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# Johnson Calls for Committee of the Whole, State of Emergency to Address St. Croix's Lead and Copper Water Crisis

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Senator Franklin Johnson on Sunday became the second legislator to ask that President of the Senate Novelle Francis convene the Committee of the Whole, to discuss the lead and copper contamination recently discovered at several locations in St. Croix's water distribution system. The senator also called on Governor Albert Bryan to declare a state of emergency on the same issue, [joining Senator Samuel Carrion and other lawmakers](#).

Last Thursday, Senator Kenneth Gittens said that he had [written to Sen. Francis](#) to request that lawmakers be given the opportunity to hear testimony under oath from several key players in the contamination response. Likewise, Sen. Johnson believes it is crucial that relevant agencies, including the Water and Power Authority, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department

of Health and others be present to testify when the committee meeting is held. To ensure their presence," Senator Johnson is strongly advocating for the issuance of subpoenas," according to a press statement issued by the Senator on Sunday.

"The involved agencies must provide a thorough examination of the crisis," Mr. Johnson's statement says. "This includes detailing the current status of the contamination, outlining a clear timeline for its resolution and estimating the financial costs associated with rectifying the program." According to the senator, "transparency and accountability are non-negotiable."

A Committee of the Whole hearing, Mr. Johnson believes, is "an essential step toward ensuring the safety, health, and well-being of St. Croix's residents."

Regarding his call for a state of emergency declaration, Mr. John is requesting several actions from the governor:

- **Abatement of Charges:** Senator Johnson firmly believes no citizen should pay for rusty leadtainted water. He is urging WAPA to immediately abate charges for citizens affected by this crisis, ensuring that unsafe water costs do not burden them.
- **Continued Water Testing:** Senator Johnson stresses the importance of ongoing water testing for lead and other contaminants. He insists that rigorous and consistent testing is essential to identifying and addressing the problem's extent and ensuring our water supply's safety.
- **Utilization of ARPA Funding:** In addition to demanding immediate action from WAPA, Senator Johnson advises Governor Bryan to allocate a portion of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding to assist WAPA in providing clean and safe water to all affected citizens. This financial support is crucial to addressing the crisis effectively and swiftly.

The senator has issued a stern warning to all residents impacted by the ongoing crisis. He stated, "Do not use the water for drinking or cooking. Boiling the water will not make it safe." Stressing the gravity of the situation, he called on the governor to secure other water sources until a solution is found.