

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## Sugar Bay Resort To Pay Employees By Weekend, Sen. Forde Says

Business / **Published On February 02, 2016 09:46 PM /**

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ST. THOMAS -- Employees of the Sugar Bay Resort and Spa here, who were [informed by the resort's manager](#) that because of "unforeseen financial difficulties," they would not receive their checks on the expected date, will be paid by the end of this week, according to Senator Jean Forde, who said through a press release issued today that he spoke with resort officials following news of the nonpayment.

"My visit with the General Manager, Mr. Zouari, was very encouraging, as he acknowledged that they did in fact experience a temporary delayed payday and that they expect to rectify that by week's end," said Mr. Forde, who revealed that, as the chairman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, his visit was prompted by

the need to get a better understanding of the circumstances surrounding the missed payroll. Mr. Forde said he was assured by the management team that while the current situation has been challenging, it would only be temporary.

On Monday, an employee of the resort sent The Consortium a copy of what appeared to be a letter from management, notifying workers that their pay would be delayed.

The [letter](#), sent to employees by Abdel Zouari, the resort's general manager, said that the resort was working "diligently to rectify the situation," and asked for employees' patience during the unfortunate times. The Consortium tried unsuccessfully to reach resort officials by placing multiple calls.

According to one employee who asked not to be named fearing dismissal, payment was due on Friday, however instead of checks, employees were greeted with a letter. "We still have incoming guests," the employee said, making a point to note that business at the resort continued normally. "People are fearful and worried at the same time," the employee added.

Another employee, who provided The Consortium with a copy of the letter and also requested anonymity to speak freely, said it was not the first time that the resort had been late on paying its workers.

"There has been no resolution as of yet but a coworker said she was told by a manager that it should be tomorrow or Wednesday the latest," this person said. "This is not the first time this has transpired. One time I waited until the following Thursday for my check." This employee, who only works part-time at Sugar Bay, lamented for the other employees who depend solely on their paychecks for their livelihoods.

The resort recently lost its "Dreams Resorts" status, which [boasts of offering](#) a collection of luxury resort destinations, each with its own unique personality," and features "sun-soaked beaches, elegant accommodations, a world-class spa, gourmet dining, unlimited premium drinks, and many other pampering amenities."

Mr. Forde said he was told that all obligations to the government, to include unemployment insurance, and employees' health insurance, are paid up-to-date, and that all employees are kept informed on a daily basis.

"In fact," he said, "I found the employees to be quite understanding and in good spirits." And the hotel, Mr. Forde went on, had launched a new website and marketing initiative, including special rates offered to locals and the re-implementation of the Sunday Brunch -- all in an effort to bolster profitability and drive new business to the beleaguered resort.

"Overall, I was pleased to meet the employees in great spirits, and was reassured that efforts are being made to rebound from this dilemma without jeopardizing any jobs," Mr. Forde concluded.