

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Leaving ABR VI Decision To Next Administration Is Disowning Responsibility, De Jongh Says

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Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. has said in recently released audio files that those with the mindset that the Operating Agreement signed between the Government of the Virgin Islands and ABR VI should be left to the incoming 31st Legislature and the next Governor, are abdicating responsibility, because as long as they are in office, their responsibility is to work for the people of the Virgin Islands.

De Jongh offered these sentiments when responding to the 30th Legislature's move on Wednesday to send the Operating Agreement to the Finance Committee for further review. He said that while he understood the move, there isn't much time to waste, as HOVENSA has given notice that it will soon run out of money and will shut down all

operations if the ABR VI deal does not succeed.

"Clearly, we've seen that there's an absence of interest, there's one party that believes that this could be a very strong merchant refinery that serves well St. Croix and at the same time can continue to benefit the Government, and I'm hoping what we can do is go through a process that allows us to educate the senators a little bit more," de Jongh said, "because there's enough that's on the plate."

The Governor admitted his bewilderment that some think the best move is to table the ABR VI deal until the 31st Legislature and the next Governor take office.

"And the part I do not understand is, for those that say let's leave it to the next Governor, let's leave it to the next Legislature, is abdicating our responsibility," de Jongh said. "We're in these jobs until the dates the others takeover. In my case, that's on January 5, 2015, the senators, I believe, it's a week later. Up until that point, we have a responsibility to this community to work as hard as possible to make sure that going forward, we put everything to best footing."

De Jongh then highlighted the workload of the incoming Senate and Administration.

"There's enough that the 31st Legislature is going to have to deal with and the new Governor is going to have to deal with," he said. "Some issues that were not taken up by this Legislature, such as pension reform, workers compensation legislation, unemployment trust legislation--those are the issues that have to be addressed very clearly, and that's well recognized, [so] why should we have to pile more on top of them? We have a responsibility [and] it's very clear where we have to go in terms of at least let's make a decision, and let's make an informed decision, and the senators now have basically said we want to make an informed decision, and whatever that decision is, we will go forward."

He added: "I'm hoping that the decision is to approve the Agreement with ABR; let's sit down, let's have them go through the process throughout the closing, let's look at restarting the refinery, and let's put this chapter behind us."

Listen to the first two audio files [here](#) and [here](#).