



GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

**STATEMENT BY PREMIER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE
HONOURABLE ANDREW A. FAHIE
DURING THE SEVENTH SITTING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE FOURTH
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS**

April 16, 2020

MINISTERIAL CODE: IMPORTANT TO OUR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to grow as a Territory, we believe that a Ministerial Code would lend to our future path that would involve systems being in place in keeping with our commitment to self-determination.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministerial Code is an important accountability tool to ensure that when persons are elected to serve, and serve in ministerial office, we are all conducting ourselves in line with best ethical standards.

Additionally, a Ministerial Code is a document that sets out guidelines and standards for Government Ministers. It is expected that Ministers would conduct themselves according to the highest standards of constitutional and personal conduct in the performance of their duties in line with best practices.

Codes of Conduct for Ministers are among a range of initiatives designed to uphold transparency and standards of ministerial accountability and to preserve public trust in the institutions of Cabinet Government.

Therefore, Codes of Conduct reflect a worldwide trend on the part of citizens to demand greater accountability and transparency from their Governments.

I always say you cannot be private in the public, and the Ministerial Code is important to our democratic advancement.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the passing and implementation of a Ministerial Code that is fully discussed would lend to our future development and even as we think about our constitutional review and advancement.

It is important that the Ministerial Code goes beyond just Ministers. It must also include how we all, as elected officials conduct ourselves because we all interact with the public service and serve in public office, and we interact with each other so we cannot be exempted.

We must ensure that everyone with an overarching and constitutional status becomes legally binding to the proper use of the Government's human and financial resources.

Once you interact with public officers, oversee public offices where there is public service delivery, we have to ensure proper and transparent engagement while in public office.

I am aware that the public service is currently working on its Public Service Management Act. I heard about this document while I served in the Opposition. Currently, public officers are still following the General Orders, and things have changed tremendously over the years.

So, we must therefore ensure that all the parts are moving together — a code for public officials working at the same time with the code for public officers— to ensure collective responsibility of all, hence the need for a code of conduct for elected and even constitutional representatives.

Mr. Speaker, with that backdrop I am pleased to inform you that Cabinet has approved the establishment of a committee to review, revise and furnish recommendations to allow for the completion of the Ministerial Code for approval by Cabinet to further strengthen our abilities to police ourselves.

On February 20, 2019, prior to the 2019 General Elections, the draft Ministerial Code of Conduct was presented for Cabinet's consideration. It was agreed, in principle, by the former Administration.

However, in light of the change in the Government, following the 2019 General Elections, there is now a need for a further review of the draft Ministerial Code document.

Mr. Speaker, your Government through the Cabinet, approved a working group committee to review the draft Ministerial Code of Conduct and bring recommendations for the final document for Cabinet's consideration.

This is one of many measures that this current Government Administration is putting in place to make good on our promises to ensure good governance, transparency, and accountability is the norm and not the exception.

The composition of the working group is as follows:

- i. Mr. Ronnie Skelton – Chairman (Former Minister for Health and Former Minister of Finance)
- ii. Mrs. Irene Penn-O'Neal (Former Member of the House of Assembly)
- iii. Mrs. Dancia Penn-Sallah (Former Minister for Health and Social Development and Attorney)
- iv. Mr. Lloyd Black (Former Minister for Education and Culture and Banker)
- v. Honourable Carvin Malone (Current Deputy Premier and Minister for Health and Social Development)
- vi. Honourable Mark Vanterpool (Former Minister for Communication and Works and Current Member of the House of Assembly)
- vii. Honourable Ralph Gonsalves (Current Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and a lawyer by profession)
- viii. Mr. Rueben Meade (past Premier of Montserrat)
- ix. Mrs. Josephine Callwood (Former Permanent Secretary)
- x. Mrs. Arliene T. Penn - Recording Secretary (Director of Communications)

This Committee will submit their report to the Premier within three months of activation for onward submission to the Cabinet for further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, implementation and enactment of the Code in the Virgin Islands would be a clear signal that the Government is committed to upholding the highest standards of good governance.

Thank you.