**Speech Delivered at the Imagine Kingston Conference at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus held between November 9-12, 2017**

As leaders of the Capital City of Kingston, we wrestle with what constitute the greatest challenge to Kingston. We never ever administer without committing to understanding the challenges that confront our city; and usually the challenges are many. But they are foundational challenges that as leaders of the city of Kingston we ought not to be ignorant of. These foundational challenges are hardly ever visible, but unattended eat away at the foundations of cities and nations crushing them into the dust of history. Knowing this we must administer with vision, understanding and imagination.

Plato spoke of the need for the Philosopher King. Leaders that are able to understand and analyse certain intangibles that overtime demolish the grandeur of once great cities. The philosopher King, the thinking leader, the thoughtful administrator is able to medicate to health cities and nations. Therefore, the greatest challenge confronting capital city, Kingston is the wisdom to be able to see the pathways before us and knowing their ends. On the one hand the path that leads to the Grand Era of Kingston, the Pearl of the Antilles, the light of the Caribbean Sea. On the otherhand, paths that lead to a fatiqued city. be able to see and understand the intangibles that overtime crush cities and nations; and two having the patience and understanding to medicate a city to health. We cannot afford to be consumed by narrowness, self interest and the status quo. The greatest challenge to us as city leaders is to be able to see the pathways before us. On the one hand, the path that leads to the grand era of Kingston, the Pearl of the Antilles and the light of the Caribbean Sea. On the otherhand, the path that leads to the death of a city. Our challenge is to understand that this is real and that the path we take or do not take at this critical stage in the life of a city will determine the destiny of the city we lead. The destiny of Kingston is before us. Is it life or death? light of the Caribbean Sea or darkness? A strong and vibrant city or one that is fatigued. Greatness or mediocrity.

Our challenge is to give ourselves to understanding the formidable challenges of our time Our challenge is to have the patience to painstakingly medicate a city through difficult times to its greatest era. Our challenge is to have the patience to wait for the successes of our policies and approaches to reveal themselves, as they will. Do we have the patience to wait or are we engulfed with the attitude that plague this generation? That of instant gratification and quick fixes. Instant gratification and quick fixes will never make Kingston the Pearl of the Antilles and the light of the Caribbean Sea.

City Leaders, the greatest challenge the city faces is that of apathy and distraction. Many of our residents show no interest in the serious questions confronting our city. Questions that if left unanswered will surely bring about the death of our city. So, these questions demand our attention. We are also surrounded by millions of distractions competing for our attention. To put it simply, we are distracted from distraction by distraction. One might ask, why is distraction so dangerous and constitute a challenge to Kingston. The answer is it hides from us the most important questions regarding the sprouting and flourishing of our Kingston.

How do we focus and navigate our city to the Pearl of the Antilles and the light of the Caribbean Sea with apathy so prominent and distractions prevalent? Do we even believe in greatness for our city? Do we believe we can initiate the grand era of Kingston? How do we move pass the apathy and distractions and get our residents attention?.

The imagination is the antidote to apathy and distraction. In the city of Kingston we want to create a generation of young people with the imaginative faculties wel-developed. A Kingston where the imagination comes to center stage. The Kingston we think of is one where the imagination is nurtured and dominates. So an engineer designs and construct a bridge. But, for us the real question is, where does the concept of a bridge come from? The imaginative mind. The sprouting and flourishing of Kingston will be attained on the platform of the imagination and the imaginative mind, the mind of the city of Kingston. So, today the most important foundation we can lay is to answer the question, how can we make the imaginative the mind of Kingston. Why is this important? The imagination is capable of apprehending and embodying reality. Its critical in informing reason and reason is in turn informed by it.

 The imagination is what helps us to pursue serious conversations with persons who are apathetic and distracted. It is imagining Kingston that will stir the interest of the residents of the city. We can never flourish as the Pearl of the Antilles, the light of the Caribbean Sea and a major player on the Latin American landscape without shared interest within the city. It is the imagination and the imaginative mind of Kingston that will incite the interest of our residents. Only then will we take our rightful place in the history among great cities. This is the greatest achievement of our time. This is the achievement above all achievements - to make the mind of Kingston the imaginative mind.

The imagination is that faculty that gives form to thought. Thought has to have form in order to make sense to our residents. It helps us to see what we are talking about. We always have to find ways to give form to thought to capture the attention of our residents. We have to give form to ideas to overcome apathy and distraction. We have been progressing in this regard. More and more of our residents are taking an interest in what we do and embracing the vision we have for our city. This is the greatest of all achievements.

Moses reflects on the brevity of life and compares it to the grass which sprouts anew. In the morning it flourishes, towards evening it fades, and withers away. Giving form to thought.

Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, all that God has prepared for those who love Him. Can you imagine it? Can you imagine Kingston?

The Pearl of the Antilles, the light of the Caribbean Sea, a major player on the Latin American landscape, an international city. Giving form to thought.

So you would understand the significance of the great project – the ward Theatre. For us, the Ward Theatre symbolizes the birth of the imaginative mind, the mind of Kingston. It symbolizes the importance of the cultural space in acquiring and transmitting ideas. Its important in instilling and communicating the idea of a Kingston that stands at the center of the Caribbean. The Light of the Caribbean Sea. The Pearl of the Antilles. Can we imagine the Kingston that is underpinned by a mind that takes pride in its place in Latin America and the Caribbean. Can we see that this is the achievement that is beyond all achievements? Can we now see why Plato speaks of leaders that can imagine and understand the intangibles and having the patience to see the outworking of those into fruits of beauty?

Imagine Kingston centuries from now.

Merchants and simple people left Port Royal about 325 years ago believing that their imagination would be able to convert a large plot of land into a prominent city. Three centuries later as mayor of Kingston, I say to you, I am still believing. We are still believing. We will honor our history and the vision of our forefathers. We will be true to this vision. Kingston, the Pearl of the Antilles, the light of the Caribbean Sea, a major player of the Latin American landscape. We will lead the people of Kingston into the grand era with patience and calculation. Councillors, you will achieve this. You will make the history of Kingston come alive. You will make Kingston stand at the pinnacle of the Caribbean Sea and view Latin America. This is our calling and our destiny. Let us be true to it. Imagine Kingston.