

The Virgin Islands Consortium

\$4 Million Allocated For Repairs and Maintenance of Territory Public Schools

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Cynthia Graham **October 09, 2014**



Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr., on behalf of the Virgin Islands Government, has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Interior's Office of Insular Affairs for maintenance and repairs to the territory's public schools with assistance from the Army Corps of Engineers. The Office of Insular Affairs will allocate \$1,000,000 for fiscal years 2015 through 2018, a total of \$4 million, through the Virgin Island's Capital Improvement Project request to fund these projects. The memorandum of understanding was signed by Governor de Jongh on September 22 and covers Phase III of this ongoing commitment.

The contractual relationship between the three entities--the Virgin Islands Government, Office of Insular Affairs and the Army Corps of Engineers--is known as the ABCs Partners, and is committed to "a strong commitment to furnish functional and safe schools in order to create the best possible learning environment for children," according to a news release issued by Government House.

Under a previous agreement, the ABC's Partners "assessed every public school building, created an analysis of general school conditions, and aggregated a detailed database of deferred maintenance items and their associated costs." With the new Phase III agreement, "the Army Corps of Engineers will develop an investment strategy that also provides technical support and local assistance; will develop, deploy, and maintain an enterprise asset management system; will recruit, train and manage teams; will provide general project management; and will re-inspect the schools during the third and fifth years of the five-year agreement," the release said.

Of the agreement, de Jongh said, "This agreement with Interior and the Army Corps targets our Capital Improvement Program to an investment that benefits our students and those in the educational system. This coupled with the current projects we have at our schools only improves the environment for years to come."

In the case of larger "capital improvement" projects, the Virgin Islands Government will be responsible for incorporating them into the territory's overall capital improvement plans, which will be funded through local and federal funds. As part of the memorandum of understanding, the Government of the Virgin Islands is required to create a school facilities plan by no later than one year after the signing of the memorandum, which must be updated at least once a year thereafter.

In addition to de Jongh, the memorandum of understanding was signed by Nikolao I. Pula, director of the Office of Insular Affairs for the Department of Interior, and Donna Frett Gregory, commissioner of education.