

The Virgin Islands Consortium

De Jongh Pays Government \$202,831.60 For Guard House And Security Fence At Personal Residence

Politics / **Published On April 25, 2015 08:28 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **April 25, 2015**



ST. THOMAS -- In a public statement issued to the press on Saturday, former Governor John P. de Jongh revealed that he has reimbursed the Government of the Virgin Islands' Department of Property and Procurement the sum of \$202,832.60 for the guard house and electric fence constructed at his residence after taking office in 2007.

The sum is less than half of the \$500,000 of government monies used on de Jongh's property. However, according to de Jongh, who served two terms and was the 7th elected governor of the territory, the \$202,831.60 is the appraised, fair market value of the guard house and fence built for security measures at his private residence, located in Estate Mafolie.

The total sum of the appraisal is \$222,631.60, however, it was reduced by \$20,000 for the removal of the guard house that's no longer needed at the property.

Simply put, the costs associated with moving my family into Catharineberg would have meant an expenditure in excess of \$2.1 million of taxpayer money. -- Governor John P. De Jongh, Jr.

"This payment was made in fulfillment of my commitment, first announced years ago and confirmed in a February 15, 2010 letter that was released to the public. At no time have I wavered in fulfilling this commitment," de Jongh said.

On September 25, 2014 senators of the 30th Legislature [passed a resolution](#) at the Earle B. Ottley Legislative Hall requesting then-Governor de Jongh pay back the money in its entirety.

De Jongh took office in 2007, but instead of living at the Governor's mansion in Estate Catherineberg, he chose to reside at his private residence — where Public Works spent over \$490,000 erecting a fence, building a guard house and installing a camera system. The project was given the green light after Public Works sought and received an opinion from the V.I. Attorney General's office, stating it was permissible to move ahead with the work once public interest was served and was the main reason for the expense.

But in 2010, the U.S. Interior Department inspector general's office concluded in a report that the renovations of de Jongh's private home with public funds, "usurped the Legislature's authority to determine how to spend public funds" and should be returned.

In his public statement, however, the governor recalled his version of the events that lead to him moving into his private home while serving as governor of the Virgin Islands.

"I was advised that to renovate Estate Catharineberg for a family would require well over a year of construction at an estimated cost in excess of \$1.5 million... I also was informed that the estimated annual housing expenses to be incurred at Catharineberg would be \$80,000 per year, which over the course of my eight year tenure as your Governor would have cost upwards of \$640,000.

"Simply put, the costs associated with moving my family into Catharineberg would have meant an expenditure in excess of \$2.1 million of taxpayer money. I did not consider the cost for such major renovations to the property, or the additional annual costs associated to be appropriate. And so I decided to remain at my personal residence," said the former governor.

He added: "As I approached the end of my second term as Governor, the Department of Property and Procurement completed the established process for obtaining appraisals or valuations for public purposes. The amount reimbursed was based on the averaging of the appraised values presented by three independent, licensed appraisers commissioned by the Department of Property and Procurement. The value of the security measures was determined to be \$222,631.60, and I accepted the valuation."

De jongh also noted the dilemma faced by every governor as it relates to housing, and said if the issue is not addressed through the political process, the reoccurring problem will perpetuate.

"This will also confront future governors unless a solution is attained through the political process, how and where the community decides it wishes to house and protect our Governor is a matter of public policy," de Jongh said. "Whether to house the Governor at a government-owned residence or have the decision made on a case-by-case basis following each election, the decision should not be a matter of partisan politics for anyone elected to serve as Governor. I trust that the community will soon determine a housing policy for the future."

© Viconsortium 2026