

BUSINESS

UWI refinances debt ...saves \$120 million per year

JAMAICA
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THE University of the West Indies, Mona, has successfully refinanced its high-cost debt, saving roughly \$120 million in debt servicing costs annually, and is now turning its sight on investing in new revenue-generating projects and infrastructure development.

The university's debt refinancing programme aimed to address its high-cost debt dominated in US dollars with double-digit interest rates, which posed a challenge to its cash flow.

Pro-vice chancellor and principal of The University of the West Indies, Mona Densil Williams said the campus was honouring debt-servicing costs of \$460 million per year for that portion of the university's debt.

To address this challenge, the university put together a programme to restructure its debt and find Jamaican-dollar equivalent debt with lower interest rates. Six investment houses were invited to make presentations, and Sygnus was chosen to represent the university as its financial advisor and arranger.

A \$5-billion bond was structured, denominated in Jamaican dollars with a single-digit interest rate. There is an option to increase this amount by an additional \$2 billion, which Williams said will be done in the future.

However, of the \$5-billion raised, about \$2 billion of the amount was used to pay down the US dollar-denominated debt, equivalent to about 40%



INVESTING IN NEW REVENUE:
Densil Williams

of The UWI Mona's debt load. This refinancing will save the university roughly \$120 million in debt-servicing costs annually.

Williams noted that the savings from the refinancing will be used to invest in other areas, such as revenue-generating projects and infrastructure development.

"This now gives us a breathing space so we can now have some resources to invest in other areas now that can help to improve revenue generation for the campus."

He said those revenue-generating projects include Global Health, and UWI Star, to boost its financing.

"We're going to train more persons in their health profession, like nurses, doctors, etc," said Williams, highlighting the project's potential to attract more students and generate revenue.

UWI Star, he said, is a short-course programme. These projects aim to generate more revenue and provide short-term credentials to the marketplace.

In addition, the university plans to invest in infrastructure development, including a campus centre, an expanded library, and a new campus in Western Jamaica. A brand-new school of engineering is also being built.

"What we're going to do, this now gives us a breathing space so we can properly strategise as to how we're raising the financing to do these kinds of things as well," Williams said.

The university plans to invest in these projects over the next five to seven years.

Some of the money also went to paying out small creditors who had done work for the university and had to wait "for a long time" to get paid.

"There are a lot of creditors that we owed to the tune of about \$500 million... small creditors, people who would have done work on halls of residence... that we owe for a long time. We're using part of that money to also pay them out so that we can actually now have our vendors in good stead and then we manage our vendor relationship going forward," Williams said.

The university's financial situation has become increasingly complex in recent years, with Government funding decreasing from 80% to 45% of the budget. To compensate, the university has had to rely more heavily on commercial operations, which now account for 40% of its spending.

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LABIDCO's Port Brighton gets EcoPorts certification

THE La Brea Industrial Development Company Ltd (LABIDCO) Port Brighton has received its EcoPorts Port Environmental Review System (PERS) certification.

Achieved in December 2024, Port Brighton now joins a global network of 66 EcoPorts-certified facilities.

It is the only one in the Caribbean Community to have earned this certification, a release from LABIDCO stated.

"This certification, awarded by the ECO Sustainable Logistics Chain Foundation (ECOSLC) under the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), highlights the port's voluntary adherence to stringent environmental standards that exceed regulatory requirements. It also underscores the Port of Brighton's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability," the release stated.

"EcoPorts PERS is the only port-specific environmental and sustainability standard tailored to the unique operations of ports. It integrates established frameworks such as ISO 14001 while addressing the specific challenges and responsibilities of the maritime industry. The certification process also involves an independent assessment conducted by Lloyd's Register, LRQA, Netherlands (Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance). The certification remains valid for two years, after which it is reassessed to ensure continued compliance with evolving laws, regulations, and international climate objectives," it added.

The release quotes Energy Minister Stuart Young as saying: "This cer-

tification is a milestone, not only for LABIDCO but for Trinidad and Tobago. By achieving EcoPorts accreditation, LABIDCO has set a remarkable standard of visionary leadership in integrating environmental responsibility into industrial operations. This achievement paves the way for regional ports to adopt more sustainable practices, ensuring a greener and more resilient future for the energy and maritime sectors."

And according to LABIDCO chairman Dr Joseph Khan, "The receipt of this certification positions LABIDCO and the Port of Brighton at the forefront of sustainable port operations in the region, signalling a strong commitment to environmental responsibility and innovation. It also reaffirms the company's role as a leader in sustainable port management. I commend the team for their outstanding work and vision in setting a new benchmark for the industry."

The release stated that often referred to as "Green Ports", EcoPorts-certified facilities set a benchmark in sustainable port development by adopting environmentally friendly practices, minimising ecological impacts, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring compliance with international environmental standards.

"In doing so, Green Ports play a vital role in advancing global sustainability goals and enhancing the port's credibility, as they align their operations with international frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainability Goals and the European Union's Green Agenda," it added.

Shell awards multi-region deepwater contracts to SLB

GLOBAL energy technology company SLB has been awarded a series of major drilling contracts by energy giant Shell to support capital-efficient energy development across its deepwater and ultra-deepwater assets in this country, as well as in the UK North Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, and other regions.

"The projects, which will be delivered over a three-year timeframe, will combine SLB's AI-enabled digital drilling capabilities with its expertise in ultra-deepwater environments. This approach will help SLB to repeatedly and predictably deliver more consistent wells that improve cost efficiencies," a release from SLB stated.

"We are proud to continue our long-standing relationship with Shell through the fulfilment of these multi-region deepwater contracts," SLB's president, Offshore Atlantic, Wallace Pescarini stated.

"Over the years, we have worked diligently to provide safe, high-quality services to our cus-

tomers, including Shell. Drawing on our global expertise in complex deepwater environments and advanced technology solutions, we will align with Shell's expectations for safe and efficient energy development on these projects," he said.

According to SLB the scope of the contracts will include digital directional drilling services and hard-

ware, logging while drilling (LWD), surface logging, cementing, drilling and completions fluids, completions, and wireline services.

SLB said it has already begun providing services to Shell for the contracts.

Each project will be managed centrally through SLB's Performance Live centres.