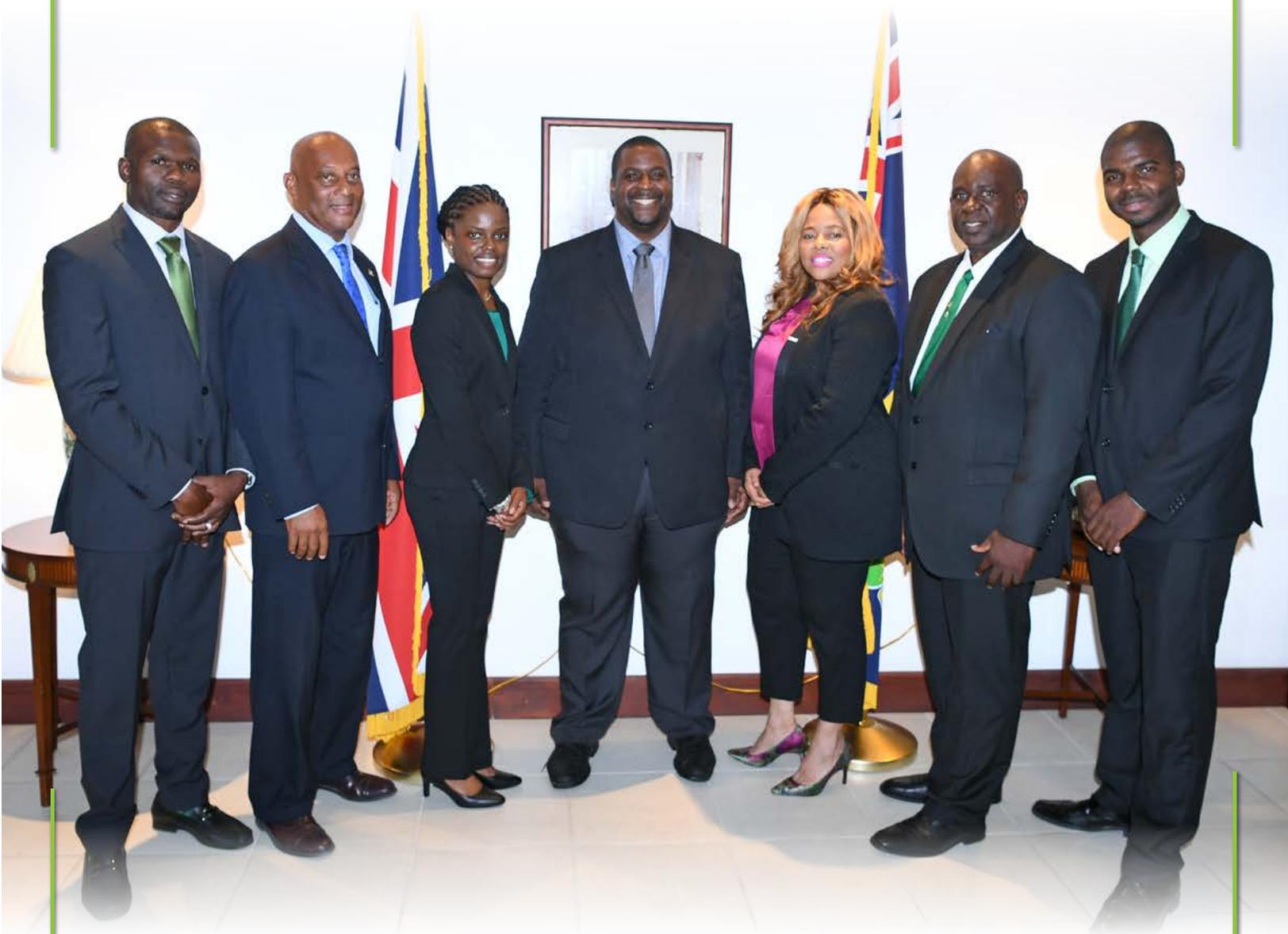




RESTORING HOPE & PROSPERITY FOR ALL



26 JUNE, 2019



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THE REPORT OF THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE



Click to hear the Report of the First 100 days in Office by the Premier, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie or follow the link:

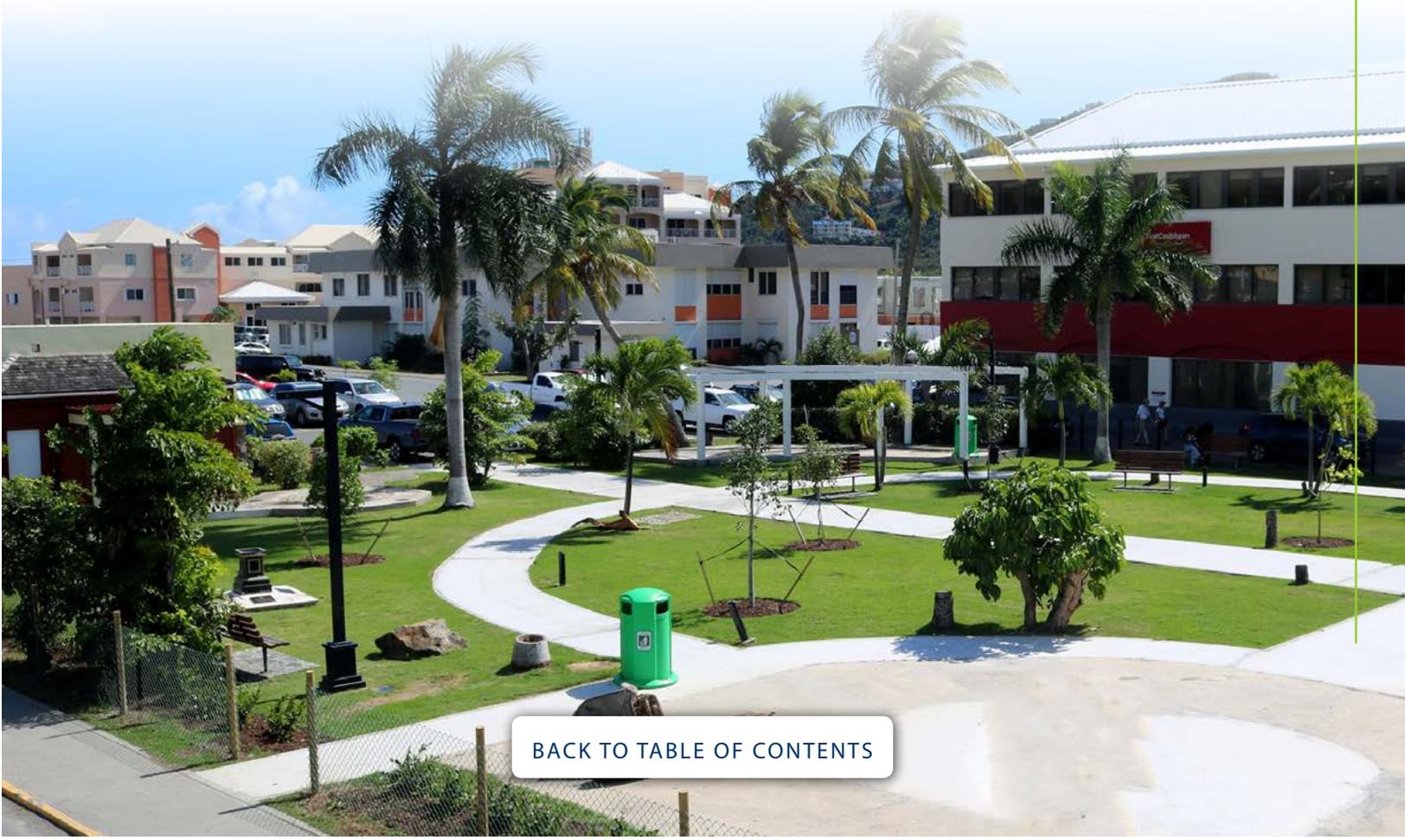
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01. NOEL LLOYD POSITIVE ACTION MOVEMENT PARK BEING RESTORED

City Manager, Mrs. Janice Braithwaite-Edwards said in February that the improvements to the Noel Lloyd Positive Action Movement Park have enhanced the beautification efforts of Road Town after the passage of the 2017 hurricanes.

Mrs. Braithwaite-Edwards said the park is almost fully restored as the choice venue and leisure spot for visitors and residents. She added, "The restrooms have been restored and are fully functional. The restored landscape includes a fenced perimeter, with lawn and a restored sprinkler system, a paved pathway, planted trees to include palm trees. The pergola, gazebo, the clock and lighting of the park are among the unfinished portions of the park, to include the statue of Mr. Noel Lloyd."

The Noel Lloyd Positive Action Movement Park symbolises the struggle and opposition of Virgin Islanders to the Bates Hill Agreement which would have prevented them from accessing this area except for jobs as servants.



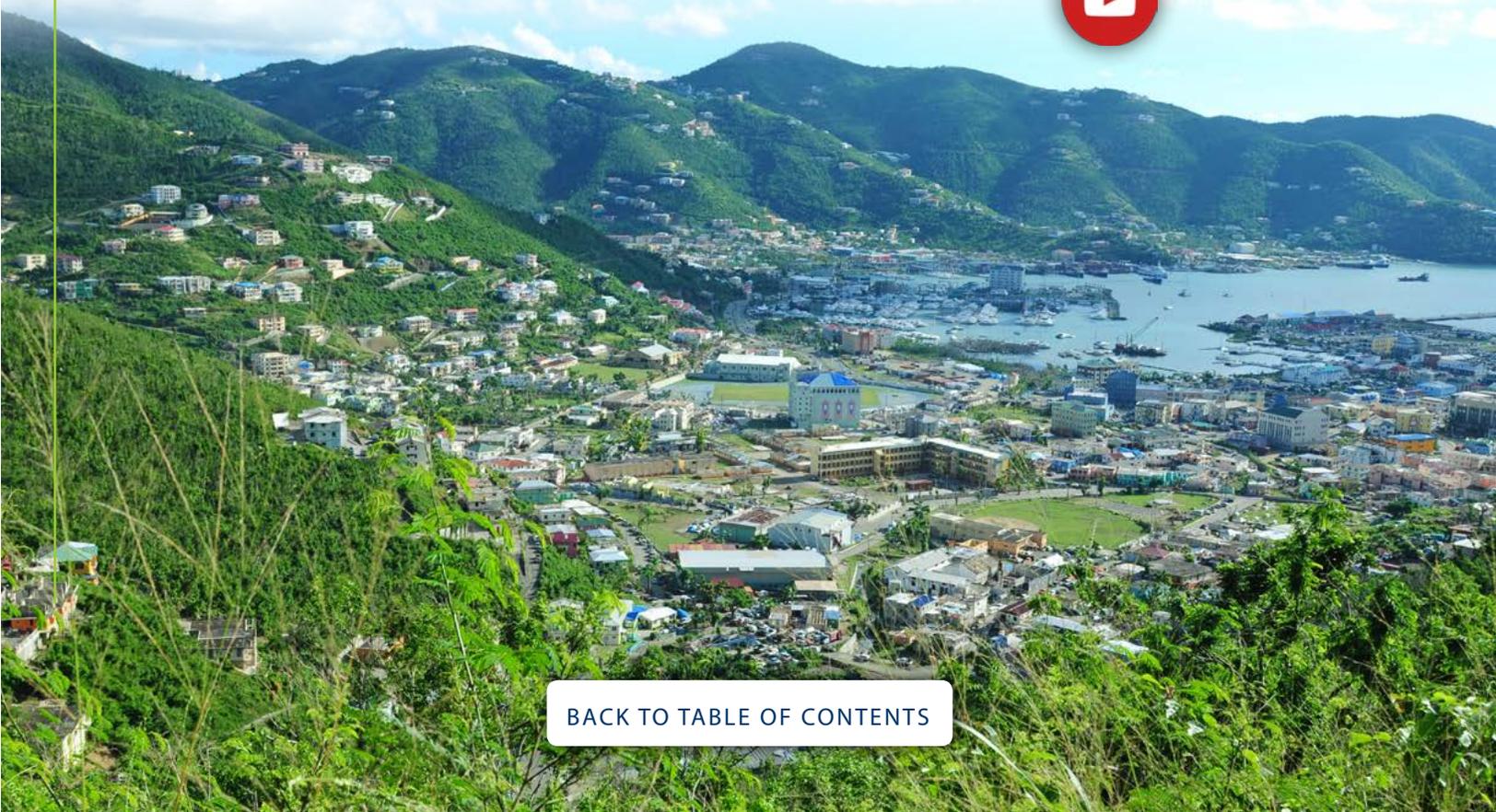
02. GOVERNMENT RECOVERY LOAN PROGRAMME ON TRACK

Director of Projects in the Ministry of Finance, Dr. Drexel Glasgow said in February that the Government's Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Loan (RRL) programme was on track.

Dr. Drexel Glasgow while updating a community meeting on the progress of the US\$65 million Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) loan programme said, "The Ministry of Finance is ensuring that the process is in keeping with the Build Back Better principle and as such the designs are being carefully checked by experts who understand what it takes to ensure that structures are designed and constructed to withstand the types of hazard impacts we faced in 2017."

Many of the projects have commenced either at the design or the acquisition stages including: the designs for a new National Emergency Operations Centre; designs for the Elmore Stouff High School and Bregado Flax Educational Centre; the approval of some 14 packages of equipment to rebuild the National Early Warning Systems and Hazard Monitoring Networks; ICT for schools, offices and the courts.

There are design works for the repair of seven Government structures on Virgin Gorda and Tortola, including the administration buildings on Virgin Gorda; the re-establishment and expansion of the CATV network for the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force; purchase of school books, psycho-social training for members of the community and for specialised groups; the designs for repairs to roads, slopes and coastal defenses as well as various consultancy services needed to support the process.



03. PREMIER FAHIE AFFIRMS HIS COMMITMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS FOLLOWING MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS

Following the swearing-in of his Cabinet and Junior Ministers in March, Premier of the Virgin Islands, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie has reinforced his commitment to the people of the Virgin Islands.

The appointments are as follows: Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie; Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Carvin Malone; Minister for Transportation, Works and Utilities, Honourable Kye Rymer; Minister for Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration, Honourable Vincent Wheatley; Minister for Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley; Junior Minister for Trade and Economic Development, Honourable Sharie de Castro; and Junior Minister for Tourism, Honourable Shereen Flax-Charles.

Premier Fahie said, "This is a tremendous opportunity for the people of the BVI. We campaigned with a clear vision to set the BVI and its people on course for future sustainability and prosperity, whilst also addressing the most pressing issues of today through a clear plan of action."

The Premier said the new ministerial assignments will strengthen the Government's ability to deliver on their agenda for the Territory. He said their first order of business was to undertake a comprehensive review of the state of the Territory to be able to effectively address the many challenges.



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04. HISTORIC FIRST CABINET MEETING HELD ON VIRGIN GORDA

The new Government of the Virgin Islands held its first Cabinet meeting on Virgin Gorda in March.

Premier Andrew A. Fahie said he promised to lead a Government of inclusion and the meeting on the sister island was the initial step.

Premier Fahie said, "This historic move to hold the Cabinet meeting on Virgin Gorda is very significant because the Cabinet makes decisions that affect residents on the Sister Islands so it is very important that we also convene meetings there and on other Sister Islands in the future."

The Cabinet of the Virgin Islands is comprised of Chairman, the Governor Augustus Jaspert; the Premier, the four Ministers and the Attorney General, as an ex officio member.



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05. JULIAN WILLOCK SWORN IN AS SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY



Mr. Julian Willock was elected and sworn in as the Speaker of the House of Assembly during the First Sitting of the First Session of the Fourth House of Assembly in March.

Mr. Willock was elected in accordance with Standing Orders number 4 of the House of Assembly which states: 'Whenever it is necessary for the House of Assembly to elect a person to be Speaker, whether after a general election or when a vacancy in the office of Speaker has occurred in any other way, the procedure for the election shall be provided by this Order.'

Mr. Willock took the Oath of Office and pledged to faithfully carry out his duties as Speaker. He said, "Beyond the proceedings held in the Chambers, I wish to help elevate this House of Assembly to the centre for good governance and working with both the Leader of Government Business, Honourable Fahie, and the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Penn, to see that the Government's legislative agenda is achieved."

Honourable Neville A. Smith was elected Deputy Speaker.

06. THE TERRITORY'S WOMEN URGED TO LEAD WITH COURAGE AND INGENUITY



Minister for Health and Social Development Honourable Carvin Malone called on the Territory's women to break down barriers and lead with courage and ingenuity, with the vision to achieve the highest ideals for a better, stronger Virgin Islands.

Honourable Malone was delivering his first public address as Minister for Health and Social Development at an Information Fair organised by the Office of Gender Affairs in celebration of International Women's Day observed annually worldwide in March.

The minister paid tribute to the women of the Virgin Islands from all walks of life who are taking action for a more balanced society as equal partners in business, parliament, community and family life.

He said, "For the first time in our history two women are serving concurrently as Junior Ministers of Government, offering a perspective that only women can bring to leadership, and inspiring young women and girls of our community to aim higher and dream bigger."

Honourable Malone said progress for women has been incremental, as each generation builds on the achievements of those that have gone before, but noted that at this crucial moment in the Territory's development, it is essential for the women of this generation to break down barriers and lead with courage and ingenuity, with the vision to achieve the highest ideals for a better, stronger Virgin Islands.

He said, "History has shown women to be the bedrock of our society through their life and work, making a critical difference whether in times of prosperity or adversity. This year's theme is therefore very timely and fitting as we chart a new course for the Virgin Islands: Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change."

07. STUDENTS TO BENEFIT FROM DIFFERENT METHODS OF TEACHING

Minister for Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley said in March that the time has come for differentiated teaching and learning in order for each student to be taught effectively.

Honourable Wheatley while speaking at the opening of Education Week 2019 said, “It is time for differentiated teaching and learning to be utilised to reach every child in our care. The ability of each child is being considered, and the Ministry of Education is planning with them in mind.”

The Minister also highlighted the theme “Be Disciplined; Achieve Excellence,” and advised teachers and students on the keys to keeping on the path of excellence through good discipline practices.



08. ELMORE STOUTT HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE DEBATE CHAMPIONS

The Elmore Stoutt High School students won the coveted title Inter Secondary School Debate Champion prize in March.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley applauded the efforts of the persons involved in organising the debate competition and further encouraged similar teaching tools for students.

He said, "Debates are an important part of the democratic process and we need much more in our society. We need to teach our young people skills such as critical thinking, information literacy skills, and how to deal with conflict, and based on what I see here today, we are on the right track."

Several schools participated in the competition including St. George's Secondary, Cedar International, Claudia Creque Educational Centre, Ciboney Centre for Excellence, Virgin Islands School of Technical Studies, Elmore Stoutt High School and the Bregado Flax Educational Centre Secondary Division.

The Inter Secondary School Debates are organised with the purpose of developing the skills of students by communicating effectively, debating their points, and practice public speaking abilities.



09. OECS LEADERS WELCOME PREMIER FAHIE AT GUADELOUPE MEETING

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie was welcomed with opened arms during his first official overseas engagement in March since taking up leadership of the Territory.

Honourable Fahie attended a two-day meeting of the Heads of Government of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in Guadeloupe at which the French overseas region was formally inducted as an associate member of the sub-regional grouping.

The Virgin Islands Premier was congratulated by all the leaders for the victory of the Virgin Islands Party, expressing best wishes and hopes for closer co-operation between the various islands.



Honourable Fahie thanked the leaders for their show of solidarity and the assistance of their respective governments and people, especially following the Territory's destruction by hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

Premier Fahie said, "It is the view of my government that we have to deepen collaboration with all the nations and islands in the Caribbean because we are clear that we have shared destinies and that by working closer together, we can bring greater benefits to our respective peoples."

Premier Fahie, in his first address to the Authority, said it was important that the islands and territories co-operate closely together to defend their shared interests, including protecting the regional financial services sector.

Premier said, "Our struggles in this Caribbean basin have always been one and the same – and it manifest itself in the modern day through our shared interest in having to defend and protect our different financial services sector from unfair and onerous demands."

Honourable Fahie said that united regional action is needed in fighting new challenges.



10. CHILDREN'S ART COMPETITION NETS 140 PIECES

Some 140 pieces of art created by children of school age in the BVI were showcased at a prize giving ceremony hosted by His Excellency Governor Augustus Jaspert and Mrs. Millie Jaspert in March.

At a ceremony held at Government House in Road Town, Governor Jaspert said he was pleased to see the amount of artwork on display and he also reiterated that the Territory's most important natural resource is its people and its most important people are the children and their future.

The aim of the competition was to raise awareness of the environment by reaching as many students as possible and submissions were handed in from Jost Van Dyke, Virgin Gorda and Tortola.

Minister for Education, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley spoke of the need for environmental education and pledged his support to organisations which assist children to develop creativity.



The organisers of the competition included the Association of Reef Keepers (ARK), Art Without Limits (AWOL) and Island Bags as well as the team at the Governor's Office.

11. COMMUNITY MEETING TO DISCUSS WEST END PORT FACILITY

The Government of the Virgin Islands invited the public to attend a community meeting on Tuesday, April 2 to discuss the redevelopment of the West End Ferry Terminal.

The community meeting was held at the Leonora Delville Primary School in Cappaon's Bay.

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie said that redeveloping the West End Ferry Terminal is of paramount importance and the meeting was in keeping with his Government's strategic agenda to provide a resilient infrastructure by carrying out a complete review of the current sea transportation system including all ports of entry.

Premier said, "The specific goal of the meeting is to ultimately construct a new modern passenger and light cargo port at West End with the input of the community as we strive to be inclusive in all of our endeavours."

The community meeting was hosted in collaboration with the Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) and the Disaster Recovery Coordinating Committee (DRCC).

Preliminary conceptual designs of the facility were presented to the audience followed by a facilitated discussion to allow public input on the redevelopment of the project.



12. ONLINE WORK PERMIT SOFTWARE TO BE TESTED ON 32 COMPANIES

Plans are in place to conduct a soft launch of the Work Permit Prototype-Online System on approximately 32 cross sectoral companies registered in the Virgin Islands.

The selected companies in their respective groupings will test the system during this pilot phase and will be able to use the prototype system to upload new work permit applications and to upload required information and documents such as passport pages, medical and police records to the system.

Minister for Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration and Representative for the Ninth District, Honourable Vincent Wheatley said the objective of the online system is to ensure the processing of work permits to be as seamless and efficient as possible.

Honourable Wheatley said, **“It is a very important first step in making the government more efficient and effective as it relates to our services. We want to ensure that all the minor issues that may arise are addressed in this testing phase before we release it fully to the entire public.”**

The system is in the testing phase of the electronic processing of new work permit applications. By the end of the prototype testing period, there is expected to be an adequate amount of data that will be collected, user feedback and requirements that are both technical and customer based to enable the system to be finalised before being launched to the wider public.

Now that the training has concluded, public officers from various agencies comprising the working and implementation groups will work to streamline the records management component of the Labour and Immigration Work Permit Prototype-Online System Pilot project.”



13. 2019 BUDGET PASSED IN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The 2019 Budget was passed at the Second Sitting of the First Session of the Fourth House of Assembly to the tune of \$427,657,383.



Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie wrapped up the debate following contributions made by all members of the House on Friday, April 26.

Premier Fahie thanked all members for their contribution on the merits and principles of the bill titled, Appropriation Act, 2019.

With the passage of the 2019 Budget estimates, the Government of the Virgin Islands is now positioned to move forward with its public programmes and key infrastructure projects.

Premier Fahie emphasised that his Government is taking steps to ensure that the BVI meets its requirements outlined in his budget speech under the theme “Transitioning Towards Sustainable Growth” by the end of the 2019 financial year.

He affirmed that the Government remains committed to ensuring efficient use of the fiscal resources, on its path towards a better and brighter Virgin Islands.



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14. BANCO POPULAR TO BEGIN SERVICES ON VIRGIN GORDA AUGUST 2019

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie has announced that the banking institution, Banco Popular will be offering full banking services to the Virgin Gorda community beginning August 2019.

Premier Fahie said, "Following a series of meetings with representatives from Banco Popular, your Government was successful in negotiating a banking solution for the residents and visitors on the sister island."

The banking institution is projected to begin services by August 2019 by offering full services 2-3 days a week.

Premier Fahie was accompanied by Minister for Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration and Representative for the Ninth District, Honourable Vincent Wheatley and Junior Minister for Tourism and Territorial At-Large Representative, Honourable Shereen Flax-Charles during the meetings.

Following the closure of the Scotia Bank branch on Virgin Gorda in September 2018, discussions had been ongoing with several institutions to provide an alternate banking solution for the residents and visitors on the sister island.



15. CONTRACT SIGNED FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT OF BREGADO FLAX EDUCATIONAL CENTRE

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie has signed an agreement with BCQS Limited for the construction management of the Bregado Flax Educational Centre.

Honourable Fahie signed the contract on Wednesday, April 3 in the amount of one hundred five thousand, four hundred dollars (\$105,400.00) on behalf of the Government of the Virgin Islands while Mr. Ben Butler signed on behalf of BCQS Limited.

Honourable Fahie said that his Government is working expeditiously to ensure that all recovery and development projects are executed, "so that we can get the BVI back to the new normal".

He thanked the efforts of the Ministries of Finance and Education who were responsible for advancing the project and for their commitment to the execution of works.

Premier Fahie said, "Students on Virgin Gorda can return to a better learning environment"; adding, "One of our aims is to speed up all these projects and develop them better than how they were pre-Irma."

Speaking on the priorities in the Education sector, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education and Culture, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley said the Honourable Premier mandated that recovery in education must be of the highest priority and as a result of that all available resources are being mobilised to ensure that young persons get back in the classrooms and learn in an environment that is conducive for the type of students the Territory wants to produce.

The Deputy Premier thanked the principal and educators for their dedication and commitment to the students despite the dire situation they face. He also extended gratitude to the patronage of Unite BVI for the reconstruction of the first wing of the school.

Minister for Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration and Representative for the Ninth District, Honourable Vincent Wheatley also expressed thanks to the various ministries and agencies involved in the development and execution of the project.

Honourable Wheatley said, "I am very excited to see this contract signing, as it is the first contract signing since this Government took office and I am very pleased that it is for a project on Virgin Gorda."

He added, "It's good to see that we are remedying that situation, it has been very stressful on the parents, teachers and students.... I am really happy to see this contract being signed and having those children out of that tent."

The project is phase II of ongoing efforts for full restoration of the school. The works will include reconstruction and rehabilitation of roof and internal structures for the administration building and secondary school buildings (Blocks 2 and 3).



16. DR. THE HONOURABLE NATALIO WHEATLEY IS DEPUTY PREMIER

Minister for Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley was sworn in as Deputy Premier in March.

His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Augustus Jaspert acting in accordance with Section 52 (2) of the Constitution of the Virgin Islands and with advice from the Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie, appointed Honourable Wheatley as Deputy Premier for a period of three months.

Premier Fahie said this arrangement allows for the appointment of each of his ministers to serve in the post of Deputy Premier for a period of three months.

The Premier said, "We have ministers with great ability and great potential and we want to make sure that Government is involved in capacity building. Every three months for the first year, each minister will be given the opportunity to serve in the office of Deputy Premier."

He added that the temporary appointments allow for each minister to get the experience and ensure that they develop in all areas of Government and that after the first year someone will be named permanently to the post.



17. EXTERNAL WORK BEGINS AT THE ELMORE STOUTT HIGH SCHOOL

The external works to clean up the surroundings of the L-shaped building of the Elmore Stoutt High School (ESHS) has begun as Government moves to end the shift system at the institution.

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie, said he is happy with the progress made by Ministry of Finance, especially Dr. Drexel Glasgow and his colleagues at the Project Management Unit to get this project completed for the new school year in September [2019].

Premier Fahie said, “Since taking office, your government has designated this project as high-priority so that our junior students can once again attend school full time at this site. Our senior students will continue school at the CTL Building, but now they will attend school full-time. This will end the shift system which was implemented as a result of the destruction of the ESHS campus in September 2017 by Hurricane Irma. In the meantime the plans for the new ESHS campus are in the making.”

The Premier expressed appreciation to the principal, assistant principals, teachers, support staff, students and parents of ESHS for their patience, professionalism and tolerance in this matter from September 2017 to the present, adding, “Your new Government will continue to move with haste to ensure a more conducive educational environment.”



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18. COMPLETED LONG TRENCH COMMUNITY CENTRE TO BE USED A MODEL

The recently completed Community Centre and Emergency Shelter at Long Trench is expected to serve as a model for what needs to be done at other centres across the Territory.

This was disclosed by Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Carvin Malone who said he is very pleased with the completed works on the building.

Honourable Malone said, “Repairs to the structure included replacement and sealing of sections of the roof, changing out of windows and doors, replacement of ceiling and kitchen cupboards as well as the upgrade of all exterior and interior water and electricity fixtures and fittings to ones that promote conservation and make the operations of the facility more efficient. The entire structure was cleaned of mold and all walls were repaired and repainted. The generator housing was also upgraded and a new generator is on site to be installed.”

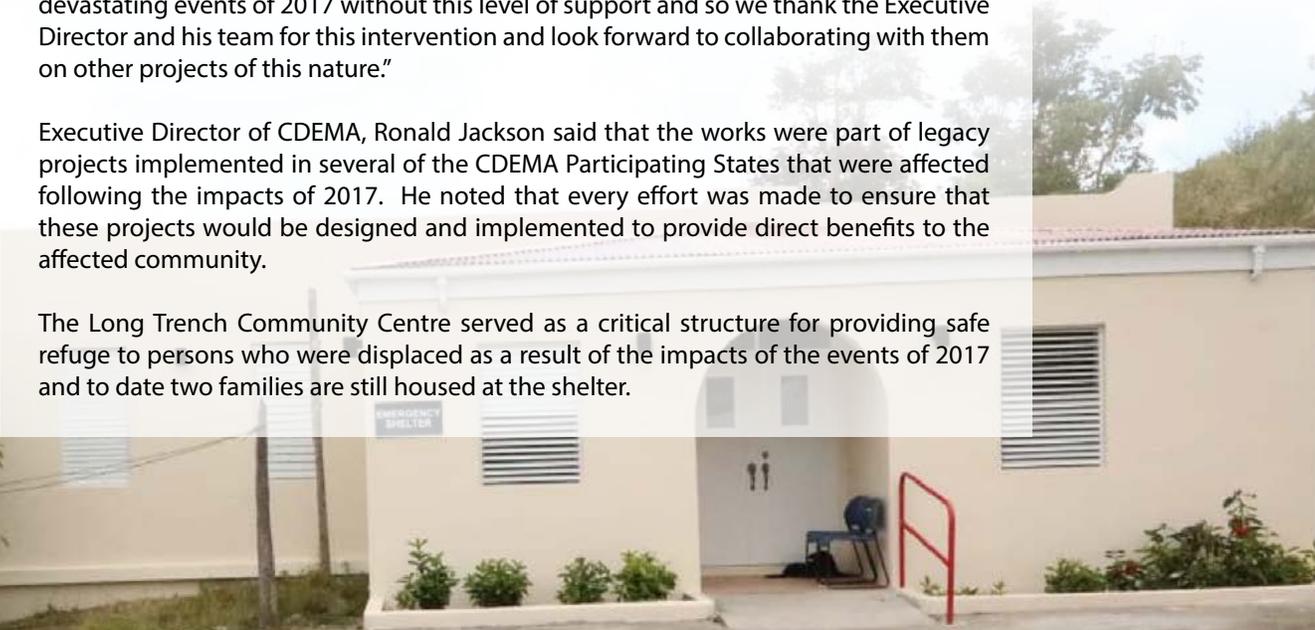


The minister expressed his appreciation to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) for supporting the repairs and said he welcomed this partnership as the Government works towards improving the resilience of community centres and other public structures.

Honourable Malone further said, “Partnerships with Caribbean organisations like CDEMA provide many benefits for us in the Virgin Islands. We cannot recover from the devastating events of 2017 without this level of support and so we thank the Executive Director and his team for this intervention and look forward to collaborating with them on other projects of this nature.”

Executive Director of CDEMA, Ronald Jackson said that the works were part of legacy projects implemented in several of the CDEMA Participating States that were affected following the impacts of 2017. He noted that every effort was made to ensure that these projects would be designed and implemented to provide direct benefits to the affected community.

The Long Trench Community Centre served as a critical structure for providing safe refuge to persons who were displaced as a result of the impacts of the events of 2017 and to date two families are still housed at the shelter.



19. WEST END PORT DEVELOPMENT MEETING WITH TAXI AND FERRY OPERATORS

Representatives from the Premier's Office and the Recovery and Development Agency further engaged stakeholders on the West End Port Development project on Thursday, April 12. The community continues to show a keen interest in this development project and this session was a follow-up to the meeting held with the wider community in Cappoon's Bay.



20. HOUSING RECOVERY PROGRAMME BRINGS RESILIENCY TO THE TERRITORY

The short term Housing Recovery Programme has ended with a visit to the home of two recipients by His Excellency the Governor Augustus ‘Gus’ Jaspert and Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Calvin Malone.



Mr. David Mathias and Ms. Callwood are beneficiaries of the Housing Recovery Programme undertaken by the Housing Recovery Unit (HRU) within the Ministry of Health and Social Development with support from the Governor’s Office and the United Kingdom.

Governor Jaspert in a brief ceremony said although the programme is focused on individual households, it contributes to

the recovery and rebuilding of the Territory. The Governor said, “I am delighted that the strong partnership between the UK and BVI governments has delivered tangible improvements to people’s lives such as shown today in restoring homes. Each individual success is part of the Territory’s success as a whole.”

Minister Malone expressed thanks to the UK government and the Housing Recovery Unit for being instrumental in the delivery of the project and confirmed the resolve of the Government of the Virgin Islands to get as many people back into their homes. He said that Mr. Mathias and Ms. Callwood’s property is a very good example of the programme, adding, “Not only do we have a resilient home but a farm, a farmer and florist. Life has been restored by this initiative.”

Looking ahead to the longer term Housing Recovery Programme, Minister Malone stated, “We must be able to have our people feeling safe. We appreciate all the efforts from the ministry and the excellent work done by the HRU team to compile numbers of affected persons and look forward to further progress throughout the Territory.”

The home was one of 80 homes repaired by funding from the UK. The UK Government support for the short term Housing Recovery Programme came from the approximately \$15M provided to the Territory throughout 2018 to support the implementation of critical recovery projects in close partnership with the ministries.

The UK also provided over \$80M to the most affected Overseas Territories in the immediate aftermath of the 2017 hurricanes and has committed another \$13M to assist the long term development of the Territory, alongside the £300M Loan Guarantee.



21. THE BVI AND LIFELABS.IO ENTER INTO FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND PARTNERSHIP TO PROVIDE BLOCKCHAIN-BASED FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND RAPID CASH RESPONSE FOR EMERGENCIES

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie announced the forming of a partnership with the company, LIFE Labs.io, for the purposes of providing Rapid Cash Response in the event of an emergency, and also creating an alternative digital currency payment method for facilitating ongoing financial transactions across the network of islands.

Premier Fahie, a thought leader in the fast emerging blockchain technology space, stated "It is of utmost importance that our citizens receive immediate and proportional response in the midst of emergencies. LIFE Labs' innovative financial technology comes at a pivotal time for our people and our economy, while the memory of recent natural disasters remains fresh in our minds and hearts, and the pressure for increased economic efficiency keeps mounting. It is with high expectations that we enter into this unprecedented partnership, together, building a better BVI for the future."

In this ever-changing landscape, Premier Fahie has recognised the opportunity to be an early adopter, promoting this pioneering industry in the British Virgin Islands. Provisions have already begun to host blockchain conferences in the near future, while welcoming new business opportunities.

The LIFE Labs.io implementation for the BVI will allow island residents to download the LIFEwallet® app on either Apple iOS or Google Android mobile devices, accessing an account that can have funds deposited into it whenever a disaster strikes. For users who do not currently have smart mobile devices LIFE will provision for digital currencies to be sent and received via SMS. The wallet app can also be used for peer-to-peer (P2P) transactions, or in daily commerce, purchasing essential goods and services from local businesses. LIFE Labs.io pioneering blockchain technology is a major advancement over traditional banking, where 'bricks and mortar'

locations can be damaged or destroyed, and thereby preventing access to much needed funds during an emergency or humanitarian crisis.

LIFE Labs.io will also allow people from across the world to donate directly to the BVI/LIFE Rapid Response Cash Fund in the event of an emergency with incoming funds confirmed on the blockchain by anyone with access to the Internet. Local charities will also be able to play a key part in supporting communities that require immediate help. This charity platform will ensure the public can see exactly where their funds are being used and for their intended purpose, creating trust for communities in hardship and transparency for the donors, utilising the transactional service and ground-breaking technology provided.



22. CONTRACTS SIGNED TO REPAIR ELMORE STOUTT HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

Four local construction companies were awarded contracts to refurbish the Elmore Stoutt High School's L-shaped building on April 18.

Roy Garraway of Quality Construction Ltd, Brian Marshal of Metro Construction Ltd, Autley Crabbe of Autland Heavy Equipment Ltd and Rayneau Gajathuar of Construction Industrial and Equipment, a company out of St. Lucia collaborating with local contractor, Mr. Gregory Hodge signed contracts to have the building ready for the new school year.



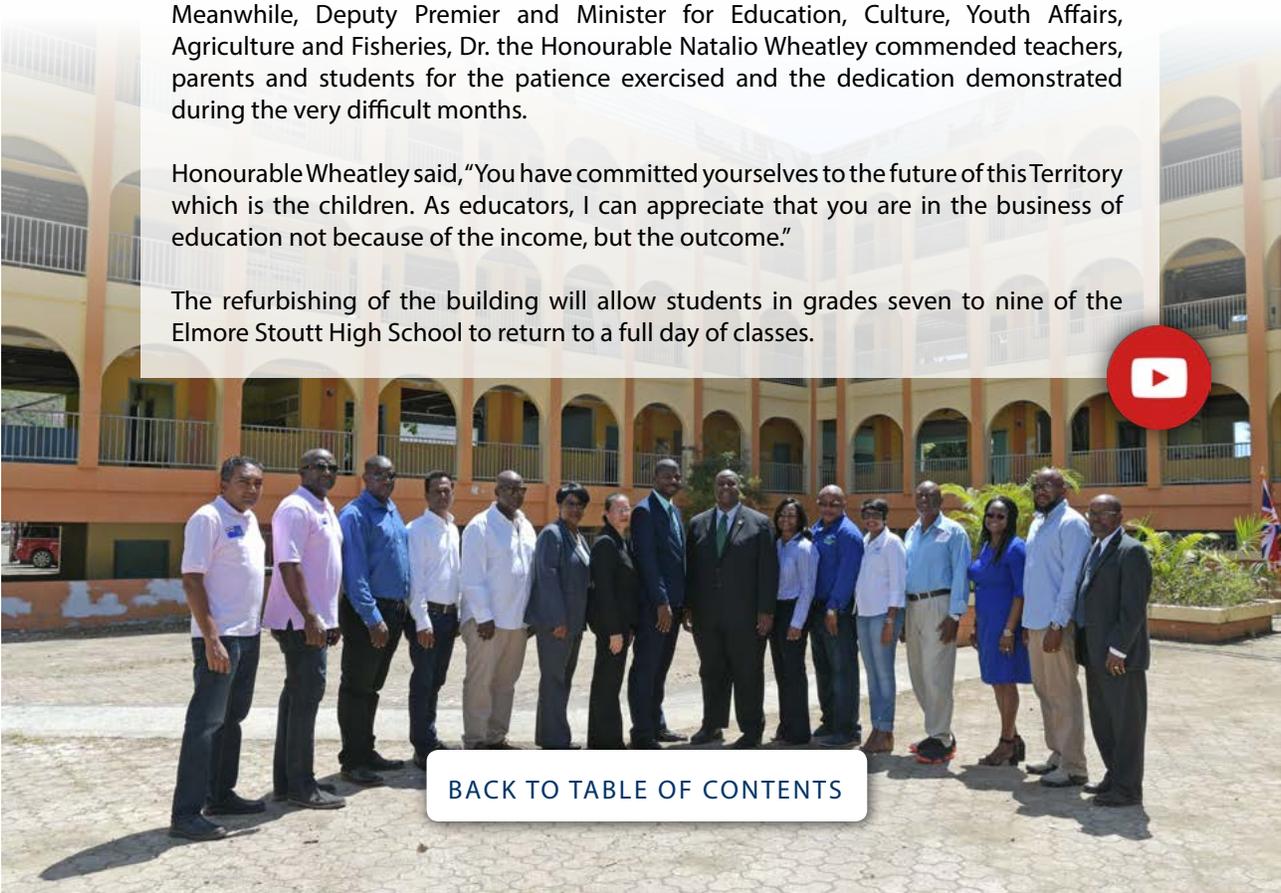
Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Andrew A. Fahie stated that his administration is looking forward for students to return to a full day of school in September after being placed on a shift system since the passage of Hurricane Irma. He also expressed that he was pleased that his Government is able to provide employment opportunities for local contractors.

The Premier said, "We are excited about our children getting back here in 2019, but we are also excited for an opportunity to engage the local construction industry and be able to offer local contractors a source of income, and today I thank you for your patience. Local contractors are key partners in the rebuilding of this Territory."

Meanwhile, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley commended teachers, parents and students for the patience exercised and the dedication demonstrated during the very difficult months.

Honourable Wheatley said, "You have committed yourselves to the future of this Territory which is the children. As educators, I can appreciate that you are in the business of education not because of the income, but the outcome."

The refurbishing of the building will allow students in grades seven to nine of the Elmore Stoutt High School to return to a full day of classes.



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23. MOTORCADE AND CEREMONY IN HONOUR OF CARIFTA GAMES ATHLETES

A motorcade and recognition ceremony was held on Friday, April 26 to welcome home and honour Gold medalist Jaleel Croal and the team of athletes who represented the BVI at the 2019 CARIFTA Games.

The motorcade took the route from the lot adjacent the Sir Rupert Briercliffe Hall and proceeded eastward to Port Purcell and returned westward continuing along Waterfront Drive, turning left onto Admin Drive and ending at the Central Administration Complex where a recognition ceremony took place in the Breezeway.



24. BVI SEEN AS A MODEL FOR RESILIENT SCHOOLS



The successes of the BVI's SMART Schools concept were shared at the 2nd annual Caribbean Safe Schools Ministerial Forum held in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, April 29 and 30.

The two-day forum was attended by Minister for Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley, along with Permanent Secretary, Dr. Marcia Potter and Department of Disaster Management, Director Ms. Sharleen DaBreo, MBE.

The officials shared how the programme has worked in the Territory since the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) issued its first Safe School certification more than five years ago and how the BVI is incorporating environmental measures for SMART Schools, the programme that grew out of Safe Schools.

During the forum, Dr. Wheatley participated in a ministerial panel discussing ways to advance the Roadmap on School Safety. He said the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria served to highlight the need for all educational facilities to look beyond having resilient physical structures, toward ensuring that systems are in place to minimise the disruption that can occur after a major hazard impact and to protect the overall well-being of the school population.

“Now it’s very clear that we have to build resilience,” Dr. Wheatley said, while explaining how the original Safe School concept has been expanded. “We in the BVI have broadened that into a cross-sectoral framework which includes environmental considerations as well as health considerations. We have dubbed it the SMART School concept. If you have Healthy Schools, and you have Safe Schools, and you have Green Schools, then you are deemed to have SMART schools from the BVI concept.”

The theme for the two-day forum was Educational Resilience: Exploring the Possibilities, and sees attendees from around the region working together to update the Caribbean Regional Roadmap on School Safety, among other goals related to the Caribbean Safe Schools Initiative.



25. TENDERS INVITED FOR WORKS ON EBENEZER THOMAS PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Government of the Virgin Islands has invited tenders for Retrofitting, Repair and Maintenance of the Ebenezer Thomas Primary School.

Scopes of works include installation of fixtures and furnishings and equipment, plumbing repairs and enhancements, installation of electricals, windows and doors, and roof works.



26. CAPTAIN OWEN G. HARRIGAN VISITOR CENTRE BATHROOMS REOPENED

Minister for Natural Resources, Labour and Immigration and Representative for the Ninth District, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley visited the newly refurbished Captain Owen G. Harrigan Visitor Centre on Monday, April 29. The centre's bathroom facilities were refurbished by the Government of the Virgin Islands in partnership with the North Sound community of Virgin Gorda. Honourable Wheatley also handed over the keys to the centre to Mr. Samuel McSheene of the BVI Ports Authority on Virgin Gorda.



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27. A.O. SHIRLEY RECREATION GROUNDS PERIMETER WALL TO BE REBUILT

AC Construction Limited owned by Mr. Arthur Corion was awarded a contract of US\$193,368.60 to rebuild the A.O. Shirley Recreation Grounds perimeter wall.

The contract was awarded by the Virgin Islands Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) and is a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture along with the BVI Olympic Committee and the BVI Athletic Association.

Minister for Education, Culture and Youth Affairs, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley said that he is pleased to see this project off the ground for the benefit of the athletes, students, and the wider community.

Honourable Wheatley said, "The erection of this wall will bring the reconstruction project of the A. O. Shirley Recreation Grounds closer to a restored stage. This will give persons who use the track a sense of privacy and security when using the premises; but above everything, our athletes will be able to practice their different disciplines of sport in a safe environment as their sense of pride and peace of mind is once again reinstated."

The reconstruction of the wall was included in Phase One of the rehabilitation plan for the grounds, while the refurbishment of the track was the first part of the Phase One recovery. The completion of the perimeter wall, will take the A. O. Shirley Recreation Grounds one step closer to re-establishing a Level Two status.



28. STATEMENT GIVEN BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT HONOURABLE CARVIN MALONE AT THE THIRD SITTING OF THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FOURTH HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ON - FRIDAY, 17TH MAY 2019



Housing Recovery Assistance Programme Update

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present an update on the support being provided to vulnerable households by the Government of the Virgin Islands to repair and rebuild hurricane-damaged homes.

The Housing Recovery Assistance Programme was created following the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 as the housing stock throughout the Territory was significantly damaged, and many households required assistance to rebuild to safe and affordable living standards.

A comprehensive Housing Recovery Assistance Policy and a Housing Recovery Plan were both approved in November 2017. Programme Guidelines were established to guide its implementation through a number of initiatives.

I am pleased to report that the Programme has been both challenging and rewarding. The first initiative to be executed was a Materials Grant programme which resulted in a total of \$517,127.83 being awarded in building material vouchers to 117 recipients. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, nine (9) households are being provided with temporary housing support.

In the second initiative, the Government of the Virgin Islands and the National Bank entered into agreement for the deposit of \$15,000,000 to be disbursed as follows:

- a) Housing Grants \$3,500,000
- b) Social Housing \$8,000,000
- c) Loans \$3,000,000
- d) Professional & Administrative fees \$500,000

On invitation by Government a total of 543 applications were received for assistance under this fund since January 2018, representing approximately \$41M in funding requests. Four hundred and nineteen (419) of these applicants met the eligibility criteria and would require over \$32 Million dollars to fund their basic building requirements. This has resulted in funding gap of more than Seventeen Million dollars (\$17M).

In order to ensure that priority would be given to the most needy families in the award of grants, applications were ranked by their vulnerability scores, following technical and social assessments conducted by the Public Works Department and the Social Development Department, respectively.

Based on available funding, 130 qualifying applicants have been approved to date, broken down as follows:

- 22 applicants for social housing for a total cost of three million dollars (\$3M).
- 105 applicants were approved for general grants, representing a total commitment of five million, five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$5,550,000.00)
- 3 applicants qualified for loans a total value of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00).

Mr. Speaker, reflecting its commitment to a collaborative approach, the Ministry of Health and Social Development has partnered with local Non-Profit Organisations, the UK Government and the Recovery and Development Agency to provide additional housing support to several more families in need.

Despite these achievements, many eligible applicants remain displaced without the financial means to repair their homes. Having heard their cries of distress, I made it a priority to conduct a thorough review of the Programme upon assuming office as Minister for the subject.

Following extensive consultations with the technical teams, the Joint Housing Recovery Committee, the National Bank of the Virgin Islands and other stakeholders, we have decided to increase the allocation of funding being applied towards general grants, bringing the total to ten million, five hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$10,550,000.). Taking into account the grants that were previously awarded, this change will result in an additional five million dollars (\$5M) to facilitate essential repairs to hurricane-damaged homes.

Funding allocated to Social Housing under the Programme will remain at three million dollars (\$3M) and Loan funding will be adjusted to five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000). Mr. Speaker, the decision to decrease the level of funding provided for loans was largely driven by the fact that the vast majority of applicants did not satisfy the Bank's credit requirements.

Another important feature of the re-designed Housing Recovery Assistance Programme is the award of partial grants that would be sufficient to make beneficiaries' homes watertight together with essential electrical and plumbing installation works. This adjustment would reduce the scope of works paid for under the Programme, thus allowing more households to be assisted within the available resources.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health and Social Development will directly engage qualified contractors, building material suppliers and construction professionals for the delivery of all new projects approved under the Programme. In addition to benefits derived from economies of scale through bulk purchasing, direct contracting will improve the supervision of construction works to ensure that quality standards are met.

Mr. Speaker, the modifications being made to the Housing Recovery Assistance Programme will go a long way in providing relief to several more uninsured families whose homes suffered damages to roofs, windows and doors.

This need is ever more pressing as another Atlantic Hurricane Season approaches. While the Government is not in a position to satisfy every request, my Ministry will be working in tandem with the Recovery and Development Agency to make an additional three million dollars (\$3M) available to support the re-designed Programme. By combining our resources in this fashion, we expect to reduce the funding gap by at least 50%; and will continue to give priority to the most vulnerable households.

Mr. Speaker, I appeal to all community-minded individuals, Non Profit Organizations and private businesses to partner with the Ministry and the RDA to address the needs of other eligible households who we are not in a position to assist due to funding shortages.

In closing, I want to put on the record the Government's recognition of all the hard work of the team of Public Officers, volunteers, consultants, contractors and other partners that have contributed to the creation and implementation of the Housing Recovery Assistance Programme. The road to recovery and rebuilding may seem long, but we must remember to celebrate milestones along the way.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

29. HOUSING RECOVERY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME UNDER REVIEW

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Carvin Malone engaged a multi-stakeholder meeting to review the Housing Recovery Assistance Programme. Several approaches were discussed to provide various forms of assistance to households in need. Honourable Malone said as the Virgin Islands continues to rebuild as the hurricane season approaches, the priority is to get residents in homes that are water sealed and habitable. The Housing Assistance Programme was set up to provide partial or full grants to meet basic building repairs or restoration following the passage of hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.



30. VIRTUAL MUSEUM INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

The Department of Culture launched its first virtual museum to motivate young persons to appreciate and love museums around the Virgin Islands.

The virtual museum initiative was launched on May 20 in observation of International Museum Day.

Minister for Education, Culture and Youth Affairs, Dr. the Honourable Natalio Wheatley, spoke of the importance of museums to the Virgin Islands culture and history while addressing students at the launch. He also urged them to appreciate their purpose and function.

Honourable Wheatley said, "This is why we have museums, to give you young people an opportunity to learn how life used to be in the Virgin Islands. We at the ministry are looking at building a museum so we can have exhibitions about our culture, from basket weaving to cultural villages, to Hurricane Irma."

Deputy Director for the Department of Culture, Ms. Anne Lennard said that in keeping with the theme of "Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition", the department was pleased to introduce for the first time, a virtual museum tour, which enable persons to access today's technology and visit the Territory's museums. She added, "In other words, if you cannot come to a museum, with the click of a button the Maritime Museum of the H. Lavity Stoutt Community College comes to you."



31. CONTRACT AWARDED FOR DEBRIS CLEARANCE AT ELMORE STOUTT HIGH SCHOOL

The Elmore Stoutt High School (ESHS) is one step closer to its redevelopment as a contract was signed to remove existing debris from its compound.

Working in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth Affairs, Fisheries and Agriculture, the Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) has awarded Autland Heavy Equipment Co. Ltd. (Autland) with the contract for the demolition and clearance of debris at the Elmore Stoutt High School.

Managing Director, Mr. Autley Crabbe signed the contract on May 24 in the sum of \$34,097.50.

The scope of works for this project includes the demolition and clearance of all debris to provide space for temporary classrooms and the future redevelopment of the site. These works are concentrated on a concrete slab at ESHS which originally contained a steel-framed structure that subsequently collapsed.



32. STATEMENT BY PREMIER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE HONOURABLE ANDREW A. FAHIE ON THE IMMIGRATION AND LABOUR REFORM INITIATIVE Sunday, 2nd June, 2019



Fellow British Virgin Islanders, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all members of the public who took the time to dialogue and feedback with the government in the consultations on the very important issue of Immigration and Labour reform.

This is a comprehensive process. The first phase focuses on addressing the issue of persons living in the territory for very extended periods.

I am proud of the way our citizens conducted themselves during the public sessions on this issue. It speaks volumes for us as a people that we can maintain our composure and respect for each other while being passionate about an issue such as this.

I want to assure every individual who submitted their views, whether verbally or in writing, that their submissions have been given due consideration during a thorough review of our approach.

On Monday, there will be a sitting of the House of Assembly, and the initiative on the order paper, speaks to the amendment to the Immigration and Passport Act that allows for cabinet to have a say in a process that effectively deals with the backlog.

In spite of what has been suggested elsewhere, the proposed amendment does not speak to the comprehensive Immigration and Labour overhaul, which will come down the road after even further consultations.

Monday sets the framework for a broader policy to come.

This is also a clear result of the recent consultation process.

The consultation process provided a forum for persons to air their concerns and, through which, the government got to understand the fears of residents – both legitimate and otherwise.

We were pleased that we also had the opportunity to correct many misunderstandings.

Not everyone we appreciate is fully satisfied; and in any process of national development, everyone will never be satisfied. But we are pleased that we have adjusted course, and found common ground that is in the best interest of every Virgin Islander.

But it is important that everyone understands the following points as we continue to debate this process:

1. What we are seeking to address does not involve new people or recent residents. There will be no flooding of our Territory with new entrants. Initially, we had envisaged considering people who were here for 15 years or more. But coming from the consultation, and having listened to you, the people, we have lifted that ceiling for consideration to 20 years.
2. Not every person who has been living in the BVI for an extended period of time would be eligible for regularisation of status – whether as resident or as a believer. Only persons who meet the

existing criteria and who have been making a contribution back to our society would qualify for consideration.

3. Qualification for consideration does not equate to immediate regularisation. The existing evaluation processes by the Immigration Department and other government agencies remain in place and will be strictly applied in the evaluation of applicants. The only difference is that the length of processing time is being shortened in this single instance.
4. This fast-tracking initiative is for one time only. The objective is to mainly address the backlog of applicants that have been pending and to sort through which applications have merit and which do not. With the backlog cleared, there will be no further need for these special provisions.
5. The clearing of the backlog is the first phase of the government's strategy for a comprehensive reform of the immigration and labour laws and procedures.

The clearing of the backlog of applicants resident here 20 years or more, makes the coming reform easier.

These reforms cannot be embarked upon with this backlog hanging over the Territory's head as it can compromise the smooth implementation of the reform programme that will be in the hands of you the people. Starting from next week, we will begin a series of more public discussions to shape the new immigration and labour policies, and to consider the substantial amendments to the Immigration and Passport Act, in the best interest of every Virgin Islander.

6. The comprehensive reform programme is aimed at closing the floodgates that currently exist and which have, in some regards, compromised the interests of BVI Islanders, leading to the fears that were raised during the consultation process.

While all other previous governments sidestepped this difficult issue, may I say, to the detriment of all BVI Islanders; this government has taken the bold step of allowing every Virgin Islander to now shape the new proposed immigration policies and laws.

This first stage of this reform process is not a case of allowing people to over-run us, as some critics have claimed.

The Immigration Department has confirmed that the backlog of applicants residing here for 20 years or more is less than 800 persons. And even so, under our current process, not all will automatically qualify.

We are satisfied that it is being done in an open and transparent way, unlike what has happened in the immediate period before.

In the last seven years under the previous administration, over 2,000 people were given some kind of status – and that was done quietly and silently, and not in the open transparent way that your government is undertaking.

Might I add, that a few of these people who received status was under 20 years residing in the BVI, and without any records of proper vetting. Interesting, a large portion of these approvals came just before the last general elections and were mainly of people who were not part of the backlog.

This is the type of behaviour we must bring to an end.

The Immigration and Labour reforms that the government is pursuing will ensure that persons who come to the Virgin Islands for employment do not develop unfounded expectations and that their presence in the Territory does not remain unchecked.

The labour reform policies will provide greater protection to BVI Islanders and Belongers in the job market by closing the gaps that have made it possible for local persons to be locked out of certain jobs.

When the government is finished implementing the reform packages that will be given to us by you, the people, there will be stricter screening procedures for allowing persons into the Territory for work, and also for the renewal of work permits.

In terms of renewal of work permits, we have welcomed the suggestions brought forward at some of the public events, that the employer applying for such, MUST furnish the Labour department with a good standing certificate from NHI, Social Security and Inland Revenue.



The government also intends to cap the number of expatriates that are allowed into the Territory for work.

However, before all of this and more can be done, the issue of the backlog must be resolved, and the sooner these issues are put to rest in a transparent and accountable manner, the sooner the government can move forward with the rest of planning and implementing protections for our people.

Our borders have been left wide open far too long, and now is the time to move with haste, to begin the process of protecting our borders and all Virgin Islanders.

As a Territory, we can no longer choose to ignore or avoid dealing with the issues affecting our Immigration and Labour policies. Doing so is why we are where we are now.

This is even more urgent given that these issues are now featuring in UK government reports and the international media.

If the BVI does not take the rudder, someone else will make these decisions for us, and we run the risk of ending up in a place that does not favour our interest as Virgin Islanders.

This current challenge is an issue that has been studied, dissected, analysed, researched, and consulted on and recommendations made on policy, law, process, and governance and so on, for many years. But the issue continues to plague BVI, because we have not addressed the heart of the matter.

Now is the time for all of us to take individual responsibility, get on board the boat "BVI Unity" and cross the vast ocean of our Immigration and Labour issues.

We must do this now before we get too deeply into the current round of migration being dictated by our recovery and economic substance circumstances.

The present situation, with all of the things that we are unhappy about, is the result of procrastination by administrators and policy makers, who choose to sidestep dealing with the issues of Immigration and Labour because they felt that those were controversial topics.

Inaction by your current government is not going to solve these problems. Only action will; action that involves you, the people.

That is why your government has paused to listen to your concerns and solutions, so that we can make sure there is a genuine place for BVI Islanders in the BVI.

And, as I have sought to moments ago, once the government is able to execute each step of this plan in the right sequence then our people will be better off than if the issues had remained untouched.

We are determined to bring comprehensive Immigration and Labour reforms that will settle all the issues once and for all.

After this process, we are moving speedily to implement measures to tighten our borders.

As a matter of fact, we have already started because recently in Cabinet, we approved the purchase of new border monitoring software for use by our Immigration Department.

This will allow the Immigration Department to keep proper tabs on people entering the territory; and also keep proper records for reference that will be used in cases of requests for work permit renewal.

We intend to make clear to people entering our borders what to expect from before they hit our shores.

There will be stricter measures regarding the renewing of existing work permits.

We are aware of instances of work permits being renewed but their Social Security, National Health Insurance & taxes are not being paid.

We are moving to ensure that this is discontinued, with violators facing heavy penalties.

This is important to enforce, in order to ensure security and to improve government finances.

We are also aware of potential employers who sponsor people to come here, but with no work to do; which allows them to freelance in our job market.

These people, sometimes end up with three or four jobs, and also resulting in cheating the system further by not paying Social Security, or their due taxes, and even while at the same time benefitting from all the social services.

These are being looked at – and the loopholes will be blocked.

We have to be more accountable; and secure our borders; and bring law and order in this Territory.

As we progress along, more details of the Immigration and Labour reform policies will be revealed and opened up for public discussion, so that citizens can have their input into the shaping of these policies.

As a proud BVIlander, my oath is to work in the best interest of the Territory. Even those who are skeptical, I can watch you boldly in the eyes, and say I am keeping the faith.

There will come a time in history, when people will look back on the path we have taken, and on the bold steps we have made – and say that in spite of fear mongering at the time – the people of the Virgin Islands are better off; and that our children have inherited a more prosperous and sustainable environment as a result.

Through the grace of God, we continue together and we march on.

I thank you very much.



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