

OFFICIAL NEWLETTER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS



Strengthening parliamentary partnership and democratic leadership.



Youth debates, school visits and civic education in action.



When we strengthen families, we strengthen the Virgin Islands

A modern governance framework for a stronger, more independent Parliament and better services for the people of the Virgin Islands.



PUBLICATION CREDITS



The House of Assembly welcomed Sir Lindsay Hoyle during an official visit centered on parliamentary partnership, youth engagement and democratic leadership.



Message from the Speaker

Continuing the Journey Together

Welcome to the second edition of *House Matters*.

It is an honour to serve as Speaker of the House of Assembly and to work on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands.

We created this newsletter to help you better understand what the House of Assembly does and how its work affects your everyday life. The House belongs to the people, so it is important that everyone has the opportunity to know what is happening and why it matters.

Over the past few months, the House has continued working to make Parliament stronger and more effective. We have debated and passed important laws, worked with regional and international partners, improved how the House operates, and continued building an institution that is open, modern and accountable to the people.

One aspect of my work that I enjoy most is meeting with our young people. Through our Education Through Parliament programme, students are learning how government works, why good leadership matters and how they can play a role in shaping the future of the Virgin Islands. Whether through school visits, classroom presentations or youth debates, I am always encouraged by their curiosity, ideas and enthusiasm.

This edition also highlights the visit of Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons in the United Kingdom. His visit was an important milestone for the Virgin Islands and strengthened the relationship between our two Parliaments while recognising the progress being made by our House of Assembly.



Parliament is not only about passing laws. It is also about listening to the people and understanding the issues that affect our daily lives. In this edition, we also look at important conversations about women's health, the challenges many mothers face, and the experiences of families in our community. These are issues that deserve understanding, support and thoughtful action.

As we continue moving forward, I remain committed to helping build a Parliament that is transparent, accessible and responsive to the people it serves. Together, through respect, service and shared responsibility, we can continue strengthening our democracy and building a brighter future for the Virgin Islands.

Thank you for taking the time to read *House Matters*, and thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Hon. Corine N. George-Massicote
Speaker of the House of Assembly
Virgin Islands

Special Feature:

A Historic Visit from the United Kingdom Speaker

Building Relationships Beyond Borders

The House of Assembly of the Virgin Islands was honoured to welcome Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, during his official visit to the Territory.

The visit marked an important milestone in the longstanding relationship between the Virgin Islands and the United Kingdom and recognised the continued development of the House of Assembly as a modern Parliament. It also provided an opportunity to strengthen parliamentary ties, exchange ideas and share experiences on the role of legislatures in serving the public.

Discussions during the visit focused on strengthening democratic leadership, improving the effectiveness of Parliament, promoting openness and accountability, building public confidence in democratic institutions, and encouraging greater participation by young people in public life.

The visit also reinforced the importance of preserving the traditions of Parliament while embracing innovation and modern practices that enable the House of Assembly to better serve the people of the Virgin Islands.



An Evening of Parliamentary Fellowship

To commemorate the occasion, Speaker Hon. Corine N. George-Massicote hosted an official dinner reception in honour of Sir Lindsay Hoyle's visit.

The reception brought together former Speakers of the House of Assembly, current Members of the House of Assembly, parliamentary officials and invited guests to celebrate the history and continued development of the Legislature.

The evening provided an opportunity for former and current parliamentary leaders to reflect on the progress of the House of Assembly, acknowledge the contributions of those who have served the institution, and reaffirm their shared commitment to strengthening Parliament for future generations.

The occasion also highlighted that Parliament is about more than debating and passing laws. It is about serving the people, upholding democracy, listening to the voices of the community and working together to build a stronger future for the Virgin Islands.

Sir Lindsay Hoyle's visit stands as an important reminder of the value of strong parliamentary partnerships and the shared commitment to promoting good governance, accountability and democratic values across the Commonwealth.

Youth Debate:

SECURING OUR SEAS, SUSTAINING OUR FUTURE



As part of the official visit of Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Speaker of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, students from schools across the Virgin Islands took part in a special youth debate exploring the future of the Territory's marine resources and how they can support a strong and sustainable economy.

The debate challenged students to consider how the Virgin Islands can protect its oceans while creating opportunities for jobs, business and economic growth. It encouraged them to think about how the sea, one of the Territory's greatest natural assets, can continue to benefit both present and future generations.

Students debated the motion:

"Securing Our Seas, Sustaining Our Future: Why the British Virgin Islands Must Be Supported to Fully Develop a Blue Economy"



Throughout the debate, students spoke with confidence, passion and conviction as they explored issues such as:

- Protecting marine life and the natural environment.
- Building resilience to climate change.
- Supporting sustainable tourism.
- Safeguarding the fishing industry and marine resources.
- Creating new economic opportunities through the Blue Economy.
- Balancing economic growth with environmental responsibility.

The debate showcased the intelligence, confidence and leadership potential of young people throughout the Territory while reinforcing the importance of involving youth in national conversations surrounding the future of the Virgin Islands.

The event also reinforced the importance of giving young people a voice in national conversations. By encouraging them to share their ideas and take part in discussions about the future of the Territory, the House of Assembly continues to inspire the next generation of leaders and responsible citizens.

The debate was a powerful reminder that protecting our environment and strengthening our economy can go hand in hand. More importantly, it showed that the future of the Virgin Islands will be shaped by young people who are prepared to lead with knowledge, vision and a strong sense of responsibility.

BUILDING TOMORROW'S PARLIAMENT

STRENGTHENING THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY TO BETTER SERVE THE PEOPLE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The House of Assembly has proudly served the people of the Virgin Islands for generations. The House of Assembly (Management) Act, 2025 builds on that proud legacy by introducing a modern governance framework that will strengthen the House and support its work for generations to come.

"The framework is changing. The mission remains the same: serving the people of the Virgin Islands."

WHY THIS MATTERS?

The House of Assembly belongs to the people of the Virgin Islands. It is where laws are debated and passed, national issues are discussed, and the Government is held to account on behalf of the public.

For the House to continue fulfilling this important responsibility, it must have the governance, systems and resources needed to support its work. That is why the House of Assembly (Management) Act, 2025 represents an important milestone in the continued development of the House of Assembly.

The Act does not change the constitutional role of the House, it strengthens the way the institution is governed and administered, ensuring it is better equipped to meet the needs of a modern legislature while continuing to serve the people of the Virgin Islands.



The House of Assembly is the institution through which the legislative functions of the Virgin Islands are carried out. To carry out its constitutional responsibilities effectively, it requires governance arrangements specifically designed to support the work of the House.

For many years, the Office of the House of Assembly functioned administratively within the wider Public Service. While this arrangement provided the administrative framework under which the House operated, it was not specifically designed to meet the distinct governance, operational and administrative needs of a parliamentary institution.

As the responsibilities of the House expanded, it became clear that a different structure was needed, one that recognised the unique role of the Parliament and provided greater responsibility for the management of its own administration, staff, finances and operations.

WHY THE CHANGE?

Like many democratic countries, the Virgin Islands is governed through three branches of government, each with a distinct role.

The Executive

The Government develops policy, delivers public services and implements the laws passed by the House.

The Legislature

The House of Assembly makes laws, represents the people and holds the Government to account.

The Judiciary

The Courts interpret the law and administer justice independently.

Together, these three branches provide the checks and balances that protect democracy, promote accountability and uphold the rule of law.



HOW WILL THIS BENEFIT THE VIRGIN ISLANDS?

The new framework will help the House of Assembly to:

- strengthen transparency, accountability and good governance;
- improve the services that support Members and parliamentary committees;
- modernise parliamentary administration and technology;
- strengthen financial stewardship and oversight;
- preserve the records and history of the Legislature;
- respond more effectively to the evolving needs of the House; and
- make the House of Assembly more open, accessible and responsive to the people of the Virgin Islands

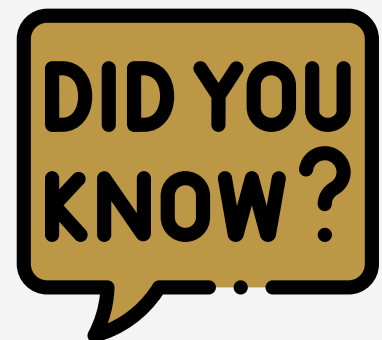
These improvements will strengthen the House's ability to serve the public while reinforcing confidence in one of the Territory's most important democratic institutions.

LOOKING AHEAD

The House of Assembly has played a central role in the democratic life of the Virgin Islands for generations. The House of Assembly (Management) Act, 2025 builds on that foundation by providing a governance framework that reflects the needs of a modern legislature while preserving the principles that have guided the House throughout its history.

As the House continues to evolve, its purpose remains unchanged: to represent the people, make laws in the public interest and hold the Government to account.

The House of Assembly (Management) Act, 2025 is more than an administrative reform, it is an investment in the future of parliamentary democracy in the Virgin Islands. By strengthening its governance and modernising the way it operates, the House is ensuring that it remains equipped to represent the people, uphold democratic accountability and serve the Virgin Islands with integrity, transparency and excellence for generations to come.



The House of Assembly (Management) Act, 2025 establishes the House of Assembly Commission, providing the House with its own modern governance framework to oversee its administration, finances and operations in support of its constitutional role.



EDUCATION THROUGH PARLIAMENT

Parliament comes to Life for Cedar International School Students.



Students of Cedar International School recently visited the House of Assembly Chamber as part of the ongoing Education Through Parliament initiative.

The visit provided students with a unique opportunity to experience Parliament first-hand while gaining a deeper understanding of:

- How laws are made
- The role of elected leaders
- Parliamentary procedure and debate
- Civic responsibility
- Leadership and public service



One of the highlights of the visit was the opportunity to participate in discussions and observe the parliamentary process in action, giving students a practical appreciation of how ideas are debated, decisions are made and legislation is considered within the Legislature.

The visit created an interactive and welcoming environment where students were encouraged to recognise that their voices, ideas and dreams matter, and that they each have the potential to make a positive difference in their communities.



Speaker George-Massicote encouraged the students to remain confident, respectful and engaged while emphasising the values that shape good citizenship and responsible leadership:

- Education
- Discipline
- Respect
- Confidence
- Compassion
- Service to Others



She reminded the students that leadership is not defined by age, but by character, responsibility and a willingness to positively impact others.

The Education Through Parliament initiative continues to strengthen the connection between young people and the House of Assembly by providing meaningful opportunities to learn about democracy, civic participation and public service. By opening the doors of Parliament, the House hopes to inspire a new generation of informed citizens, community leaders and future parliamentarians.

"Today's students are tomorrow's leaders. By opening the doors of Parliament, we are investing in a future generation that understands the importance of democracy, service and responsible leadership."

TAKING PARLIAMENT INTO OUR SCHOOLS

Speaker visits Enis Adams Primary School to promote civic education.

The House of Assembly's commitment to civic education extends well beyond the walls of Parliament.

As part of its ongoing community outreach programme, Speaker Hon. Corine N. George-Massicote visited Enis Adams Primary School to deliver an engaging presentation on the role and work of the House of Assembly.

The visit formed part of the House's continued efforts to bring Parliament closer to students across the Virgin Islands, helping young people develop a greater understanding of democracy, leadership and active citizenship.



During the presentation, students explored:

- The role and purpose of the House of Assembly
- The responsibilities of the Speaker
- How laws are debated and passed
- The importance of leadership and public service
- Why civic participation matters
- The three branches of government and their roles

Students participated enthusiastically throughout the session, asking thoughtful questions, sharing their ideas and demonstrating a genuine interest in how Parliament serves the people of the Virgin Islands.

Speaker George-Massicote encouraged the students to remain curious, work hard and believe in their ability to make meaningful contributions to their schools, communities and the Territory. She reminded them that every leader begins as a learner and that the future of the Virgin Islands rests in the hands of young people who are informed, compassionate and committed to serving others.

The visit reflects the House of Assembly's ongoing commitment to ensuring that Parliament remains visible, accessible and connected to the people, particularly young people, who represent the future of the Virgin Islands.



Building Tomorrow's Leaders

Whether welcoming students into the House of Assembly Chamber or engaging with schools throughout the Territory, the House of Assembly remains committed to educating and inspiring the next generation. Through these engagements, young people are encouraged to deepen their understanding of democracy, develop a strong sense of civic responsibility, and recognise the importance of their voices in shaping the future of the Virgin Islands.

The **Education Through Parliament** initiative continues to provide students with meaningful opportunities to learn about the role and functions of Parliament, while building the knowledge, confidence and values necessary to become informed, responsible and engaged citizens and ultimately, tomorrow's leaders.

PARLIAMENT IN ACTION

Every sitting of the House of Assembly is an opportunity to shape the future of the Virgin Islands. While the passing of legislation is an important part of Parliament's work, it is only one aspect of the House's constitutional responsibilities.

The House also debates matters of national importance, considers Bills, approves resolutions, establishes committees and provides oversight on issues affecting the people of the Virgin Islands. Together, these responsibilities help strengthen democratic governance and ensure that Parliament remains responsive to the needs of the Territory.



During the period April to June 2026, Members considered a broad range of parliamentary business that reflected the House's continued commitment to:

- Good governance and accountability
- Justice and fairness
- Consumer protection
- Economic growth and opportunity
- Efficient public services
- Constitutional development
- Community wellbeing



Bills Considered by the House

Bill	Why It Matters
Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2026	Proposed stronger protections for consumers by helping to ensure that savings arising from duty and tax concessions on essential goods are reflected in the prices paid by consumers.
Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2026	Sought to strengthen the Territory's electoral framework and support confidence in the democratic process.
Other Government and Private Members' Bills considered during the quarter	Reflected Parliament's continuing role in reviewing and debating proposed legislation affecting the Virgin Islands.

Resolutions Approved

The House also considered and approved important resolutions that supported the work of Parliament and the wider development of the Territory, including:

- Approval of the Constitutional Negotiating Committee, advancing the Territory's constitutional reform process and supporting continued dialogue on the future constitutional relationship of the Virgin Islands.
- Appointment of the Special Select Committee on the Elections (Amendment) Bill, 2026, demonstrating Parliament's commitment to detailed scrutiny of significant electoral reform proposals and encouraging public participation in the legislative process.

Resolutions are an important part of parliamentary business, enabling the House to establish committees, express decisions and authorise actions that support good governance and effective administration.

— COMMITTEE BUSINESS —

Committees are an important part of the work of the House of Assembly. While much of Parliament's work is seen during sittings of the House, committees provide an opportunity for Members to examine matters in greater detail and give focused attention to issues that may require further consideration.

Through committees, Members can review information, hear from public officers, organisations and other stakeholders, and consider different perspectives before reporting their findings and recommendations to the House. This helps to strengthen oversight, accountability and informed decision-making.

Committees can also provide an important connection between Parliament and the public by creating opportunities, where appropriate, for persons and organisations to contribute to matters being considered.

Parliament Beyond Legislation

The work of the House extends well beyond considering Bills.

Parliament provides a forum where issues of national importance are debated, Government actions are scrutinised, and decisions are taken that influence the future direction of the Virgin Islands.

Whether considering proposed legislation, approving resolutions, establishing committees or debating matters of public interest, Members remain committed to serving the people with integrity, transparency and accountability.



Cancer, Care and Cost:



A cancer diagnosis can change life very quickly. Along with the emotional impact, patients and their families may suddenly have to manage medical appointments, testing, medication, treatment, follow-up care and, in some cases, travel overseas for specialised services.

Living in a small Territory means that not every specialised treatment can be available locally. We are fortunate, however, to have healthcare services and the National Health Insurance system to help residents access care both at home and, where necessary, overseas.

Early detection remains one of the most important ways we can protect our health. Regular check-ups and recommended screenings can help identify some cancers earlier, when there may be more treatment options and better outcomes.

Here in the Virgin Islands, services are available to support early detection, including mammograms, cervical cancer screening, diagnostic imaging and other testing. Public education and screening initiatives also help to encourage residents to take a more active role in looking after their health.

But there is another side of the conversation that is equally important:

HOPE



What happens after the diagnosis?

For many families, a serious illness can bring unexpected expenses alongside the worry of treatment and recovery. There may be medication, specialist appointments, travel, accommodation and other costs that can add up over time.

This is why conversations about cancer should not only be about screening and treatment. They should also include how we support patients and families throughout their journey.

As a community, we can continue looking at ways to make preventative care and screening easier to access, strengthen support for persons who need treatment overseas, explore partnerships with regional and international medical institutions, and find opportunities to make medicines and specialised care more affordable.

Prevention is also an important part of that conversation. When people feel encouraged to have regular check-ups and seek medical advice early, health concerns may be identified sooner.

Cancer affects more than the person who receives the diagnosis. It affects families, friends and communities. By encouraging early detection, supporting those undergoing treatment and continuing the conversation about access and affordability, we can work towards ensuring that no one has to face that journey alone.

Quality Care and Patient Protection

Affordability is an important part of healthcare, but so too are quality, patient safety and confidence in the care we receive.

The Virgin Islands already has systems in place to regulate healthcare professionals and maintain professional standards. As healthcare changes and new treatments, technologies and services become available, it is important that these systems continue to develop alongside them.

This includes ensuring that patients understand the care they are receiving, have access to clear information about costs and know where to turn if they have questions or concerns. It also means supporting healthcare professionals and providers with clear standards that promote safe and quality care.

Good regulation should ultimately work for everyone. It helps to protect patients, supports healthcare professionals and strengthens confidence in the services available to our community.

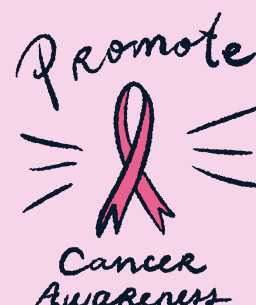
For persons facing cancer and other serious illnesses, however, the conversation goes even further. How do we continue to ensure that patients can access the care they need while families are supported through what can already be a very difficult time?

There may not be one simple answer. It requires healthcare professionals, policymakers, insurers, community organisations, patients and families to be part of the conversation.

Starting the Conversation

The House of Assembly has a role in helping to create space for conversations that matter to the people of the Virgin Islands. Healthcare is one of them.

Cancer affects individuals and families, but healthcare touches all of us. Talking openly about prevention, early detection, access, affordability, quality care and patient support can help us better understand where we are and where we may wish to go as a Territory.





LOOKING AHEAD

Creating healthier communities begins with listening to one another.

Whether through neighbours supporting neighbours, employers recognising the needs of persons undergoing treatment, healthcare professionals providing compassionate care or families simply checking in on one another, every act of support contributes to stronger communities.

By continuing these conversations with empathy and respect, we help create a Virgin Islands where persons affected by cancer feel valued, supported and empowered throughout their journey.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

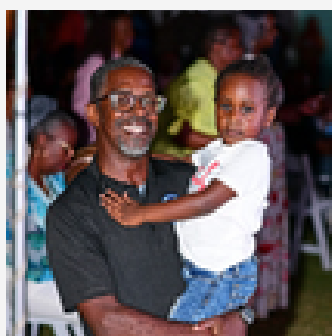
This Quarter's Questions

What more can we, as a community, do to improve cancer prevention, access to care, affordability and support for persons and families affected by cancer in the Virgin Islands?

We invite you to share your thoughts, experiences and ideas.

Selected community responses may be featured in a future edition of House Matters as part of our ongoing commitment to encouraging respectful dialogue and greater civic engagement.

Together, through conversation, understanding and shared responsibility, we can continue building a stronger, healthier and more connected Virgin Islands.



"When we support those affected by cancer, we strengthen families. When we strengthen families, we strengthen the Virgin Islands."



BEHIND THE SCENES

Recognising the People Who Keep Parliament Moving

Behind every sitting of the House, committee meeting, public engagement, school visit and official event is a dedicated team whose commitment and professionalism ensure that the House of Assembly continues to serve the people of the Virgin Islands with excellence.

While much of their work takes place away from public view, it is fundamental to the effective functioning of Parliament. From providing procedural advice and administrative leadership to coordinating meetings, preparing official documents, supporting Members and Committees, managing communications, maintaining the Chamber and delivering essential operational services, every member of the House Administration contributes to the success of the institution.

The House of Assembly extends its sincere appreciation to every member of staff whose dedication, expertise and teamwork continue to strengthen Parliament and uphold the democratic process.

Recognising the Leadership of the House Administration

Special recognition is extended to Mrs. Bethsaida Smith-Hanley, Clerk of the House of Assembly, for her dedicated leadership of the House Administration and her steadfast commitment to supporting the work of Parliament.

As the principal adviser on parliamentary procedure and the head of the House Administration, the Clerk provides strategic administrative leadership while ensuring that the business of the House is conducted efficiently, impartially and in accordance with established parliamentary practice. Through her leadership, the Office of the Clerk provides essential procedural, administrative and operational support to the Speaker, Members and Committees, enabling the House of Assembly to fulfil its constitutional responsibilities with professionalism and integrity.

The House also expresses its sincere appreciation to the entire House Administration team, whose collective efforts, often carried out quietly behind the scenes, provide the strong administrative foundation upon which Parliament serves the people of the Virgin Islands each day.



THE HOUSE MATTERS TEAM

House Matters represents the House of Assembly's commitment to openness, transparency and public engagement. Each edition is the result of careful planning, collaboration and creativity by a dedicated publication team.

The House extends its sincere appreciation to Ms. Janiecia Vanterpool whose exceptional coordination, organisation and editorial support have been instrumental in the development of House Matters. From planning and structuring each edition to coordinating content, managing production schedules and ensuring continuity throughout the editorial process, her professionalism, attention to detail and unwavering commitment have helped transform the vision for this publication into reality.

Special recognition is also extended to Ms. Lenisha Callwood, whose creativity, innovation and design expertise have given House Matters its distinctive visual identity. Through thoughtful layout, engaging presentation and meticulous attention to detail, she has transformed each edition into a professional publication that reflects the House of Assembly's commitment to excellence in parliamentary communication.

Together, their talents and dedication have helped establish House Matters as a publication that informs, educates and strengthens the connection between Parliament and the people of the Virgin Islands.

"The strength of Parliament is reflected not only in its debates and decisions, but also in the dedication of those who work tirelessly behind the scenes to support its mission of serving the people."



Publication Credits

Published by:

Office of the House of Assembly
Virgin Islands

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Visit of Sir Lindsay Hoyle

Official Dinner Reception



Youth Blue Economy Debate



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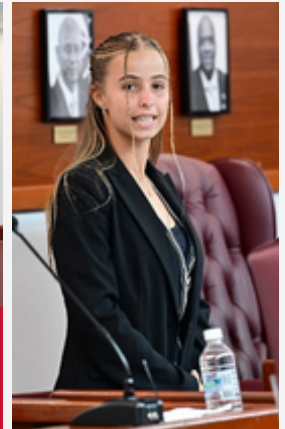
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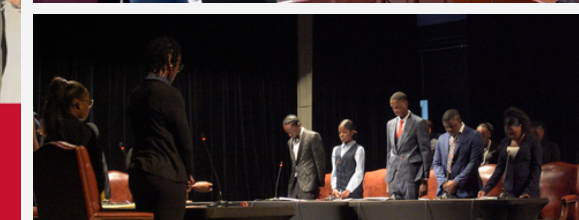
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HOUSE MATTERS

VOLUME 1
ISSUE 2
SEPTEMBER 2026

Together, we continue building a stronger Virgin Islands through service, unity and community.

Thank You

for your continued Support and Partnership.



Stay Connected

The House of Assembly welcomes your questions, feedback and participation



Contact the Speaker's Office

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SERVING THE PEOPLE • STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY • BUILDING THE FUTURE



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