

Government to Begin Accepting Bids for Casinos on June 1

The Government will begin accepting bids for the construction of integrated resorts under the recently-gazetted Casino Games Regulation 2012, as of June 1.

Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr. the Hon. Peter Phillips, made the announcement during his opening presentation in the 2013/14 Budget Debate in the House of Representatives, on April 18. Dr. Phillips informed that the integrated resort developments, with casinos, will create at least five jobs per room. "Our law provides for a maximum of three such resorts with 2,000 new rooms each. This will, upon completion, translate into at least 30,000 new permanent jobs," he stated. The period for receipt of requests and completed applications will be from June 1 to September 30, 2013. "I expect to be able to make orders declaring Approved Integrated Resort Developments by early (2014)," the Minister said. He pointed out that the Casino Gaming Commission has already received at least six serious expressions of interests. The Casino Gaming Act was passed by both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament in 2010. Dr. Phillips argued that approved integrated resort developments are the means by which the Government proposes to substantially grow the hotel sector with accompanying casinos, entertainment, banqueting and other facilities. He noted that the model which the government is using, is based on the one introduced by Singapore, which is inclusive of hotels, restaurants, and shopping and convention space, with casinos, and has led to a "phenomenal growth in tourism". The Minister said that Singapore now earns more from its casino floors than Las Vegas, Nevada, in the United States. "Here in Jamaica, our Casino Gaming Act provides that the Minister may, by Order, declare an Integrated Resort Development to be an approved Integrated Resort Development," he said. Local regulations also require that the integrated resort development, when completed, will comprise one or more hotels, providing in the aggregate at least 2,000 rooms. The law also excludes hotel rooms already in existence or under construction, prior to the making of an application for an Order. Additionally, each new integrated resort must have 2,000 new hotel rooms. JIS