

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Citing Successes, Mapp Sees Estate Nazareth Mansion And Ritz-Carlton Hotel Costs As Trivial Matters

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ST. CROIX -- Controversies about Governor Kenneth Mapp's [living costs at Estate Nazareth](#), where taxpayers dollars funded rent more than \$12,000 monthly, and credit card spending that invited the rage of many a Virgin Islander, were classified as trivial matters by the territory's leader, who told The Consortium in [an exclusive interview](#) last Friday that such disputes were nothing more than "good fodder for good dinner conversation."

Mr. Mapp had said during his first State of the Territory Address in January, 2015, that the islands' financial condition was dire, and that the territory was [near the brink of collapse](#). But after multiple fumbles in regards to [the true cost](#) of the Estate Nazareth

rental property, and promising raises to cabinet members even before they had spent reasonable time serving in their respective capacities, residents as well as elected officials began questioning the governor's prudence.

Mr. Mapp, however, explained his nonchalance as prioritising what he felt would move the territory forward, and leaving behind conversations about housing and credit card spending as irrelevant. He did, however, agreed to a [compromise with senators](#) on the salary of his cabinet members after they were rejected by Senate Democrats twice.

The governor said that when he came into office, various special funds within the government, including workmen compensation and unemployment insurance, were depleted, and therefore, he said, the territory was indeed nearing a financial disaster.

"[But] when you're going to just oppose the emptiness of these funds in a billion-dollar entity, and say that housing a governor at \$12,500 a month is unnecessary spending. Or the governor paying for trips to go to Washington, DC and introduce himself and his senior team to people like Mitch McConnell or Senator Orrin Hatch, the chairman of the Finance Committee, and the Speaker of the House, and representatives in Congress that have a tremendous amount to do with 4 or 5 hundred million dollars of monies that come into the territory.

"Or to go to the US Department of Treasury and work through the issues on the EDC companies that have resulted in them relaxing their rules and reducing the amount of residency days. To traveling to New York and bringing back \$5 million of old monies [that dates] to 2011, and \$37 million for new infrastructure improvements. Or traveling to Guam and bringing back a portion of \$7 million for the climate change program. And having a dinner in New York City, or sleeping in a Ritz-Carlton hotel, or coming into Government House that you have given me to live in, and expecting that I, or any human being would not retrofit that home for their families with new linens and new towels, [and] that, somehow, is unwarranted spending, that's just fodder for good conversation. That's not realistic.

"If anyone believes that the president goes into the White House and use the bedding and the linen that the previous first family uses, is just being unrealistic," Governor Mapp said.

Pressed on whether he would change any aspect of spending during his first year in office, the governor remained steadfast, but mentioned that the [Senate had identified a home for governors](#) that he would soon be residing in, once the bill arrives at his desk.

"In November, I stayed in St. Thomas maybe 15 days, and my hotel bills exceeded \$13,000," he said. "So what is the expectation? There is no question that every state and territory houses governors. And I came into a situation where the home for the governor in the capital is not available. What is the expectation? What am I to do? You tell me," Mr. Mapp said.

"The point I'm making is that these may be very important things to some people, [but] these are very minutiae, no-matter stuff," the governor contended.

He went on: "Let us just assume for the moment that I should not have spent any of the money. I should have gone into St. Thomas at eight o'clock and make sure that I was out

at five o'clock if that was even possible, and that I should have told the members of Congress, 'no, I'm not coming to see you; you come and see me. I can't come to Washington.' And tell the EPA director, 'I'm sorry, you come down from New York and see me, I'm not coming to see you.' I think what we have accomplished in a year in terms of new dollars that have been brought into this treasury before our first anniversary, has certainly covered the cost of any expenditure that I may have made, or the that the lieutenant governor has made."

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