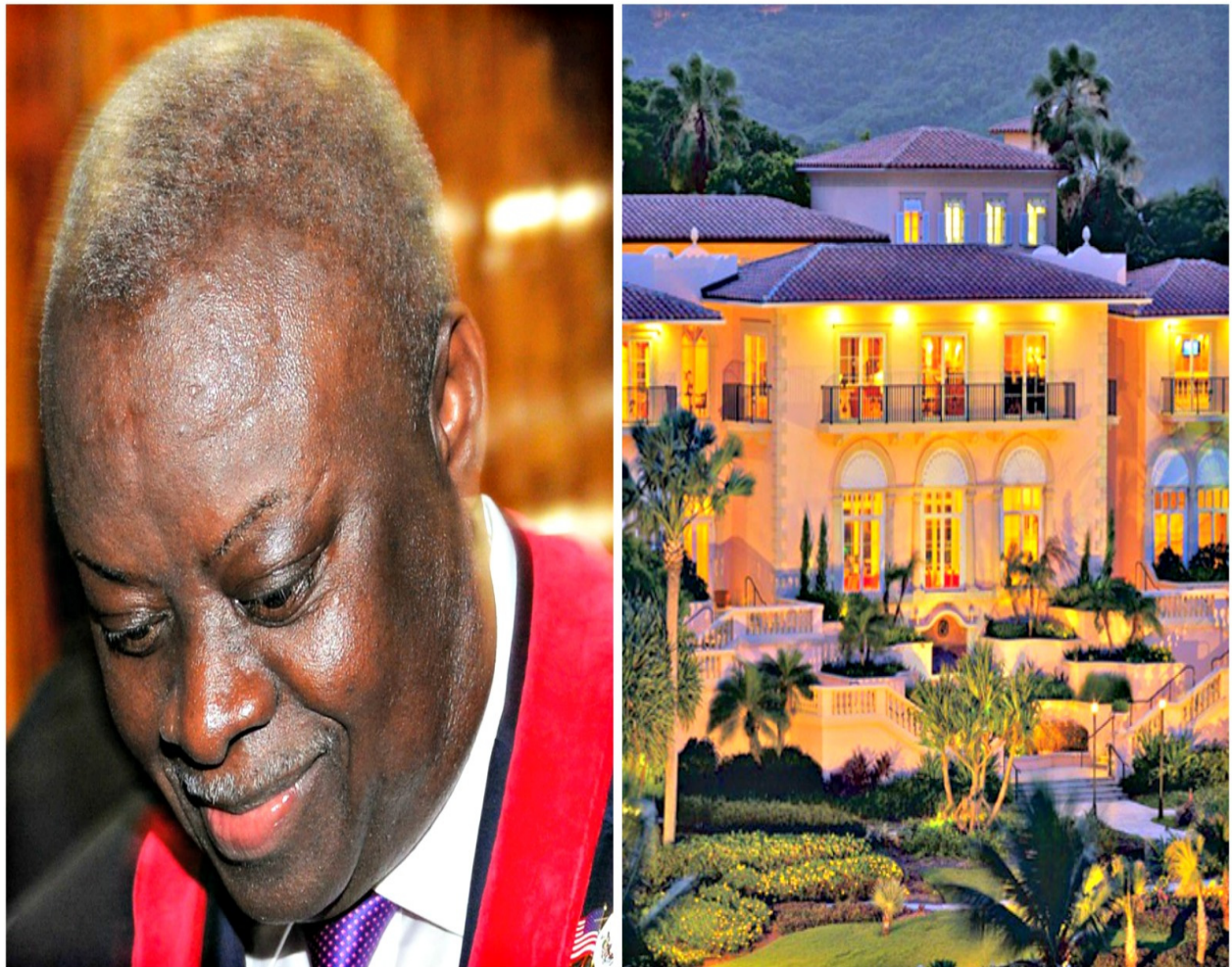


# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Senators To Mapp: Ease Up On Spending; If You Have A Plan, Show It Now

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Ernice Gilbert **October 01, 2015**



ST. THOMAS -- It was a long time coming -- the Senate hearing where officials of the West Indian Company's board were to give testimony on the details surrounding WICO's rental of Villa Fratelli Cresta, located in Esate Nazareth here, for Governor Kenneth Mapp, who to this day remains without a permanent residence.

But the conversation, while productive in relation to revealing further details surrounding the costly monthly rental, was more focused on what senators deemed the frivolous expending of taxpayers money by the Mapp administration, and admonishing the governor to curtail the behavior.

Senator Kurt Violet said the people had arrived at a peak in their frustration, and reminded that the territory continues to lose its brightest individuals to other jurisdictions. He said a lavish style of governing should not be employed by any official until government employees see pay increases.

"When we're able to give government employees a raise, then we can talk about excess," Violet said. "At this point we really can't. We're losing teachers on a regular basis; they're relocating because of salary. And I've never seen the community of the Virgin Islands so frustrated. They're at a different level of frustration now. And that is why in this body, we had to [find money to supplement the government health insurance](#) because we know even five dollars more a pay period is going to break some families. And I'm asking for us to be responsible."

Sen. Myron Jackson said the community is "incensed right now," and held to his stance that the territory's governor, according to law, should reside in Government House in the islands' capital -- even if it means reoutfitting the building to meet the required needs.

In relation to the rental property (a story is forthcoming on Friday morning), Senator Neville James said he was disappointed that Jimez Ashby, owner of the villa, came without a statement. He was also confused as to why [Mr. Ashby](#), who has testified at the Senate in the past and admitted to currently holding at least one government contract with the Waste Management Authority, said that he did not understand why he was called to the Senate.

"I'm a business man providing a simple customer service: quality residence, modern amenities, and a piece of mind, peace and security," Mr. Ashby began. "And I really don't understand why I'm here today. I provided a service and that's all I did. The government approached me about a residence, I sat with the government, gave a price, we made up a rental agreement and that's as far as it went."

But Senator Nelson said he had no qualms with Ashby, how much he asked the government for the rental of his property and how much the government was willing to pay.

"The problem here is the spending habits of this administration," he said. Nelson also said that the people of the territory has a role to play in the fate of Governor Mapp, hinting at impeachment -- a move, he suggested, should be initiated by the people.

And Senator Nereida Rivera-O'Reilly, appearing frustrated with the protracted hearing that she said would change nothing, also stated that the administration was making poor choices.

"Returning \$202,832.60 to Governor de Jongh, poor choice," Rivera-O'Reilly said. "The lease of a 7-bedroom villa at \$12,000, \$4,000 -- whatever that amount was, poor choice," she went on.

"I want this administration, whether it's Mapp, or whomever is sitting in Government House, to succeed. You know why? We cannot afford to fail. Because if we fail, people in this territory will be hurt deeply. Deeply," she stressed. "There is too much poverty; there is too much hurt, there is too much pain," the veteran senator voiced, passion apparent with every word.

Rivera-O'Reilly then mentioned people within the community who come to her office and reveal that they have no place to sleep. "Their children are being put out of their homes; going to bed without electricity and on an empty stomach."

"If Governor Mapp has a plan, he needs to start rolling it out," she concluded.

Invited testifiers included WICO's President and CEO Mr. Joseph Boschulte, owner of Villa Fratelli Cresta Ashby, and WICO Chairman and Mapp's Chief of Staff Randolph Knight. WICO's legal counsel Adriane Dudley was also present at today's hearing.

*Feature Image: Governor Kenneth Mapp alongside the RitzCarlton hotel here. The Consortium [learned sometime back](#) that the governor resides at the luxury resort when in the capital.*

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