

Sumfest provides \$6m boost to MoBay economy

Reggae Sumfest 2016 is expected to provide a US\$6 million shot in the arm to the economy of Montego Bay, St James, and its environs.

Created as a vehicle for stimulating tourism during slow summer months, Reggae Sumfest provides a huge fillip for the greater Montego Bay economy, said Robert Russell, former chairman, Summerfest Productions Limited. "Sumfest annually attracts 4,000 visitors to Montego Bay. The Jamaica Tourist Board (JTB), says that they typically spend US\$1,500 each. A lot of people depend on the festival to send their children back to school in September. The hotels, rental cars, taxis, craft vendors ... everybody look to Sumfest, as it's a big economic boost for Montego Bay and, by extension, Jamaica," Russell said. The festival, part-sponsored by JTB, is scheduled for Catherine Hall, Montego Bay, St James, July 17-23. Gloria Henry, president, Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, agreed Sumfest provides an essential boost for the economy. "Hotels are filled, restaurants, food services, bars and car-rental companies do great business. The impact is far-reaching and, apart from the fiscal benefits, the festival is a great calendar event, marketed locally and overseas, which helps to promote Montego Bay as a great place to do business," she said. Sumfest's best-attended night has consistently been its Thursday Dancehall Night, featuring almost 30 local deejays, drawing 12,000-plus patrons. Traditionally, at least 20,000 patrons attend the festival over three nights. "From the days of Sunsplash, this period has traditionally been very important to Montego Bay because we are coming out of the tourist season at the end of April. Sumfest provides a boost that keeps the hotels operational by filling rooms for a week or two," Robin Russell, general manager of Deja Resorts, said. "The influx of visitors from Kingston and overseas injects capital in a variety of industries from arts and crafts to rent-a-cars, to restaurants, so Sumfest is a great vehicle to stimulate the economy."