GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Premier Says No Need to Escalate Charter Licence Matter to Washington, Invites USVI Talks in The Virgin Islands

Release Date: 1 October, 2026

Premier and Minister of Finance Honourable Dr Natalio D. Wheatley says there is no need to escalate discussions on the Commercial Recreational Vessel Licence (CRVL) fees to the United States as his administration remains open to meeting further with the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) here in the Territory.

Speaking on *Virgin Islands Voice* last night, Wednesday 30 Seotember 2026, the Premier said he has written to USVI Governor Albert Bryan Jr. in response to a deadline set for a proposed meeting in Washington. "It's not friendly to impose deadlines on your friends in that type of way," he said. "I would have much preferred for the Governor to pick up the phone and call me."

Premier Wheatley said the Inter-Virgin Islands Council was established as a bilateral framework for the two Territories to resolve matters between themselves. He said that involving the United States would also require the involvement of the United Kingdom, which the Council was designed to avoid. He also pointed out that the regulation of Virgin Islands waters is a matter devolved by the United Kingdom to the locally elected Government which he leads.

"If our neighbours want to engage more and to discuss more, we're certainly open to that," the Premier said. Noting that Governor Bryan is term-limited and a new Governor will be elected in November, the Premier expressed hope that the two Territories can reset the relationship and continue working together in a constructive and friendly manner.

According to the Premier, the Government was transparent with the USVI at every stage of its fee review, and the two sides reached an agreement announced in a joint communication. He said The Virgin Islands made concessions, including on fees for day-trippers and a per-trip licence cost after seven trips.

The Premier also sought to correct what he described as a misconception. He said the fees are not a charge to enter Virgin Islands waters, but a licence to conduct commercial activity. He said the fees apply to all foreign charter vessels, not only those from the USVI, and that fees for locally based charter boats were also increased.

The Premier said CRVL legislation had not been amended since it was first enacted in 1992 under the Territory's first Chief Minister, the late Honourable H. Lavity Stoutt, and that annual licence fees of $400 to $800 no longer reflected the value of the charter industry. He said that, before the fee review, the Government reached reciprocity arrangements with the USVI that removed work permit and trade licence requirements for charter operators in both Territories.

About:

The Premier’s Office provides strategic leadership and policy direction for the Government of The Virgin Islands and is responsible for advancing the Territory’s priorities in governance, constitutional development, external affairs and sustainable national development.

Additional Documents or Media

- premier_re_crvl_on_viv_30sept26.pdf