

# NWC to spend \$4.5 b to tackle non-revenue water in Portmore, on north coast

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Carlton Earl Samuels (left), chief development financing officer at the Jamaica National Group, and Mark Barnett (right), president of the National Water Commission, listen keenly as Humphrey Taylor, president of the Incorporated Master Builders Association of Jamaica makes a point during the association's conference held at Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston, yesterday.

THE National Water Commission (NWC) is slated to spend approximately \$4.5 billion, during the next 18 months, to continue its non-revenue water reduction programme in sections of Portmore, St Catherine, and along the north coast.

Mark Barnett, president of the NWC, made the disclosure while addressing the Incorporated Master Builders Association of Jamaica (IMAJ) conference, at Jamaica Conference Centre in downtown Kingston yesterday.

“We're going to pursue a non-revenue water activity in Portmore, St Catherine, and along the north coast, from St James to St Ann, within the next 18 months. For Portmore we're looking at about \$1.5 billion; and on the north coast, we're going to spend about \$3 billion,” Barnett said.

He said this was in addition to the US\$42.5 million which is being spent on the Kingston and St Andrew (KSA) Non-Revenue Water Reduction (NRW) Co-Management Programme, currently underway.

The KSA NRW Programme is being undertaken in conjunction with Miya to reduce water loss due to leaks, theft or metering inaccuracies.

Barnett noted that the projects form part of the NWC's ongoing thrust to significantly reduce its operating costs. "Critical to our survival as an entity, we must address two of the most significant cost factors for us — and these are non-revenue water and energy costs," he said.

"We believe that, rather than adding more capacity, we need to address what we are already producing," Barnett explained. Overall, in the NWC non-revenue management improvement programme, we're looking to spend upwards of US\$5 billion over the next five years," he said.

He added: "In my view, this gives an understanding about the level of expenditure that is required to improve our very critical infrastructure".

"Any country which does not invest in its water and sanitation services is not moving towards 'developed state' status. Therefore, if we ignore that level of development, we're failing to go in the right direction. The fact is, water is the most basic necessity for development."

The NWC president further noted that other water projects in the pipeline involve a partnership to install floating solar panels on the Mona Reservoir, which will assist the company to reduce its overall energy costs.

"There are indications that we could go up to about a 44 megawatt PV system on the Mona Reservoir," Barnett said, noting that, "We will be looking at all the other water bodies we own and operate and seek to establish similar arrangements."

He said the company currently spends approximately US\$5 million per month on energy costs.

Meanwhile, Carlton Earl Samuels, chief development financing officer at Jamaica National Group, urged contractors to use technology to construct more climate-smart and resilient homes and buildings in Jamaica.

He noted that the boom in the real estate sector has raised concerns about the impact which these developments may have on the country's water resources.

Recent reports have pointed to cases in which approvals for housing projects have been delayed, due to a lack of water. There are also concerns that adequate water is not available to meet the housing demands in some areas, including Negril, Kingston, and parts of St Catherine.

Mr Samuels encouraged contractors to implement measures which would result in more efficient and cost-saving use of water. He said this can be achieved by applying water-adaptation measures, such as water-harvesting systems and water-efficient fixtures in new developments.

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