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## Senator Johnson Blasts BOC's Missed Revenue Opportunities; Director Fires Back

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**An aerial view of the John A. Bell Correctional Facility on St. Croix. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM**

In a recent meeting of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security, Justice, and Public Safety, a discussion initially focused on [new parole legislation](#) veered off course as Senator Franklin Johnson criticized the Bureau of Corrections (BOC) for failing to capitalize on income-generating activities. However, BOC Director Wynn Timerman quickly countered, emphasizing the agency's current focus on inmate rehabilitation and community reintegration over revenue-generating measures.

The senator inquired about the status of an embroidery machine he said was in the possession of the Bureau, and a BOC official confirmed that the agency did have the machine but said that it was not currently in use. This seemed to exasperate Mr. Johnson, who noted that agencies across the territory need embroidery on their shirts, and mused that this was a missed opportunity for the BOC to charge for the service. Meanwhile, “prisoners are pretty much eating, sleeping for free,” he grouched.

Sen. Johnson also spoke of when the prison maintained a farm which sold produce not just along the roadside but also to major supermarkets in the territory. Harking back to before the passage of Hurricane Hugo in 1989, the senator recounted a set schedule of deliveries, “1000 pounds of cucumbers on Mondays, 1000 pounds of zucchini on Wednesdays, and 1000 pounds of tomatoes on Fridays for seven months straight...they paid you for that because we had a farming program in place,” he recalled.

Mr. Johnson argued that inmates should be assisting the BOC in income-generating endeavors alongside their rehabilitation activities. However, BOC Director Winnie Testamark pushed back on Sen. Johnson’s vision. “I want him to understand, I want everyone to understand times have changed,” she asserted. “Corrections back then is not the corrections [of] today.”

Ms. Testamark noted that produce grown via the prison’s agriculture programs are fed directly into the BOC’s kitchens to help improve access to fresh fruits and vegetables, not sold to the outside population. She also informed lawmakers that the Bureau has an existing memorandum of understanding to assist the Department of Public Works, and asserted that inmates also do work with outside facilities.

Ms. Testamark explained that the BOC’s current priority is rehabilitation with an eye towards eventual integration within the community after the period of incarceration has ended. “We have to be able to teach individuals marketable skills so that when they come out into society, they’re able to make a living wage.”

The BOC director vehemently denied the claim that BOC does not generate any revenue, noting that half a million dollars flowed into government coffers due to the housing of federal inmates. “So when you say that we don’t generate funds...I just wanted to make it very, very clear that some of your statements were inaccurate on behalf of the men and the women who work tirelessly every day in those facilities to take care of the individuals entrusted in our care,” Ms. Testamark admonished. “We do a darn good job.”