

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Meeting With Petitioners Of BVI's National Health Insurance Suddenly Canceled

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**Audience at National Health Insurance announcement.**

TORTOLA -- A meeting called between Premier Dr. Orlando Smith and the NHI Concerned Citizens and Residents Group has been cancelled.

The meeting was set for Friday October 9th at 11:00 a.m. to discuss the National Health Insurance and to present a petition with more than 600 signatures calling on the Premier to go back to the drawing board to further discuss this initiative before implementation on January 1st 2016.

Spokesperson for the Group Natalio Sowande Uhuru Wheatley told The Consortium they are disappointed when they were informed about the cancellation of the meeting Wednesday by the Premier's Office.

"I did attempt to get a meeting perhaps next week, or sometime after that but they weren't willing to confirm any dates in the near future. Their advice was to seek a meeting with the Minister for Health and Social Development Ronnie Skelton. Our group will get together and decide whether that's the course of action we want to take", he said.

He said certainly our petition is addressed to the Premier and I think its appropriate for us to present it to the Premier who is the Head of the Local Government. I do believe that the Premier whatever the problem is, is resolved that we'll be able to have a meeting with the Premier, I'm optimistic about that".

Wheatley said the cancellation of tomorrow's meeting is a minor setback and the stakes are too high to give up at this time and they will continue to press on.

The spokesperson said he learnt yesterday that people are losing their life insurance with the NHI, you know people who have health insurance that's tied to their life insurance. One lady told me that she is going to lose her part time employment. So this thing has big implications for us here", Wheatley noted.

Meanwhile Premier Smith was asked about the cancellation of Friday's meeting during a Press conference today, Thursday.

"It was because of a scheduling conflict, as I said I am willing to meet with anyone and answer any questions, but there was a scheduling conflict for tomorrow, that is why I cancelled it", the Premier explained.

Premier Smith said he is aware that they were advised to speak with the Minister for Health and that would be a good thing to do, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't meet with him.

*Feature Image: Audience at National Health Insurance announcement in Tortola.*

*Image Credit: VIC.*