

## Process Underway to Improve Airport Experience in Jamaica

Efforts to improve the flow of visitors and locals alike through Jamaica's international airports are to be boosted, through the introduction of strategies aimed at making the process seamless.

In making the announcement, Jamaica's Minister of Tourism and Entertainment, the Hon. Dr. Wykeham McNeill, explained that "we believe that it is critical that we address the lingering issues in order to improve the airport experience and make the exit and entry of persons to the island seamless. This is in-keeping with our plans to improve the flow of persons through immigration and our airports in general."

Minister McNeill expressed that "I am working along with my colleague, Minister of National Security Mr. Peter Bunting, under whose portfolio immigration falls, to determine how we can improve on the current situation. Ultimately we would like to have a smoother, hassle free and more customer friendly process. We believe we will have to examine our laws in order to improve the system, as many of them don't speak to the current technological trends."

Dr. McNeill outlined that "it is also evident that we will have to re-engineer how we handle out-going immigration to ensure that we make the process more efficient while ensuring that security is not compromised. It is likely that we will have to boost our staff complement as well, so we are currently examining the options available to us at this time."

The Minister, who along with Minister Bunting, Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, the Hon. Damion Crawford, and senior officials from both Ministries toured the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay on the weekend, added that "our recent tour was a fact-finding mission which allowed us to see first-hand the problems that need to be tackled. It was important for us to visit the airport early because it is the first and last experience for our visitors and there have been concerns which we have to address. We intend to establish a special committee which will examine all the issues that need to be dealt with in order to ensure that the passage of persons through the airports is smooth and that the time spent clearing immigration is reduced."

Dr. McNeill added that "the work of this committee will be informed by the report recently submitted by the Tourism Competitiveness Task Force which was chaired by Mr. Josef Forstmayr. They examined issues affecting the competitiveness of tourism in Jamaica particularly relating to welcome at the airports, regional and international visa requirements, as well as aviation policy issues and taxation. We intend to examine their recommendations and build on that foundation moving forward." Source: South Florida Caribbean News