



GOVERNMENT HOUSE BLOG

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Government House Reaffirms Administration's Priority on La Valle Police Substation

In response to recent statements made regarding the La Valle substation on St. Croix, Government House reaffirmed on Tuesday the Administration's priority of providing funding and manpower for the north shore facility. Highlighted was the fact that the full and necessary funding to support the La Valle Substation was not available until the passage of the recent Bond Bill, which the Governor and his Administration worked to put together and get approved through a Special Session of the Legislature.

Noting the recent public statements made to malign the work in progress, Government House officials said,

"It is ironic that a senator is grandstanding on this issue, especially given the fact that he voted against the funding for it when he voted no on the recent Bond Bill. Senator Donastorg, along with four St. Croix Senators, voted against that funding, thus voting against the La Valle and Cotton Valley Substations. Now that the funding has been allocated, the project will be able to proceed. Senator Donastorg simply does not know what he is talking about on this issue or he has forgotten the vote he cast."

Police Commissioner Novelle E. Francis, Jr. spoke with reporters earlier in the day reiterating his commitment to measures dedicated towards expanding the Territory's community policing initiatives.

Governor deJongh also reaffirmed the Administration's commitment:

"From the very beginning, my Administration has communicated our high priority on public safety and emergency response as a first and necessary focus. The La Valle project is a tremendously important part of a comprehensive community policing strategy in place, and our north shore focus has never been stronger thanks to the recently passed Bond Bill. This bill provides the full and necessary funding to support the scope of work and manpower needed at this key St. Croix facility," deJongh said.

The Chief Executive provided a reminder on the necessary actions taken to secure the funding for the substation and other public works projects stating, "Recognizing that the initial \$450,000 appropriation from last year would not satisfy the \$2.6 million cost estimate for the La Valle substation, I called the Legislature into Special Session in order to address the additional funding needed for this important facility."

The Department of Public Works conducted an analysis for the La Valle site, concluding that in order to best serve the needs of the area, a multi-purpose emergency response center needed to be constructed to accommodate Emergency Management and First Responders, as well as Police and Fire capabilities. The final cost estimate of \$2.6 million provided for an overhaul and upgrade of the facility, to include greater public safety measures to help protect residents in the area.

The Governor continued,

"There has been and continues to be an enormous concern for the residents of La Valle, Cane Bay, Mon Bijou, Salt River and the surrounding areas, as well as all areas throughout the Territory. Despite the senator's statements to the contrary, we have always held the Territory's protection of residents as an utmost priority, which speaks to our actions in taking steps to secure the funding and manpower needed to renovate and properly outfit the La Valle site," deJongh said.

The Governor also noted that public safety and emergency management has been and continues to be a continued Administration focus, drawing on the reorganization of VITEMA, as well as the recent launch of the new 911 Emergency Communications Center on St. Croix.

Regarding legislative and other crime prevention measures in place throughout the Territory, the Governor stressed,

"The issue of crime in our neighborhoods is certainly a serious one, and there are many steps that my Administration is taking to bring innovative and needed public

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safety measures forward. Any indication of the contrary is a misguided attempt to unseat the good work that we have done and continue to do on behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands. We are continually training police officers and utilizing police cadet forces, auxiliaries, and experienced law enforcement officers (ELEOS) to assist in manpower shortages, including for the La Valle and other critical areas. In addition, we are graduating two police classes a year, which will include a class later this year with the largest number of police recruits in recent history, and we look forward to continuing the coordinated efforts to provide the highest level of public safety in the history of the Territory," deJongh continued.

The Chief Executive reiterated statements made earlier today by Police Commissioner Novelle E. Francis, Jr., who spoke with a television reporter at the site of the La Valle substation this afternoon.

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