

**SPEECH FOR GRACEKENNEDY GROUP CEO DON WEHBY  
TO ADDRESS  
THE ROTARY CLUB OF MONTEGO BAY  
Tuesday, November 22, 2011  
@1pm**

---

Madam President of the Rotary Club of Montego Bay, Dr. Vernella Fuller, other Rotarians, colleagues from the GraceKennedy family, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon.

I am very happy to be here with you, as you celebrate 50 years of service. Several social sectors have benefitted from the work of your club, and that work shows that volunteerism is still alive and well in Jamaica. I salute you for that, as GraceKennedy is a company that strongly believes in, and advocates for, volunteerism. Congratulations to you all on the great job you have done, and continue to do.

I am also happy to be here because Montego Bay has always been important to GraceKennedy. Our association with this city goes back many years. We are proud to have our products and services being widely used in Montego Bay.

Our four factories provide a wide range of foods and beverages, proudly manufactured right here in Jamaica – our Grace ham, ketchup, cock soup, and beverages such as Tropical Rhythms. Our Hi-Lo, Agro-Grace and Rapid True Value stores are also here in Montego Bay. There is also the GraceKennedy Financial Centre which we opened in April of 2010, comprising First Global Bank, First Global Financial Services, Allied Insurance Brokers and JIIC. That Centre represents a commitment on our part to expand our operations in Western Jamaica, and to make it easier for persons in this part of the island to access our products and services.

I know that this year, your club is focusing on education through scholarships, but especially dealing with the area of literacy. I'm also aware that your focus is driven by an understanding that a number of the problems we face in our society would be eliminated, if our country had more literate citizens. GraceKennedy shares that view one hundred percent, and we have translated this awareness into practice, as we have two active Foundations which are changing the lives of many young people in this country, through scholarships, and a vision of the great nation that Jamaica could be.

Today I want to share with you my thoughts on that vision and how we can make it reality. My humble belief is that the vehicle that will get us to the destination we so desire, is sustainable growth, so that our citizens can realise their potential, and live a better life. At present there are a number of obstacles in our way. But we can get around them with dedication, and the right approach!

The first stumbling block is the lack of growth in our economy. The National Development Plan has a vision of Jamaica as the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business which, it is hoped, can be achieved by 2030. If we are to realise this vision, we have some serious work to do, some of which has already started. But there is more to be done, including the putting in place of a sound and predictable macro-economic policy framework that *maintains* low inflation, the creation of a tax system that is simple and competitive, and the development of a modernised labour market geared at high levels of productivity. There is also the need to strengthen the measures to stem and prevent corruption, and the creation of supportive infrastructure. Thankfully, we have seen some progress in the area of crime, which is steadily on the decrease. We are encouraged by that development.

There is, however, one area that I think needs serious attention – which is the creation of a simplified business-friendly bureaucracy.

I would like to expand on that point a little more. While listening to Prime Minister Holness' speech at his swearing ceremony, I was very encouraged to hear him say that bureaucracy is an area he plans to tackle. I was happy to hear it, because I believe that bureaucracy is seriously stifling growth in our nation. Each year the World Bank releases an "Ease of Doing Business Report", which ranks countries worldwide on how easy it is to start and maintain a businesses there based on a number of criteria, including, how easy it is to start up the business , register property, pay taxes, get electricity, obtain credit, and deal with construction permits, among other things. In the World Bank "Doing Business Report" for 2011, Jamaica is ranked 85<sup>th</sup> out of 183 countries in terms of how easy it is to do business here! 85<sup>th</sup> out of 183 countries! Why are we ranking lower, instead of rising on that list? In a word - bureaucracy. There is just too much red tape and unnecessary delays in doing business here.

These are some of my suggestions to help alleviate bureaucracy. First, I suggest a full review of the information technology systems throughout the different ministries, accompanied by the creation of a campaign map, for us to move forward in a modern world, using modern technology. I would also like

to see an office set up within the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, to investigate bureaucracy complaints from those trying to do business with the government. I also think there could be a review of government ministries and agencies, with measures put in place to improve their accountability and efficiency. Targets could be set for what each ministry or agency should achieve, with progress reports given on a regular basis. Audits of the different processes and systems used should be done as well, so that those that don't work can be eliminated. If government were a business, we would review the details of that World Bank Report I mentioned earlier, and create measurements on how to improve on the ranking criteria, with a view to setting goals on how to improve our overall position on the list. I challenge the government on Jamaica to see how we can move to the top fifty of that list within the next two years. What gets measured, gets done!

Another vehicle to growth, is unity. Some tough decisions need to be made for growth, which will require unity. I am calling for a strengthening of the Social Partnership between the Government, the Opposition, the private sector and trade unions. It is an interesting time for Jamaica, and we now know that we will soon be having national elections. It is therefore a very good time for the Government and the Opposition to lead by example. We hope they will be engaged in constant dialogue, respectful of their differences, but fully aware that, as the Governor General once said, "the Jamaica that unites us is far greater than the political parties that divide us".

In my opinion, Tourism is going to be the lead industry for growth in the Jamaican economy. The truth is that we can benefit as a nation from immeasurable growth in that sector, but we have to get it right! The time has come, when we have to take a serious look at the industry and what it could mean to for Jamaica. Yes, we are doing well – better than many – but there is room for improvement.

I am honoured to have been asked by the Minister of Tourism to head a special Task Force to lead an Impact Study, which will pinpoint the extent of tourism's contribution to the economy. The aim is to help public and private sector decision makers to adequately plan and manage the industry. The results of the Study will contribute significantly to improving the quality of information available for strategic planning and policy development. It will also be useful to local producers of goods and services, to allow them to take advantage of the many opportunities that exist in the industry.

I am hoping that the Impact Study will provide data, and a guide on how the local production sector can get more integrated with the tourism sector, through the provision of goods and services from local

entrepreneurs and businesses alike, and as such, provide more capital to stimulate more growth. I speak of our farmers, our craftsmen, our restaurateurs. Everybody can benefit!

Jamaica's National Development Plan has a vision of a country with an inclusive, world-class, tourism industry that is a major contributor to socio-economic and cultural development, with a well-educated, highly skilled and motivated workforce at all levels. That's a vision we need to make reality.

Again, how do we do that? First, through improvement in key aspects of the tourism product, including tourism development and diversification, improving standards, upgrading of infrastructure in resorts, and human resource development. All of that can be done through the **promotion of linkage, and the reduction of leakage.**

When local economic linkages are weak, revenue from tourism receipts in any local economy leaks out in many ways. Last year, we had 1,921,678 visitors to our shores. We have 31,404 hotel rooms. Think about this for a moment - the people who occupy those rooms must be fed; they should be having our delicious mangoes, and local produce! They drink gallons of water and beverages every day – why shouldn't those be made here?

The new hotels that have come on stream and those that are still on the drawing board need furniture. Who is providing these products and services? There are dozens of services that support the industry, but so many more that could! If Jamaicans don't see those opportunities and seize them, others will, and that is where the leakage comes in. The industry needs to engage local suppliers, use local capital and resources and develop the skills necessary to deliver consistently at an appropriate quality and at a competitive price. Let's stem the leakage, and bring back that entrepreneurial spirit to Jamaica, by providing opportunities for employment, and outlets for those who produce locally, to sell their authentic Jamaican products.

Everytime I see a T-shirt bearing the Jamaican colours or the Jamaican flag, with a label that shows it was made abroad, I wonder why that T-shirt could not have been made here! Others are doing it and cashing in! It's now time for **US** to starting taking advantage of, and benefitting from the power of **OUR** Jamaican brand.

We all want to see Jamaica become a better place, through the alleviation of poverty, suffering and distress, the facilitation of education for those who cannot afford it, the improvement of economic,

social and environmental conditions in vulnerable communities, and the reduction of crime and violence through economic opportunity. All this will lead to a better quality of life for Jamaica and her citizens.

In the last 50 years, Montego Bay's Rotarians have inspired each other to achieve what many would have thought to be impossible. I urge you to continue this tradition of extending yourselves to achieve more and to make a positive impact on Jamaica and its people.

Thank you all for inviting me here today. Here's to another 50 years to the Rotary Club of Montego Bay, in a Jamaica where we are about to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> next year. May our celebrations ignite a movement to create a nation where there is sustainable growth, and where we can all be happy to live, work, do business and raise our families.

Thank you all.