leader in the House (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Julian Robinson MP	Chairman of Public Accounts Committee (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Mikael Phillips MP	Chairman of Public Accounts and Appropriations Committee (Parliament of Jamaica)
Dr. Morais Guy MP	Opposition Backbench MP (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Tamika Davis	Government Backbench MP (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Colleen Lowe	Clerk to the Houses (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Christopher Cowan	Deputy Clerk (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Chesanne Brandon	Assistant Clerk (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Tashana Sewell	Director – Corporate Communications and Public Relations (Parliament of Jamaica)
Capt. Wayne Blake	Marshal to the Houses (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mrs. Camille Ashman Morris	Director – Human Resource Management and Development (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Rochelle Campbell	Acting Principal Finance Officer (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Ashleigh Ximines	Acting Senior Legislative Counsel Parliament of Jamaica



Mrs. Donette McHayle	Hansard Editor (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Carl Bryan	Chief Hansard Writer (Parliament of Jamaica)
Ms. Stephanie Hamilton	Senior Researcher (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mrs. Julian Wilson	Librarian (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Renford Watson	Facilities and Office Manager (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Merrick Brown	System Administrator (Parliament of Jamaica)
Mr. Glasspole Brown	Director of Elections (Electoral Commission of Jamaica)
Mrs. Fernell Daley	General Legal Counsel & Director of Electoral Affairs (Electoral Commission of Jamaica)
Ms. Daynia Harper	Public Relations and Communications Manager (Electoral Commission of Jamaica)
Ms. Trishanna Williamson	Executive Assistant (Electoral Commission of Jamaica)
Dr. Derrick McKoy	Attorney-General (Attorney-General's Chambers)
Mrs. Carissa Messado	Deputy Solicitor-General – Constitutional and Legislative Affairs (Attorney-General's Chambers)
Miss Monique Adams	Assistant Attorney-General – Constitutional and Legislative Affairs (Attorney-General's Chambers)
Mrs. Pamela Monroe Ellis	Auditor-General (Auditor-General's Department)
Ms. Carolyn Lewis	Deputy Auditor-General (Auditor-General's Department)
Mr. Marlon McAdam	Deputy Auditor-General (Auditor-General's Department)
Mr. Wayne Robertson	Permanent Secretary (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)
Ms. Judith Grant	Chief Parliamentary Counsel (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)
Ms. Christal Paris-Campbell	Assistant Chief Parliamentary Counsel (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)
Mr. Christopher Harper	Senior Director – Constitutional Reform Division (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)
Ms. Nadine Wilkins	Director – Legal Reform Department (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)
Mrs. Janelle Miller Williams	Senior Director – Legal Education Division (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)

Ms. Nastacia McFarlane	Director – Corporate Communications and Public Relations (Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs)
Mr. Chevon Campbell	Senior Reporter (Nationwide News Network)
Mr. Arthur Hall	Editor-at-Large (Jamaica Observer)
Mrs. Andrea Chisholm Anglin	Senior Reporter/Producer/News Anchor (RJR Gleaner Communications Group)
Mr. Jonathan Cook	Deputy High Commissioner (UK High Commission – Kingston)
Mr. Oliver Blake	UK FCDO Representative for Jamaica (UK High Commission – Kingston)



This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly across the page, typical of notebook or legal stationery. The lines are thin and light blue, set against a plain white background. There are no margins, text, or other markings present.

[illegible]





## GEORGE WILLIAM GORDON HOUSE



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