

**Address by the Director of Tourism
Basil Smith
at a function to honour Jim Proctor
on Saturday, 2006 December 9
Sandals Cay, Sandals Royal Caribbean, Montego Bay**

SALUTATIONS

Persons confirmed include Horace Peterkin, Camille Needham, Butch Stewart, Godfrey Dyer et al

Welcome “Mr. Jamaica” to your home away from home.

It is no secret that Jamaica enjoys a special relationship with tour operators in our various markets overseas. We are currently experiencing a boom in arrivals and our valued tour operator partners deserve a fair share of the credit for the increase in business.

A significant number of our visitors book their vacation via tour operators and the Jamaica Tourist Board recognises the importance of this group to our efforts to market and promote our beautiful island.

Jim Proctor represents an important link in the relationship between Air Canada Vacations and Jamaica. A spirited individual, Jim has worked tirelessly with local partners in promoting the island for more than 30 years.

One cannot deny the impressive growth that Jamaica has been experiencing in the Canadian market. Latest figures show that October saw approximately 40 per cent more stopover visitors coming to our shores over the same period last year. Cumulatively, we experienced more than 30 per cent increase in business from Canada.

As you will hear this evening, Jim Proctor has played a significant role in helping us to achieve that reality. Credit must be given to the role he played in growing the Canadian market. At the beginning of his tenure with Air Canada Vacations there were only ten (10) hotels with which the company did business. Upon his retirement in July this year, the number of Jamaican hotels with which the company does business rose to 34, a testament to the confidence that Jim has in Jamaica.

His years of association with Jamaica have allowed him to be intimately familiar with the island and our product, while the friendships he forged with tourism interests were useful in strengthening business. This evening, you will hear tributes from several of these friends and colleagues - tributes which will serve as evidence to the character of the man we are honouring.

These tributes will also serve as testaments to the value of friendship and loyalty in the success of any business. You have to be devoted to a

product or cause to see it through to success, whilst friendship is important is providing the necessary support. There is a saying which goes: "A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out."

Jim has been both a friend and a loyal travel partner for the island and like a true friend, he has been faithful to Jamaica during all circumstances.

He has not only sold the island to the Canadian market but has vacationed here on several occasions. Clearly, his faith in the Jamaican product goes beyond spewing a nice-sounding sales pitch solely for the sake of doing business. Rather, his belief in Jamaica is predicated on personal first-hand experience. He is an admirer of the Jamaican people and culture, and has a meaningful appreciation for the diversity of our tourism product.

Many who have worked with Jim have been quick to recognise how well he was able to have an accurate pulse on the affairs of the island and how much he was familiar with the island's offerings.

His easy-going nature allowed him to develop a good rapport with industry persons, whether they worked in the accommodation, attraction or travel sector. I am told that this did not prevent him from being forthright in

offering his suggestions for improvement of service. He is without a doubt a Jamaican at heart.

I welcome all who are here today to honour Jim Proctor – a true friend and patriotic Jamaican. Jim, remember that “The road to a friend's house is never long”. It is always a pleasure to have you in Jamaica. Welcome to your home away from home.

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