

Watch Yuh Money Spending

Does it seem like yuh money is doing a disappearing act? Are you buying the same tings, paying for the same services, but at a much higher price?

Well, don't be too quick to blame it solely on the global financial crunch. The Consumer Affairs Commission(CAC) is urging shoppers to take a closer look at prices, and be much more vigilant in the supermarket, department stores, or at the gas pump. "During this time, we are asking consumers to be even more vigilant than you were before. We ask that you do shopping around, before you actually make your purchase. Compare your prices when you go shopping," advises Chief Executive Officer of the CAC, Dolsie Allen, in a JIS News interview. "We have been providing information for you on basic food items, and to let you know where the cheaper prices are, in terms of basic food items, in the markets and so on," she went on. That enticing end of month sale may be just what you have been looking for. However, the bargain you think is made in heaven, may be the one to be wary of. "We ask that persons be more vigilant with these specials going on. Do the math yourself before you make your purchase. We are also asking that you examine the products carefully before you purchase them, especially those items that you are going to ingest, such as food items, and some pharmaceutical items, ensure that you look at the labels and that the expiry date is within reasonable time," the CEO says. Consumers should also take precaution to secure their money and protect against identify theft, and if you use a credit card, do not let it out of your sight, she insists. "Make sure that you are seeing what is happening, because there are a lot of persons who are involved in identity theft, and a lot of persons fall prey to this type of thing when you give your credit card to persons to run it, for example at gas stations," she warns. "We have a tendency to remain in our cars, while the credit card is being run inside the office. We ask that you desist from this practice," she said. She discourages persons from becoming too involved in high cost credit arrangements, as high interest rates prevail at this time. She advises persons that, where these transactions are entered into, they must ensure that they are getting the best possible deal. She is also asking consumers to keep an eye out for the troubling practice, where prices are displayed on items but billed higher at the cash register. This is most prevalent in supermarkets and petrol stations. In cases where persons purchase items and find that they are sold much cheaper at other locations, she says it is up to the discretion of the vendor as to whether the shopper can return the goods. In a free market environment, the CAC has no control over prices and, therefore, buyers are not entitled to any redress in such instances. "We are living in challenging times, but we can overcome this. We ask that you do some planning, and budgeting before you go shopping," Mrs. Allen suggests. "We have many needs and many wants, but we have to learn to prioritize and take care of the needs. Those of us who have children, we ask you to ensure that the children are taken care of long before we think of our personal needs," she implores. She further informs consumers to arm themselves with information on their rights, and to ask about the return policy of the establishments. It is also important not to be lured into back-door, or illegal transactions, she says. "We are encouraging persons to ensure that you collect your receipts. There are times when persons will say, I won't charge GCT if you don't collect the receipt. You may think you are getting a bargain by not paying. But, this is illegal. If something happens and you don't have a receipt, it may be more challenging for you to get redress," she warns. Visitors should also be on the alert and should ensure that they are aware of what currency prices are being quoted in, before they make their purchases. Mrs. Allen says that going shopping with a friend or a local is also advisable, for better guidance and to avoid being quoted exorbitant prices.