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Gittens Demands Detailed Plan for Use of \$50 Million Before Approval; Bolques Urges Caution

Lawmakers demand transparency and fiscal strategy as Governor Bryan seeks an additional \$50 million to ease the government's cash crunch

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Some lawmakers are now casting doubt on their willingness to accommodate Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s request to give the government [more access to credit](#).

Earlier this week, a press release from Government House and testimony from the government's finance team made the case once again that easing the territory's cash crunch would require more credit than what the government can currently access.?

Governor Bryan wants an [additional \\$50 million](#) made available so that the administration can pay outstanding bills, remit promised payments to former employees, and take care of other pending obligations.

Lawmakers on Tuesday were non-committal in the face of testimony by Finance Commissioner Kevin McCurdy, who told members of the Senate Committee on Budget, Appropriations and Finance that the line of credit would allow the government to “navigate a period of reduced revenue and stimulate economic growth.”?

Now that the hearing is over, however, Senators Kenneth Gittens and Angel Bolques Jr. have both come out to express skepticism regarding the idea. “We must be cautious in how we approach our fiscal responsibilities,” a statement from Sen. Bolques reads. “The government's current financial situation, as outlined in recent testimony, raises significant concerns about our ability to manage additional debt without a concrete plan for repayment and fiscal sustainability.”?

Sen. Gittens notes that previous interventions from the Legislature have not been used in the manner intended. “The Administration has received substantial funding in the past, specifically \$50 million through Acts #8770 and #8759, intended for retroactive payments. Yet, only \$2.5 million of this was disbursed to the workers owed back pay,” he highlighted.

[During an interview](#) with the Consortium's Ernice Gilbert last week, Mr. Bryan said the \$25 million approved by the Senate for retroactive wages, [which the administration had proposed](#), was less important than paying taxes. “We don't owe no \$23 million, I'm telling you the budget is just a fictitious thing that they put there,” he said, responding to criticism that the \$2.5 million of the \$25 million the administration had paid wasn't satisfactory. In January, Mr. Bryan's financial team admitted that the rest of the original allocation was [used to make payroll](#).

The governor then contended that the decades-old debt has long been ignored. “I am trying to right a 40-year wrong, but I've always said we have priorities over paying the retro,” he said. “It isn't fair to all the people who paying their taxes that they don't get their [refunds] first; I've got to prioritize them first. This is a debt that has been ignored by six governors that I'm trying to pay.”

According to Sen. Gittens, the administration's decision to use funds approved by the Senate for unintended purposes undermines trust and accountability. “We must ensure that existing funds are managed responsibly before considering additional financial support,” he wrote.

Both Senators Gittens and Bolques insist that central government must return with a more detailed account of how any additional credit facilities will be used, and how the government intends to manage the additional debt responsibly. “Any decision to expand or approve new lines of credit must come with a transparent and accountable strategy that prioritizes the long-term economic health of our territory,” Mr. Bolques argued. “Until we see a full accounting of how the previous \$50 million designated for retroactive wages was managed, we should be very cautious about further extending ourselves,” Mr. Gittens suggested.

?Despite their expressed concerns, both lawmakers underscored their commitment to ensuring that the territory has the sustainable fiscal solutions needed to pull through the current challenging financial climate.