

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR  
THE MOST HON. P. J. PATTERSON, ON, PC, QC, MP  
PRIME MINISTER OF JAMAICA  
AT MICHAEL LEE CHIN'S RECEPTION  
TORONTO, CANADA  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2004**

The resumption of Air Jamaica's direct flights to Canada, comes at a time when the partnership between our two countries is entering another exciting and promising period. This is happening at every level – government to government, in trade, investment, tourism, culture and sports.

Indeed, in view of the wide scope of our common interests and the depth of our shared objectives, the resumption of Air Jamaica's direct flights to Toronto strengthens even further the two-way connection with family, friends, investors and consumers.

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Hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans have chosen to make Canada their adopted homeland and have settled across the length and breadth of the vast Canadian territory.

The Jamaican community in Canada has been a source of much support for philanthropic projects in education and health in Jamaica, which have been of tremendous benefit to our communities. For that, I thank you on behalf of all those who benefit from your generosity.

Among the more recent developments is our relationship with many Jamaicans here who hold influential positions in the bureaucracy, in political organizations, the professions, in services and in business.

Each year, there is a strong two-way flow of traffic as thousands of Jamaicans travel to Canada to visit friends and relatives and Jamaicans resident in Canada visit family in Jamaica. Additionally, thousands of Canadians vacation annually in our island to enjoy the diversity of our world-renowned tourism attractions.

This direct connection with the start up of non-stop service by Air Jamaica will no doubt strengthen the already robust partnerships between our two countries that is evident in so many areas, for example: the Canadian firm, Vancouver Airport Service, is a partner in the international consortium which now manages and operates the Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay - the important Air Jamaica hub - where the vast majority of our stop-over visitors arrive and the gateway to the airline's Caribbean destinations.

Visitor arrivals from Canada to Jamaica is up by 7.7% for the first two months of this year compared with the same period last year; Jamaican products have taken off to become favourites of consumers here and, of course, billions of dollars of new investments are being made in Jamaica by Canadian companies and by Jamaicans who have made Canada their home.

Complementing all of this is the activism of the Jamaica Canada Society that helps to keep the bonds of friendship and cooperation strong and vibrant among our Jamaican communities.

Our tourism sector is enjoying robust growth and our stop over visitors as well as our cruise passenger arrivals have reached record levels. Over the past four years, our tourism sector has attracted new investments to the tune of approximately US\$127.7 million.

We welcome the interest being shown by Canadian investors in the sector. Entrepreneurs like our host this evening, Lee Chin and Ray Chang, whose hospitality I enjoyed on another equally pleasant occasion yesterday – business tycoons who have earned reputations of knowing how to pick winners - have already invested heavily in our financial and agro-processing sectors, and are now expressing strong interest in the hospitality sector.

When you think about it, it is only right that more Canadians partner with us in Jamaica's tourism because stop-over visitor arrivals to Jamaica out of Canada is surpassed only by our visitor arrivals from the USA and the UK.

Our bauxite/alumina sector has been another very strong performer in our economy, generating Gross Revenue of US\$773 million last year, an 8.6% increase over 2002. Recently, Alcoa announced a US\$690 million expansion of the Jamalco refinery in Clarendon that will result in increased annual revenue of US\$300 million.

The vast potential for further inflows is the basis for the sustained focus that the Government of Jamaica has placed on investment promotion and on creating an investment-friendly environment.

Over the last three years, confidence in our island's prospects for sustainable economic development has led to investments of over US\$1 billion by overseas investors in Jamaica's tourism, telecommunications and infrastructure sectors.

One of the indicators of my Administration's success in creating an enabling environment is that the World Bank recently named Jamaica among the ten best places to do business.

We have achieved this international recognition because we have introduced the requisite policies and services to increase our competitiveness in the facilitation of investors.

My visit to Canada at this time is occasioned by the new initiative of Air Jamaica - the re-introduction of non-stop service to Toronto after a hiatus of fourteen years. The national airline has proven to be a most steadfast player in our development efforts. Not only does Air Jamaica bring more than half of our stopover visitors to our island annually, but it has forged strategic partnerships with our business and export sectors and with Jamaican communities overseas.

With this new route linking Canada to Jamaica, and through our modernised and updated Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay, Air Jamaica's hub, we are opening up further gateways for investment by way of the airline's service to the entire Caribbean region.

I invite you to take advantage not only of the many opportunities available for investment in Jamaica but also in our member countries of CARICOM, a logical development as the regional grouping continues to actively pursue the creation of Caribbean Economic Space that can enhance our individual and collective socio-economic welfare. The establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) will enable CARICOM countries to take advantage of reciprocal trade and investment within a regional market.

We look forward to facilitating your business relationship with Jamaica as well as our Region to our mutual benefit.