

# Georgian Bay Loves Jamaica

Deputation to Council – The Town of The Blue Mountains

Presenter: Nova Nicole, Private Resident, Thornbury

Meeting Date: November 17, 2025

## Purpose of the Deputation

To request the Town's support and partnership in launching a new community initiative – 'Georgian Bay Loves Jamaica' – a public appreciation campaign and cultural festival celebrating the Jamaican and other international seasonal agricultural workers who contribute to the region's economy and community life.

## Background

Following Hurricane Melissa, local farms and residents mobilized to send aid to Jamaica. Goldsmith's and the Ontario Fruit Growers Association partnered to create one of three provincial drop sites for relief collection. This initiative aims to transform this community spirit into an enduring celebration of gratitude and connection.

## Proposal: Georgian Bay Loves Jamaica

Two-part initiative launching Fall 2026:

- Community Awareness Campaign – Flags and signage at orchards and public spaces recognizing seasonal workers.
- Flagship Event – Rock and Reggae Party at Sheffield Park Black Heritage Museum, held alongside the Beaver Valley Fall Fair (Sept 11–13, 2026).

## Event Highlights

- Friday: Domino & Ludi Tournament (cash prize)
- Saturday: Community Dinner & Dance featuring reggae covers of classic rock
- Weekend Activities: axe throwing, museum tours, tool & clothing drive, bike repair, mobile barber, jerk & BBQ dinners
- Proceeds support Hurricane Melissa relief and direct worker bonuses

## **Request to Council**

- Endorse and partner with the Georgian Bay Loves Jamaica initiative.
- Provide logistical and promotional support (communications, signage permissions, event coordination).
- Collaborate to align the event with the Beaver Valley Fall Fair weekend in September 2026.

## **Closing Statement**

Our agricultural success depends on the contributions of international workers who return each season. 'Georgian Bay Loves Jamaica' is a heartfelt way for our community to express gratitude and solidarity. Thank you for considering this partnership and helping make this celebration a lasting Blue Mountains tradition.

# GEORGIAN BAY LOVES JAMAICA

## Town of The Blue Mountains – Council Deputation Summary

Presenter: Nova Nicole, Private Resident – Thornbury

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### 1. Local Economic Case & Key Data

- Agriculture remains a key pillar in The Town of The Blue Mountains, generating **\$21.7 million** in gross farm receipts across 119 farms and 17,500 acres of crops.
  - The Town represents over **11 % of Agriculture & Horticulture jobs** in Grey County (~340 jobs).
  - Provincially, **49.5 %** of agricultural employees are seasonal workers, vital to Ontario's fruit and orchard sectors.
  - The Town's 2021-2025 Economic Development Strategy identifies agriculture, tourism, and hospitality as a combined **\$584 million** annual export economy supporting over **4,500 local jobs**.
- Implication:** A stable and supported seasonal workforce sustains farm productivity, visitor experiences, and overall community prosperity.

### 2. Initiative for Social Connection & Inclusion

Launch of a “**Community Connections Hub**” to strengthen belonging and inclusion among seasonal workers: **Worker Neighbourhood Nights:** Monthly casual gatherings at orchards or community spaces (shared meals, meet-your-neighbours). **Multilingual signage** and farm-gate recognition celebrating worker nationalities and contributions. **Buddy-system volunteer programme** pairing residents and seasonal workers for recreational outings and cultural exchange. **Welcome to the Region orientation sessions** each spring, connecting workers to local services, libraries, recreation, and healthcare. These activities promote inclusion, reduce isolation, and strengthen cross-cultural ties in the Town.

### 3. Benefits to the Town

- **Community Reputation:** Positions the Town as a leader in equity-centered community building.
- **Tourism & Event Growth:** Rock & Reggae Party alongside Beaver Valley Fall Fair expands visitation and local spending.
- **Economic Stability:** Supports labour reliability, worker morale, and harvest season performance.
- **Social Cohesion:** Encourages community participation, volunteerism, and cross-cultural understanding.
- **Goodwill & Media Visibility:** Boosts civic pride, media coverage, and reinforces The Blue Mountains' welcoming brand.

### 4. Request to Council

- **Endorse** the “Georgian Bay Loves Jamaica” campaign as a formal Town-sponsored initiative.
- **Provide support** for signage, communications, and event coordination.

- **Collaborate** to align the flagship festival (Sept 11-13 2026) at Sheffield Park Black Heritage Museum.
- **Champion the Community Connections Hub** by providing meeting spaces and liaison support from recreation and volunteer services.

### ***5. Closing Message***

By celebrating the contributions of Jamaican and international seasonal workers, The Town of The Blue Mountains can set a hallmark precedent for kindness, inclusion, and economic resilience. This initiative strengthens local agriculture, enriches cultural life, and amplifies our identity as a welcoming, globally-aware destination.

**“A community of kindness means doing better — together.”**

Prepared by Nova Nicole | Private Resident – Thornbury | November 2025

# Executive Summary: Case for a Hurricane Melissa Relief Fund

## Background

On October 28, 2025, Hurricane Melissa, a powerful Category 5 storm, made a direct landfall on Jamaica's west coast, causing catastrophic damage, widespread power outages, and severe flooding.

The affected parishes of [St. Elizabeth](#), [Westmoreland](#), and [St. James](#) are home to many families of the seasonal agricultural workers vital to the South Georgian Bay region's economy. Our local apple industry and associated businesses in [Thornbury](#), [Clarksburg](#), [Meaford](#), and The Blue Mountains would not operate without this dedicated, hard-working workforce.

This document outlines a data-driven proposal for the Towns of Collingwood and [The Blue Mountains](#) to lead a unified fundraising campaign for the families of these Jamaican migrant workers.

This initiative will not only provide critical and immediate humanitarian aid but will also serve as a powerful public affirmation of the towns' gratitude and support, generating significant positive visibility for the communities and their corporate partners.

## Data-Driven Rationale for Urgent Action

Metric	Context & Impact
Agricultural Labor Dependence	The South Georgian Bay region's apple industry, which relies heavily on Jamaican seasonal workers, contributes significantly to the provincial economy. The Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) is essential for labor-intensive fruit and vegetable farms, with temporary foreign workers making up over half the workforce in this sector nationally.
Economic Vulnerability	Farmers have become increasingly reliant on the TFWP to fill labor needs that domestic workers do not fill. The severe personal impacts of Hurricane Melissa on workers' families in Jamaica create instability that directly threatens the workforce our local agricultural industry and wider economy depend on. The inability to provide for their families after such a disaster is a major source of stress for workers, affecting their well-being and stability in Canada.
Reciprocal Relationship	The funds workers earn in Canada are crucial to supporting their families and economies back home. A direct donation campaign is a reciprocal gesture that acknowledges this economic symbiosis and provides immediate support for rebuilding homes and lives devastated by the hurricane.
Humanitarian and Reputational Opportunity	In the wake of a natural disaster affecting their home communities, many migrant workers experience significant stress and worry. Leading a compassionate and practical response presents a vital opportunity for local governments and businesses to demonstrate ethical leadership and community values. This will generate goodwill and strengthen the reputation of the towns as caring and equitable communities.

## **Benefits for Local Businesses and Communities**

1. **Enhanced Reputation and Brand Loyalty:** Demonstrating solidarity with the Jamaican workforce will earn local businesses and towns a reputation for social responsibility. This positive publicity can enhance brand loyalty among consumers who increasingly value corporate social responsibility.
2. **Strengthened Workforce Stability:** Investing in the well-being of migrant workers' families helps ensure the stability of the workforce. When workers feel supported, their stress and anxiety decrease, leading to greater focus and productivity.
3. **Community Unity and Engagement:** A fundraising campaign can unite residents, local businesses, and community groups towards a common, humanitarian goal. This effort can strengthen community bonds and foster a more welcoming environment for all residents, including seasonal workers.

## **Action Plan: 3 to 5 Ways to Get Started**

1. **Establish Official Fund and Committee:**
  1. The Town of Collingwood and the Town of The Blue Mountains should establish a joint, official "South Georgian Bay Jamaica Relief Fund."
  2. A steering committee with representation from both municipal councils, local business leaders (including farming operations), and community organizations should be created to oversee the campaign.
  3. Leverage existing grant application processes, such as The Blue Mountains' Grants and Donations application, to provide seed funding.
  4. Action: Secure a local partner, like a credit union or foundation, to manage donations and ensure transparency.
2. **Organize Community Fundraising Event:**
  1. Host a large-scale, family-friendly "South Georgian Bay for Jamaica" community event.
  2. This could be a harvest-themed festival with local food, apple-related activities, and live music, featuring local talent. "Rock 'n' Reggae Festival"

3. Consider a symbolic event, like a "Solidarity Harvest," where a portion of the apple harvest proceeds goes directly to the fund.
  4. Action: Secure event sponsorship from businesses, including in-kind donations like space or food, which both towns have facilitated for past events.
3. Launch Corporate and Community Challenge:
1. Initiate a "Local Business Challenge," where businesses pledge to match employee or customer donations for a set period.
  2. Challenge local service clubs (e.g., Rotary, Lions) to contribute and promote the campaign among their members.
  3. Create opportunities for individual residents to contribute directly through a secure online portal and at participating retail locations.
  4. Action: Launch the challenge with a strong, unified message from the towns and key business leaders, including the farming community.
4. Engage the Public Through Visible Communication:
1. Use municipal and business channels (websites, social media, e-newsletters) to promote the fundraiser and raise awareness.
  2. Partner with local media outlets to cover the campaign's launch, progress, and stories from local workers.
  3. Highlight the symbiotic relationship between the Jamaican workforce and the region's prosperity to drive public empathy and donations.
  4. Action: Display prominent signage in town centres and at participating businesses to encourage donations.