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BVI Health Minister Demands Resignation of Health Authority Chair Amid Growing Crisis

Ron Potter's leadership questioned after a tragic death on Virgin Gorda and alleged resistance to healthcare improvements; Potter denies allegations and challenges removal process

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BVI Health Services Authority Board Chair Ron Potter

British Virgin Islands residents have long expressed frustration with the territory's health care system, but recent events have brought those concerns to a head. Last week, Health and Social Development Minister Vincent Wheatley took decisive action by requesting the resignation of BVI Health Services Authority Board Chair Ron Potter. This move comes amid growing public outcry over the state of health services in the British territory.

Mr. Wheatley, who confirmed the request to local media outlets, cited dissatisfaction with the management of health care services during Mr. Potter's tenure. The demand for change was further fueled by a tragic incident involving a man who died after being unable to access emergency care on Virgin Gorda. His attempts to seek help were thwarted by a closed clinic and calls to emergency numbers went unanswered, spotlighting the critical failures within the territory's health sector.

Mr. Potter has been accused of blocking the establishment of a proposed medical school, a signal of his supposed opposition to initiatives that would improve healthcare services in the territory. However, he denies the allegation, reportedly calling it "unfounded."

?The BVIHSA chair did confirm receiving a WhatsApp message from Mr. Wheatley requesting that he resign, but said that the request does not comport with the BVI Health Services Authority Act of 2004, which governs the appointment and removal of board members. "The Act requires grounds for the removal of an office holder," Mr. Wheatley said in a press release. "Having reviewed the Act, I am confident that no grounds exist for my removal if the laws of the Territory are to be followed and fairly applied."

?Mr. Wheatley also pointed out that the board of BVIHSA has been operating without a quorum since July, leaving it unable to "have meetings and make vital decisions for the advancement of healthcare in the Territory." He noted that cabinet, and the minister, bear responsibility for appointing new members to the board.