

Public Education Campaign on Access to Information Act

From the Jamaica Information Service

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Minister of Information and Development, Senator Colin Campbell, has said that the Ministry would be embarking on an island wide public education campaign, to sensitize the public about the Access to Information Act.

Senator Campbell, who was addressing the opening of the International Access to Information forum yesterday (June 8) at the Knutsford Court Hotel in Kingston, said that the campaign would "extend beyond the civil society stakeholders and will target educational institutions as well as the public at large."

As of July 2005, all ministries and their agencies were brought under the Access to Information legislation and according to Minister Campbell, the necessary staff has been put in place in the various agencies and the personnel have received the requisite training. The Information Minister pointed out that Jamaica was ranked among a number of countries that have implemented the access to information regime and as such had received positive reference as a model. "We will work just as hard and even harder to keep this designation," he affirmed.

The objective of the seminar, which was held under the theme: 'Access to Information: Building a Culture of Transparency', was to examine the development of an access to information regime in Jamaica and the reform process, to assess the issues that have arisen in the implementation and enforcement of the Act in light of relevant international experiences, and to consider emerging trends and the step forward.

Presenters included University of the West Indies lecturer, Senator Trevor Munroe Scottish Commissioner of Information, Kevin Dunion and John Maxwell from the Access to Information Appeal Tribunal.

The occasion was also used to launch the publication; 'Access to Information: Building A Culture of Transparency,' prepared by the Carter Centre, which is headed by former United States President, Jimmy Carter. In the book, Jamaica was praised for its "remarkable" efforts to establish an access to information regime, which has made the country a leader in the region and the world. "The Jamaican government and its people have met the challenges of passing, implementing, enforcing and exercising the right to information and have succeeded in demonstrating the law's value and potential", the book said.

The Access to Information Act was passed in the Houses of Parliament in 2002, and the provisions were implemented on a phased basis starting January 2004, before full application last year.

See: http://www.jis.gov.jm/development/html/20060609T100000-0500_9070_JIS_PUBLIC_EDUCATION_CAMPAIGN_ON_ACCESS_TO_INFORMATION_ACT.asp

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