

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix's Tourism Product 'Major Focus Area' Through Paul E. Joseph Development, Other Measures, Mapp Says

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ST. CROIX -- The island's sagging tourism industry will receive a significant boost in fiscal year 2016 according to Governor Kenneth Mapp's budget message to 31st Legislature President Sen. Neville James, as work on the Paul E. Joseph Stadium moves forward and construction on a new multi-sport complex in Mars Hill commences.

That's what Mapp said in his transmittal letter, made available to the press on May 29, adding that the Department of Tourism will play a significant role in the island's economic success.

"The Department of Tourism will be central in the path forward as St. Croix's tourism product is going to be a major focus area," said the governor. "Particularly with the planned developments in Frederiksted's Paul E. Joseph Stadium, and a multi-sports complex center in Mars Hill."

While giving a keynote speech in March, Mapp told a packed audience at the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting that while he suspended the work being done through a \$20 million contract [signed between former Governor de Jongh and GEC](#), the project's lead contractor, the idea was to eventually move ahead with the project, albeit in a grander fashion, through the Frederiksted Revitalization Project.

"On the issue of Paul E. Joseph Stadium, I want to be very clear that we're not opposed to this project," Mapp said, pointing out that, because of his years spent heading up the the Public Finance Authority (PFA), there is no way he could be opposed to the reconstruction of the stadium. Instead, the governor said, his concern is with making sure the people of the Virgin Islands was getting the best possible deal.

"I want to be clear that my concern in this job is to ensure that you, the people of the territory, receive the value for your money," the governors said.

And just as he did during his [February press conference](#) held at Government House on St. Croix, Mapp again pointed out the many discrepancies with the contract that former governor de Jongh signed before he left office.

"I'm not going to participate in just signing contracts and spending money on some premise that there will be some economic return to this territory," Mapp said. "That is not how you manage, that does not work, and anyone running a successful business will tell you that is a path to bankruptcy.

"And so I suspended the project simply because, how do you sign a contract of \$20 million to do a project for which there are no concepts, no designs, there are no specifications, and then the contract has loose ends regarding what could be done with savings, what the costs are, or no lack of cost containment," the governor said.

But the process is seemingly moving forward as made known by the governor during a [Memorial Day commemoration event](#) in Frederiksted on May 25. He said the company originally contracted to construct the facility through the Revitalization Project, that costed the government \$200,000, was back on island doing assessments.

The 2005 design, according to Mapp, contains "mitigation for the flood issues that occur at [Estate] La Grange," something he says is not included in the contract that was placed on hold.

"So, if you put \$20 million on the footprint of Paul E. Joseph Stadium, and do not deal with the flood issues that come out of the La Grange hill, on our first major rain, you will lose the facility because dugouts and bathrooms will be filled with mud," Mapp warned.

However, the governor said he does not intend to completely sideline the current contractor. Instead, "we're going to bring the company in that, in 2005 developed this process with the community, only to fully design the product in tandem with the community's efforts and the dollars that the government has available, do a costing of

that project, for which we will then sit with the current contractor, GEC, to see if we could work out a system where they can, in fact, have access to do the construction of the project."

He added: "But that the government knows what it is buying, and what it should pay for, and what the quality attributes of the stadium ought to be, and the flood and mitigation issues to protect the town and the community of La Grange, in tandem with federal dollars that we need to ensure that happens," Mapp said.

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