

Good governance key to SME financing, says NCB Merchant Bank



Christopher Buchanan, senior vice president, Investment Banking Unit, NCB Capital Markets speaking at the SME Power Breakfast hosted by NCB Merchant Bank (Trinidad & Tobago) in collaboration with the Greater Tunapuna Chamber of Industry and Commerce.

NCB Merchant Bank (Trinidad and Tobago) (NCBMBTT) is urging Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) to strengthen governance and financial management practices to improve access to financing and drive sustainable growth.

At its recently held SME Power Breakfast in St Augustine, hosted in collaboration with the Greater Tunapuna Chamber of Industry & Commerce (GTCIC), NCBMBTT brought together business leaders, policymakers and investors to discuss how transparency and structured management can build SME resilience and attract investment through loans, equity, receivables financing and other capital market instruments.

Christopher Buchanan, senior vice president of Investment Banking at NCB Capital Markets said that while many entrepreneurs are eager to scale, true growth requires more than ambition.

“Governance is what transforms a good idea into a credible business,” Buchanan explained. “Investors and lenders look for discipline – accurate reporting, sound management and accountability. When those things are in place, capital becomes much more accessible.”

With a World Bank Enterprise Survey revealing that 35.7 per cent of SMEs in Trinidad and Tobago identify access to finance as their greatest obstacle, the SME Power Breakfast provided a timely forum for local SMEs to connect with a leading financial institution and their peers. The session followed the release of the 2025 National Budget, which introduced new compliance measures and fiscal adjustments that will require businesses to strengthen their financial management and governance practices to remain competitive.

Ramon Gregorio, President of the Greater Tunapuna Chamber of Industry & Commerce, commended NCBMBTT’s commitment to collaboration, noting that the event fostered essential dialogue between the private sector and financial institutions.

“Today’s Power Breakfast is timely,” said Gregorio. “At the Chamber, we believe that no business should operate in isolation. Whether you’re an SME owner in Tunapuna or a growing manufacturer exporting to new markets, your success depends on the ecosystem around you—banks that understand your risk profile, regulators that enable innovation, and businesses that open doors to opportunity.”

SMEs represent about 95 per cent of registered businesses and contribute nearly 30 per cent of Trinidad and Tobago’s GDP, yet many still consider access to financing a major hurdle.

Buchanan noted that NCBMB- TT’s advocacy for stronger governance seeks to close this gap by encouraging SMEs to adopt the transparency and operational discipline necessary for sustainable expansion.

“Empower your business so that you can raise capital and expand by listing on the stock exchange through an Initial Public Offering, or by accessing flexible financing solutions such as commercial loans, equipment leasing and invoice financing,” Buchanan emphasised.

“The stronger our SMEs become in governance, the more investible and resilient our economy will be.”