

The Jamaica Debates Commission is pleased to announce that Jamaica will have its first Local Government Political Debate on Thursday March 22, 2012 at 9.00PM with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Three-member teams from the Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party will participate in a 90-minute debate on radio and television. The debate will examine the parties' vision and policy direction on local government, proposed or amended structures, governance procedures and especially the scope of local government activities.

In its broad definition of local government issues the JDC has listed financial accountability and transparency issues as being amongst those it expects to be covered in the debate.

"This is a very important step forward as issues close to people will come into focus, including the management of street cleaning, street lighting, public health, fire services, water quality, the handling of our parks, markets, beaches, cemeteries; how we deal with the poor and indigent through poor relief programmes, how we manage our infirmaries; the licensing and monitoring of safety and hygiene practices of restaurants, barber shops, hair dressing facilities and so on", JDC Chairman Gary Allen said.

The JDC disclosed that in preparation for the debates and as a part of building awareness about the depth of local government issues, it is partnering with the British High Commission in the staging of a workshop on Local Government issues.

The workshop, which takes place tomorrow (Sunday March 18, 2012) at the Mandeville Hotel, Mandeville Manchester, will examine a number of important issues related to the coverage of Local Government. Presenters at the workshop include Political historian Troy Caine, General Secretary of the Jamaica Association of Local Government Officers (JALGO), Mrs. Helene Davis-Whyte, Franklin McKnight Founder/Editor North Coast Times Newspaper and Mrs. Ethlyn Norton-Coke Tax Specialist & Attorney.

The JDC says it will make an announcement shortly as to the moderator and the questioners for the debate.