

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Wants To Impose Surcharge To WAPA Bills For Streetlight Maintenance

VIC News / **Published On February 11, 2016 11:16 PM /**

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp said on Thursday that his administration is considering imposing a surcharge to water and power bills of residents and businesses, a move he contends is needed to help keep the territory's streets lit.

"What we would like to do is to be able to impose a surcharge on the WAPA bill that will be not less than \$1, but for its highest users, hopefully not more than \$20. So if your business consume a lot of power, your surcharge will be around \$20," the governor said during his keynote speech at the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting held at the Palms at Pelican Cove on Thursday morning.

"That money will go directly and only for the purposes of lighting every public road in the territory; because right now we're trying to do that and we have no resources do so," he said. "We're saying if we can get the cost of power to continue to go down, with that reduction in the cost of power, we would be able to capture the resources specifically for the purposes of lighting the streets." The governor also said that the surcharge already imposed on residents' property tax bills to pay for streetlight maintenance, is not enough.

The announcement is sure to spark controversy among residents who say that the government's only solution to its problems is to impose additional taxes on an already overburdened electorate. And [the last time](#) the idea of taxing residents to pay for streetlights surfaced, [a politician lost her job](#), petitions were [circulated](#) and the measure was eventually [vetoed](#) by former Governor John P. de Jongh.

"While I agree that the Legislature must determine an effective way to fund the cost of street lighting, it would be just as appropriate to hear the community's voice on this matter and hold hearings to obtain the necessary guidance from all those who would be impacted," Mr. de Jongh said in a communiqué that accompanied his veto.