

# **EDUCATION REVOLUTION DEEPENS**

**BY**

**UNITY LABOUR PARTY**

---

## **THE ISSUE**

Among the bedrock policies of the Unity Labour party (ULP) government and the upliftment of modern St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been, and is, the Education Revolution. It has been, since 2001, a central plank in the ongoing quest to build a modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy which is at once national, regional, and global.

The Education Revolution and its necessary and desirable accompaniments such as the Health, Wellness, Housing, Sports and Cultural Revolutions, Applied Science and Technology Innovations, and major developments in Physical Infrastructure (International Airport, Jet Airport, Modern Port, Bridges and Roads, etc.) have fuelled the growth of the economy (Gross Domestic Product in 2000: EC \$800 million; 2024: EC \$3.1 billion), increasing wealth and job-creation significantly.

In Budget 2025, the allocation for Education, at all levels, is \$251 million — the highest ever in our country's history. In the process, we are deepening and broadening the scope of the Education Revolution. It is an Education Budget from an Education Government!

## **FOUR FRESH INITIATIVES**

In Budget 2025, there are four fresh initiatives in Education.

First, the scale of the proposed expansion in every material particular in Post-Secondary (SVG Community College), and Tertiary (University) Education is unprecedented in its ambition to lift quantity and quality. This sub-sector of Education has had its recurrent allocation jump by \$15 million, from \$45 million in 2024 to \$60 million in 2025 — an increase of 33 percent.

The relevant details are as follows: (i) Contribution to the SVG Community College, from \$16.5 million in 2024 to \$23.5 million in 2025; Tertiary training allocation at the Chief Personnel Office, from \$22 million to \$30 million in 2025; and (ii) the contribution to the University of the West Indies of \$6.5 million.

As the Prime Minister outlined in his contribution to the Budget Debate last week, the SVGCC is embarking on a massive expansion of fit-for-the-market programmes on the area of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), inclusive of access to many of these programmes for students who do not traditionally meet the entry qualifications for the existing TVET programmes at the College. At the same time, the Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) department of the Ministry of Education continues with its array of skills training programmes.

On the capital side of the Budget 2025, there are four “higher education” capital projects touching and concerning Equipment Purchase for SVGCC (\$50,000, mainly for TVET); Infrastructure Improvement for SVGCC (\$1.66 million of which \$423,416 has been spent thus far); ICT Improvement for SVGCC (\$776,000); and the Establishment of a Modern Science and Innovation Laboratory (\$400,000 to undertake designs for construction).

Secondly, a fresh initiative in Budget 2025 embraces our ambition to enroll, instruct, and certify even greater numbers of young persons in technical and vocational subject areas. This ambition has produced a \$1.6 million allocation to fund a programme called Skills Training for Employment and Professional Success (STEPS).

As the Minister of Finance outlined in his Budget Address, the STEPS initiative will provide students enrolled in any relevant TVET programmes at the Technical Institutes and the TVET Division of the SVGCC with a modest stipend to cover basic costs associated with attendance and participation. This initiative will place greater emphasis on taking students from Level I certification to Level II, III, and beyond.

This STEPS initiative, in tandem with the Technical Institutes and SVGCC’s outreach programme, follows up on programmatic work done through the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), the Zero Hunger Trust Fund, and the Ministry of Education. These programmes hitherto include those such as Skills for Youth Employment (SKYE), Youth and Adult Training for Employment (YATE), and ANEW (Another Nexus in Workforce development) which helped to usher in an exponential increase in the number of persons obtaining Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQs) and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), certifying competencies in various technical fields. In 2019, less than 200 CVQs and NVQs were issued; by 2022, the number exceeded 1,200. CVQs allow certificate holders to travel and work in CARICOM without the requirement of a

work permit. The CVQ qualifies a person for a CARICOM Skilled National Certificate.

The third fresh initiative relates to the Mathematics Improvement Programme (MIP). The MIP will facilitate after-school classes in Mathematics for students in grades 5 and 6 of primary school and forms 4 and 5 of secondary schools mainly in 2025, the MIP will pay Math teachers to conduct weekly, mandatory classes for all students in the targeted grades and forms. When fully implemented, the MIP will provide students with more than 30 additional hours of instruction in Mathematics each academic year.

The fourth fresh initiative in Education in 2025 involves the provision of 2,700 laptops (ASUS Vivobook G0 15) at a cost of over \$3 million to 5<sup>th</sup> form secondary and 2<sup>nd</sup> year SVGCC students and teachers. These laptops will bring to over 61,000 laptops and tablets distributed to students in SVG between 2011 and 2025. Absolutely amazing! The best in the region!

## **YOUTHS, SPORTS, AND CULTURE**

As a companion to the fresh initiatives in Education are those connected to youth, sports, and culture in Budget 2025. In summary form, they are as follows:

### (1) Youth Programmes: Targeted Specific Interventions (Recurrent Budget)

(i) Greater Youth Volunteerism and Engagement [NEW]	: \$1.5 m
(ii) Skills Training for Employment and Professional Success (STEPS) [NEW]	: \$ 1.6 m
(iii) Future Athlete's Support and Training (FAST) Fund [NEW]	: \$ 0.25 m
(iv) Establishment of Semi-Professional League (Football) [NEW]	: \$ 0.90 m
(v) Establishment of Semi-Professional League (Netball) [NEW]	: \$ 0.20 m
(vi) Promoting Youth Mico Enterprises (PRYME)	: \$ 3.0 m
(vii) Offering National Support for Internship Training and Employment (ON-SITE)	: \$ 2.52 m
(viii) Support for Education and Training (SET)	: \$ 3.0 m
(ix) Youth Empowerment Service (YES)	: \$ 6.0 m
(x) Sports vs Crime	: \$ 0.13 m
(xi) Pan vs Crime (through PetroCaribe and NLA)	: \$ 0.20 m
(xii) Establishment of National Orchestra [NEW]	: \$ 0.56 m
(xiii) ICT Equipment for Students (Laptop roll-out) [NEW]	: \$ 2.70 m
(xiv) WINLOTT Games	: \$ 0.50 m
(xv) Carnival Development Corporation	: \$ 1.0 m
(xvi) Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Youth	: \$ 0.264 m
	<u>\$24.264 m</u>

(2) Some Major Capital Projects for Youth, Sports, and Culture

(i) Diamond Sports Facility – Sir Vincent Beache Stadium	: \$11.24 m
(ii) Improvement to Arnos Vale Sporting Complex	: \$1.0 m
(iii) Cultural, Educational, and Production Hubs (Belle Vue, Troumaca, Petit Bordel)	: \$9.54 m
(iv) Cultural, Educational, Wellness Centre (Park Hill)	: \$3.0 m
(v) Four capital projects for SVGCC	: \$2.72 m
(vi) Capitalisation of Student Loan Company	: <u>\$0.50 m</u>
	\$28.05 m

Additionally, the National Lotteries Authority (NLA) will spend at least \$5 million in 2025 on Carnival, Sports and Cultural activities, and capital sports projects. Further, the NLA will spend over \$3 million in educational supports for young persons in 2025.

**SUMMATION**

In 2025, it is a heavenly condition to be young and access the productive opportunities available in SVG today. Long may it be so. A piece of advice to the youths: Stay away, from crime and unwholesome activities. ULP is lifting the youths higher!

---

Article for week of January 24, 2025