

STATEMENT

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VI Government to upgrade Territory's schools

Release Date: 7 March, 2025



The Government of the Virgin Islands will be investing more than two million dollars this year in the upgrading of the Territory's schools.

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports Honourable Sharie de Castro in a statement to officially launch Education Month said schools must be more than just buildings and that they are to be safe, modern, and conducive to learning.

Honourable de Castro said guided by structural assessments, essential remedial works have been identified that require urgent attention.

"These include waterproofing buildings, repairing roofs, replacing outdated windows and doors, and installing backup power generators," the minister said, adding, "We are upgrading plumbing and air conditioning systems to ensure students and teachers have access to reliable water and a comfortable learning environment. We are also strengthening security by installing new systems to enhance the safety of our schools."

Honourable de Castro stated that a world-class education system demands world-class facilities and over the past two years, the government has made significant strides in improving the Territory's education infrastructure.

The minister said, "In 2023, we invested just over \$850,000 in critical school renovations. In 2024, we doubled that amount, spending 1.5 million dollars. This year, we are making our most ambitious investment yet—2.5 million dollars dedicated to upgrading our schools."

Honourable deCastro said funding has been allocated in this year's budget for the design of a secondary educational facility that supports the development and expansion of critical technical and vocational skills needed to fill gaps in the local labour force.

The Minister further stated that through partnership with Unite BVI, five new playgrounds have been installed at primary schools across the Territory. She said the Althea Scatliffe Primary School Redevelopment Project is currently in the design phase following some delays but that Unite BVI is finalising project costings and securing necessary approvals. Once designs are approved, a definitive

timeline for construction this year will be provided.

“Our investments are not just about repairs; they are about resilience. By addressing these essential needs, we are ensuring that our schools are prepared to withstand environmental challenges, creating learning spaces that are not only safe but built to endure,” the Education Minister concluded.

The Ministry of Education will continue to move forward in its drive to Innovate, Inspire, and Transform to create a reimagined education system for all as it continues to Move Virgin Islands Education Full STEAM Ahead!