



Political circumstances in Jamaica surrounding the pending resignation of Prime Minister, and Jamaica Labor Party leader, Bruce Golding, have moved at rapid pace. Less than two weeks since [Golding made his shock announcement](#) the JLP's parliamentary group has announced they [are backing youth](#) ; Andrew Holness, 39, to succeed Golding as party leader, and subsequently [Jamaica's next prime minister](#)

Objectively, Golding's resignation and the apparent consensus within the JLP in supporting Holness shows a sense of fresh and rear maturity in Jamaican politics.

Golding, despite whatever real reason, and poor timing of his decision, took the honorable and patriotic step by stepping down instead of continuing to lead the country and the party with his credibility damaged. The fact is various polls in Jamaica indicated that Golding would be a liability leading the JLP into the general elections due by September 2012. Obviously he was aware his liabilities would not serve the country well.

In the days following Golding's announcement there were indications the JLP was poised for another of its infamous divisive battles for party leadership. Up to Monday, there were six JLP parliamentarians who seemed poised to succeed Golding. The suggested contenders were Holness, Dr. Christopher Tufton, and Robert Montague, all with a combined average age of 42.7 years, and Finance Minister, Audley Shaw, JLP chairman Mike Henry, and Deputy Prime Minister Kenneth Baugh, all having a combined age of 69 years.

Several JLP members were weary of the potential damage of this six way race, and some, including Tufton, sought a consensus candidate. That emerged on Wednesday with the announcement that the party's parliamentary group including Shaw, Montague, Tufton, Baugh and Henry, were pooling their support for Holness, It was reported that Tufton was instrumental in brokering the support for Holness. Tufton's action and the support of those who originally sought to succeed Golding shows unusual maturity in Jamaica's politics.

Since Golding's sudden announcement, the sentiments within the JLP, the Jamaican community and the Diaspora has been towards a young leader replacing Golding. The prospect of a new, young prime minister has gained popularity as some Jamaicans are seemingly tired of old, tried politicians who have failed to make any significant change in the nation's growth

In his speech to the Jamaican nation on Sunday evening Golding was clear he supported a young leader to succeed him, stating that it was time for him and party members of his age (63) to step aside and make way for youth.

But now that it seems apparent that Holness will be the youngest prime minister to lead Jamaica, is youth really the answer? How will this young leader match up against the experienced, popular PNP leader, Portia Simpson Miller, in next year's election?

Months before Golding's resignation announcement, polls also indicated the JLP if led by a, young leader, would have a better chance of defeating the PNP.

However the JLP and some Jamaicans must be careful of the glamour and intrigue in selecting a youthful leader.

There is no doubt Holness is hard working, highly educated, showing positive leadership as minister of education, and garners respect within and outside the JLP.

But does he have the ability to immediately take over the ailing Jamaican nation and place it on

a path to social and economic growth? Being the driver is a much different prospect than being the back-seat driver. Will Holness probably giddy with success as the nation's prime minister have the ability to prioritize the nation's urgent problems, the guts to make unpopular decisions, be strong enough to heal possible wounds in the party after Golding's departure, and succeed in gaining acceptance on the global stage where he will be a relative stranger? These are all questions Holness will have to answer soon.

Conversely, the PNP's Simpson Miller has years of political, parliamentary, and even prime ministerial experience to her advantage.. She and her backers will most likely build a formidable campaign that touts experience over youthful inexperience, with the slogan, "Can Jamaica be placed in the hands of an inexperienced leader in these crucial times?"

Holness will most likely need time to get acquainted with his new role as prime minister, which could be to his, the JLP and Jamaica's disadvantage. For this reason it is believed that the new prime minister will call general elections shortly after taking office. It is unlikely that he will risk making blunders that could jeopardize his party's chances in a later election.

It is far from a done deal that Holness could lead the JLP to victory even in an early election. The PNP keen to regain the power it lost to the JLP after ruling for 18 years will be certain to attempt to batter Holness' inexperience. The big question for Holness is, will he have the temerity and political skill to stave off the PNP onslaught? If he succeeds he could be an outstanding prime minister, but if he loses, the glamour and excitement of his youth would have failed.

Certainly, Jamaica's political scene is poised to be more exciting than the 2012 summer Olympics and the nation's 50th independence anniversary celebrations. .